SOSC 13300
Social Sciences Inquiry 3
Spring 2011

Meeting Time: T/Th 9:00 to 10:20 am
Location: Cobb Lecture Hall 106

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Office Hours: M 3:00-5:00 pm

Course Objectives:

Welcome back to Social Sciences Inquiry. This third and final sequence of the course integrates the theoretical understanding of democracy and social science from the Autumn quarter with the methodological training of the Winter quarter. The course will be devoted to practicing social scientific concepts and skills for the completion of a policy-relevant research project. In that process, our goals are not only to develop the skills of written and oral presentation of completed research but also to learn the skills of academic cooperation to improve our works through on-going mutual critique, response, and revision processes.

We will review how social scientists ask and answer their research questions about social life and facts. We will cover four main areas of Social Research: research design, measurement, sampling, and modes of observation and data analyses. We will initially focus on the general logic of social inquiry including hypotheses, variables, causality, and ethical issues (Part I). You then explore how to define concepts, how to translate them into reliable and valid measures, and how to make questionnaires (Part II). The next portion of the course will look at the collection and management of data (Part III). Then, we will delve into various modes of observation – experimental designs, survey designs and quantitative regression analysis, content analysis, comparative/historical analysis, qualitative field research, and their relative strengths and weaknesses. For each mode of analytical strategy, we will conduct a critical review of published articles in the main venues of sociology, political science, and economics (Part IV).

In the course of reviewing these, you will be asked to develop your own research paper step by step throughout the quarter, following detailed guidelines. We employ a simulated paper production and review process in modern academy to this course: see the detailed procedures and requirements.
below. We seek not only rigorous and critical peer reviews, but also cooperative and active (therefore fun) academic communications and productions.

Contacts:

You can reach me via email at chslee@uchicago.edu. I will respond to most of the emails regarding the course, and this is the best way to work through simple questions. Please check your email and course webpage several times a week. Email is one of the best ways to keep in touch with our class when we are not in class. More complex questions would likely require more time, and for these, we recommend our office hours. We are also available by appointment and we will set up a convenient time.

Course Requirements:

Readings:

We will use the following text in this course. Please purchase or borrow a copy for your use during the quarter. Other readings will be available through the course web page. We will also make use of other media forms, such as audio/video segments. I refer to the book by the authors’ initials below. Page numbers below are based on the 11th edition, but if you find other editions (e.g. 10th or 12th) at a more reasonable price, you may use it.


Selected Journal Articles (See course outline below)

Assignment:

You have only one assignment in this class other than the research paper and comments.

Certification for NIH training Due: TBA


Daily Reviews:

- During the semester, we will work together to learn and apply course concepts to our respective projects. To this end, each student will conduct one Daily Review briefing based on course concepts.
- Each presenter should email review presentation material (e.g. power point file) to the instructor and TA one day before presentation (5:00 pm).

In-Class Exercises:
There are many class sessions in which students are expected to complete an in-class activity. Often, these activities are completed in a group. The details for in-class exercises will follow in “each class” as the course progresses and be NOT posted on the course webpage. In-class exercises will not be graded but will be used for gauging your class participation.

Research Paper:

You will develop a research paper during the semester. Instead of just memorizing methodological concepts and techniques, you should be able to apply them to an actual research project. We have several steps to accomplish this: The term paper (research proposal) topic will be developed in consultation with the instructor. It should be (1) a social scientific issue and (2) have some policy-relevant implications (e.g. “who will win NCAA tournament next year” will not be accepted). Submit the title and one paragraph (about a half page, 2-300 words) of the description of your research proposal by class 3. This submission is to judge whether your topic is appropriate for this course, therefore will not be graded. Then, you are expected to submit the research proposal by class 6 (15 pts). It should include the objective of the research, literature review, variables for study, and measurement. During the later part of the quarter, you will have to conduct data analyses (either qualitative or quantitative, or both) to test your hypothesis or support your argument. You are expected to submit this full version of your research paper by class 14 (20 pts). You will be provided with detailed guidelines of what I expect you to do for each stage for these two submissions. You may utilize one or more of the papers you have written in other courses for this research project (but it should meet the two criteria listed above and you will have to revise it significantly to conform to the guidelines and comments).

With your presentation, you will receive 4-5 comments for your research proposal and about 15-20 comments for your final paper from your colleagues (depending on the class size). We (instructor and TA) will let you know which comments you should seriously consider. You will also have to respond to our comments in your final revision. The final version of the paper will be graded based on how seriously and persuasively you respond to these comments. You should submit the final version of your paper no later than 5 pm, June 6th (15 pts).

Comments on your Colleagues’ Papers:

You are expected to deliver “critical” but “constructive” and “courteous” comments to your colleagues’ research proposals and final papers. Remember: you will not reject their ideas, arguments, and analyses, but provide them with helpful comments on how to improve their works. You will do this for their research proposal within a 4-5 student group (so, providing 3-4 comments to members in your group) and then do this for everybody else at the end of the quarter (about 20 comments). Be prepared to take notes when they present. Be prepared to circulate your proposal and final papers to your class mates via email. For your comments on your group members’ research proposal, write a half page of comments for each member’s proposal and then send it to us (instructor and TA) by April 19th. For your comments on the final presentations, send them to us after each class. Each presenter will receive a coordinated plan for the final revision from us a day after her final presentation.

Grading:

Your grade will be measured as follows: Grading will NOT be on a curve:
### Component | % | Grade | % | Grade | % | Grade | %
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Research Proposal | 15 | | | A | >= 93 | A- | 90-92
The Final Paper | 15 | | | B- | 80-82
The Final Paper Revised | 20 | | | B | 83-86 | B- | 80-82
Final Presentation | 10 | | | C | 73-76 | C- | 70-72
Daily Review | 5 | D+ | 67-69 | D | 63-66 | D- | 60-62
NIH Training | 5 | | | F | < 60
In-Class Exercises | 10 | | | | | | |
Comments on Others’ Works | 20 | | | | | | |
**Total** | 100% | | | | | | |

### DAILY ASSIGNMENTS

I. Research Design

**Class 1:**
*What are the course goals and requirements?*

**Class 2:**
*Topic I: What do you need to do to be successful in this class?*

*Topic II: Research Design and Writing*
*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 4: Pp. 112-120, Chapter 17: Pp. 521-528

**Class 3:**

*Topic: Causation in Social Research*


**A Description of your Research Topic Due Today**

II. Measurement
Class 4:
Topic I: Measurement: Conceptualization and Operationalization, Levels of Measurement
Assignment: Read [EB] Chapter 5: Pp. 128-147

Topic II: Measurement: Validity and Reliability

[link]

Class 5:
Topic I: Questionnaire Construction

Topic II: Variable Construction
Assignment: Read [EB] Chapter 6: Pp. 177-183

Class 6: Student Research Proposal Presentations (within Group)

Research Proposal Due Today (April 14th)

Class 7:
Topic I: Generalization, Target Population, and Sampling Frames
Assignment: Read [EB] Chapter 7: Pp. 188-196, 208-211

Topic II: Probability Sampling and Types of Sampling Designs

2 Page Comments on your colleagues’ proposals Due Today

Class 8:
Topic I: Experimental Design

Topic II: Internal and External Validity
Class 9:
Topic I: Qualitative Field Research Techniques

Topic II: Article Review – Focusing on Sampling and Interview Techniques

Class 10:
Topic I: Qualitative Field Research Paradigms

Topic II: Article Review – Focusing on Validity and Reliability

Class 11:
Topic I: Content Analysis

Topic II: Article Review – Focusing on Causality

Class 12:
Topic I: Quantitative Analysis I

Topic II: Article Review – Focusing on Measurement and Third Variables


Class 13:
Topic I: Ethical Issues in Social Research

We will watch a video: Obedience, 1962, Stanley Milgram.

Topic II: Institutional Review Board
Assignment:  

Class 14:
Topic I: Quantitative Analysis II  
Read [TBA]

Topic II: Article Review  
Read [TBA]

*The Term Paper -- First Submission Due Today*

V. Applications

Class 15 – Class 18 Student Paper Presentations

*Comments on Each Paper: Due one day after each Presentation*

Class 19:
Topic: How to Finalize your Paper.

*The Term Paper -- Revision and Resubmission Due by 5 pm, June 4th*