

SOSC 2140: Research Methods in the Social Sciences

Fall 2021

Professor Stuart Gietel-Basten, ZOOM then in-person (with special dispensation for those not able to attend in person)

Tuesday and Thursday, 0900-1020

Enrolment requirements

None

Course objectives and intended learning outcomes

In this course, we will be taking a non-traditional approach to learning social science research methods. You will 'learn-by-doing' in terms of understanding how to 'do' social science. In order to do this, we will combine a combination of whole class lectures, group work, field trips and individual/group study utilising online lectures. The course is designed in such a way that the minimum amount of time required is no more than other 3-credit bearing courses.

The objectives of the course are for you to:

- Understand *why* we do social science research and the various stimuli for research
- Understand why social science research is different to other approaches to research
- Understand how social science research can make a difference to people's lives

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate a critical awareness of some of the key themes within social science research
- Reflect upon how the study of social science methods is relevant for both society and scientific endeavour
- Design a viable research proposal for study within the social science

Teaching and learning activities (e.g. lecture, tutorials, etc.):

This course is a combination of experiential and blended learning.

Experiential learning means that you are 'learning by doing'. In the course of this course, you will be 'learning by doing' in terms of creating, as a group, a viable research proposal which may be funded in real-life. At the end of the course, you will need to pitch the research proposal to a panel of social science faculty and other stakeholders.

In order to do this project, you will be exposed to a 'real life' social issue/topic which will serve as a lens through which you will develop and hone your skills as a social science researcher. This social issue will be 'migration' and, in particular, the circumstances of

migrants in Hong Kong. During this period, you will talk to migrants in Hong Kong (as well as people who work with migrants) and explore some of their issues and concerns about life here.

During the weeks that follow, you will work in your groups, utilising a set of resources including a series of specially recorded lectures, provided reading and your own independently sourced reading to produce the proposal. As you will see from the schedule (later in this document), part of the class time will be spent together as a group, but the majority will be given over to you to work independently in groups, always with access to the course instructors as required.

In order to complete the project, it will be necessary for you to watch the online lectures. This is what we call a 'blended learning' approach; where you watch the lectures in your own time rather than using class time for the instructor to lecture you. The advantage of this approach is that you will be able to utilise the time of the instructors more effectively in our class time.

The lecture series we will be using for this course is 'Social Science Approaches to the Study of Chinese Society' delivered by Professor Cameron Campbell of HKUST. The lectures presented in on this Canvas site have been specially selected for this course.

You will be asked to use the lectures in two ways.

1. Specific lectures in week by week classes

In the syllabus, you will see that many classes have been allocated to time for you to watch the online lectures. In these cases they are explicitly linked to in the syllabus. You will be tested in class on some of the contents of these lectures.

2. A menu of lectures for you to use in your research project

As you will have read already, the development of the research project is a central component of this course. In order to do well in this assessment, **you will need to identify and watch the online lectures which are relevant to you.** Of course, the more you watch, the more options and possibilities you will be able to explore and reflect upon both in the proposal and the reflection log.

However, this approach requires you to take responsibility for engaging with the online materials and other reading. To be clear, **you will not be able to complete the course without watching the online lectures.**

Grading type, assessment tasks and their respective weighting in the final grade

You will be assessed in a number of ways for the course. *Please see the Assignments tab for information about each assignment.*

Recommended readings:

Methods

Bryman, A. (2017) *Social Research Methods* Oxford: OUP

Babbie, E. (2017) *The practice of social research* New York: Cengage

Migration

Battistella, G. (ed) (2015) *Global and Asian Perspectives on International Migration* Dordrecht: Springer

Weeks, J. (2015) *Population* New York: Cengage