

SOSC 3700 Quantitative Social Analysis Practicum

Fall 2022

Thursday, 1:30-2:20pm

Rm 6602 (Lift 31-32)

Instructor: Dr. WANG, Hongbo (hbwang@ust.hk)

Office: Academic Building, Room 2372 (Ext. 7804)

Office Hours: By appointment

TA: TBD ([??](#))

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Description and Objectives

This course is intended to help students gain practical, real-world experience with the skills that they have learned in their QSA methods courses. The goal is to give students practice independently choosing a topic, identifying a dataset, selecting a method, carrying out analysis, and reporting results outside of a methods class where the final paper or project is highly structured. It is also intended to help students develop ideas for their capstone project.

Students will conduct a small project that involves quantitative analyses of social data. Under the supervision of the instructor, students will choose a topic, locate suitable data, and design and conduct an analysis.

The work done for the project should be above and beyond any work done for the QSA topical elective. Any work that is going to be submitted or has been submitted for credit in another class should not be submitted for the credit of 3700.

Students should apply basic techniques that they have learned in their methodological courses for managing and analyzing datasets, and would acquire independent working experiences that are necessary for their capstone projects. Students will probably find it easiest to work with a well-documented dataset that is publicly available and can be downloaded from a site like ICPSR or IPUMS. However, they are certainly welcome to construct their own dataset and analyze it. Students are encouraged to use the opportunity afforded by 3700 to explore different sources of data that they might use for their Capstone Project and conduct analysis with it.

Students may work in groups. For a group project to be approved by the instructor, it must be more ambitious than an individual project, with expectations set according to the size of the group. The roles of group members will need to be specified in the proposal, and contributions to the final project will need to be documented in the final report.

The class will meet on an occasional basis during the term. A detailed schedule can be found later in this syllabus. At these meetings, students will be required to present progress on their projects and participate in discussions of other students' projects.

Prerequisites

SOSC 2400. This is intended primarily for QSA students in their third year.

Projects

Identify **two to three** candidate research topics for the prospective Capstone Project and conduct either of following two types of projects:

- 1) *Literature review* Conduct literature review for each of the candidate topics. This should be a review of the relevant literature and a discussion of previous relevant studies. Note that the review should show a comprehensive, in-depth, and up-to-date understanding of the literature. The reader will want to be able to see that you really understand the field. In particular, the review needs to connect the literature clearly to your topic. It is common bad practice to contain a series of paraphrases or summaries while lacking the analysis that develops the argument to show why this is relevant to your topic. The reviews are supposed to help determine why your proposed research differs from previous studies, and identify the gaps in the previous research that you seek to fill.
- 2) *Data exploration* For each candidate topic, explore a variety of datasets potentially suitable for addressing it. This can be preparatory to development of Capstone Project proposal. Note that you need to actually download and explore each dataset. Specifically, you need to evaluate the suitability of the data to your topic in terms of sample size, time frame, availability and adequacy of variables, and so on. Such data exploration should help you narrow down to one or two datasets that could be used for the capstone project, allowing for focusing on preliminary analysis in preparation for Capstone Project.

You may also opt to do both literature review and data exploration. In any case, however, it should not repeat anything you have done in a previous 3700 offering or in any of your methods classes.

Written Submissions

In addition to attending all scheduled meetings (See "Schedule" below), you will need to complete the following over the course of the term.

(1) Work plan (Presentation)

The presentation should provide a description of your topic that also specifies the dataset(s) and methods (s) that you will use. You should also explain how you chose your topic and what it is interesting to you. If you are doing a group project, the names of all group members and division of work should be included.

(2) Progress Reports

Please keep a diary of your work on the project that describes all related activities, including exploration of literature and data, downloading and processing of data including data that you decided not to use, any calculations you are doing, including ones that didn't work out. This should document that you have spent the expected amount of time on the project, including on data and calculations that are not reflected in the final report.

Each individual/group is required to submit two brief reports based on the diary (See "Schedule" for the deadlines). The reports serve to update the instructor on the progress of the project.

(3) Final output (Presentation)

This presentation should summarize the topic and your findings, but it is not expected to be a fully-developed report or research paper. More important is that it demonstrates that you have mastered the preparation and analysis of data and the interpretation and presentation of results.

The presentation should include a series of visually appealing and appropriately titled and labeled tables and figures, with appropriately chosen axis ranges, symbols, and color schemes. They should be suitable for use in a business or academic presentation.

It should include all the details on how you prepared your dataset and produced your tables and figures, among other things.

Grading

P/F 1 credit

To earn a P, students must attend class meetings, submit all materials required by the instructor, make a project presentation, and submit a final written report. For group projects, the report must describe the contributions of each member. The presentation and report must include a description of the steps taken as part of the analysis, including the statistical package used and the code or scripts used to transform the data.

The project will be evaluated regarding merits in design, analysis and interpretation. Feedback will be given regarding prospects for development into a Capstone Project.

Schedule (Subject to adjustment)

Academic Calendar Week	Topic	Meeting	Submission
Week 1 (9/1)	Introduction	√	
Week 2 (9/15)	Work Plan	√	√
Week 3			
Week 4			
Week 5			
Week 6			
Week 7 (10/20)	Progress Report I (Presentation)	√	√ PPT
Week 8			
Week 9			
Week 10 (11/10)	Progress Report II		√ PPT
Week 11			
Week 12 (11/24)	Final output (Presentation)	√	√ PPT
Week 13			