

SOSC 2140: Research Methods in the Social Sciences

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

2023 Fall

Course Information

- Teaching Team:
 - Instructor: Kwan To Wong (Email: kwanto@ust.hk; Room: 2356) [Office Hours: Wed 1500-1600]
 - TA: Lillian Lam (Email: lillianta@ust.hk; Room 2359) [Office Hours: Fri 0930-1200]
- Class Venue: CYT G009A
- Class Room: Wed & Fri 1330-1450

Course Description

This course offers a broad overview of principles in research design and introduces some fundamental research methods. The course covers the logic of research question, framing of research story, and selection of research techniques such as survey, experimentation, and quantitative analysis. The course serves as an introduction to research, helping translate general research interests into a well-defined research question, design a study to investigate it, and interpret the results to give research/political inferences.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this course, students will be able to

- identify theories, hypotheses, and methods used in social research
- apply different methods to approach research questions in social science
- appraise how to measure concepts from various types data sources and collection methods
- define causation and the multiple ways of making causal inferences
- assess the quality of empirical work from others
- propose a research design to study a question of their interest and communicate it effectively to both the public and academics

Course Format

This course will be taught in a face-to-face format. So please come to the classroom on time!!!

In the past, this course was in blended mode - 30% of the lecture time will be replaced by online components like videos, and online activities/assessments for self-study. Original designer of this course made wonderful online materials and you are encouraged to view the following online lectures to prompt your understanding of social science research

- [Video P1: Social Science Approaches to the Study of Chinese Society Part 1](#)
- [Video P2: Social Science Approaches to the Study of Chinese Society Part 2](#)

Course Policy

Assessments

Assessments of this course include both individual work (50%) and group work (50%).

- Class participation: **10%** (individual work)
- ONE Reading report: **40%** (individual work)
- Research Proposal: **50%** (Group Work) research proposal (25%) and two presentations (25%) as a group project.

Individual Work Each of you is required to develop a reading report based on **3** assigned papers on a topic.

- You read **THREE** papers chosen from the reading list under the same topic to write a **3**-page reading report (i.e., table, chart and reference excluded).

Here are some guidelines for the reading report:

- **Format:** A4 size, 1-inch margins, 12-point, Times New Roman font, 1.25 spaced
- **Structure:**
 1. summarize the paper, including its research question, contribution, data, methods, and conclusion;
 2. verify how the data/method help address the problem
 3. thinking about the reasons for choosing the methods in the paper (i.e., data limitation, story related reasons) and whether other methods are applicable using same data for the same research question.
- **Nov 3rd 1pm** is the deadline for submitting the reading report

Group Work We will split the class into 8-12 groups, each group consisting of 5 people. Students can choose their group members. Ideally, the groups should have a roughly equal number of students. To allow some flexibility, 6 is the maximum upon approval and any group less than 4 members also needs prior approval). Please go to the link to complete your group information before Sept 29th.

For the group project, your team will collaborate to write a research proposal using what you have learned in class to carry out promising research. Each group will give two presentations to collect feedback and promote their research.

50% of your grade will be determined by a research proposal (25%) and **TWO** presentations (25%) as a group project.

Research Proposal (25%):

- **Format:** up to 20 pages including reference, tables and charts; A4 size, 1-inch margins, 12-point, Times New Roman font, 1.25 spaced.

- **Structure:**

Abstract: (1 page, 100-150 words) summary of key points to inform the non-experts audience of the nature of the research

Research Question: (1 pages) research question, its background and significance (i.e., Why is the research worth doing?)

Previous Research: (1-2 pages) a review of the relevant literature and a discussion of previous studies to reveal contributions of your research

Hypothesis: (1 page) your expected answer to the research question

Data: (1-2 pages) data collection process, variables of interest, summary statistics of available data

Research Design: (2-3 pages) your plan to analyze the data, discuss features (i.e., variations, statistics) in data and possible quantitative methods that would address the research question and verify your hypothesis.

Reference: see [referencing guide](#) for reference format

- **Dec 6th** is the submission date of the final draft of research proposal

Presentation: Your team will give **TWO** presentations in this course. **Each** of the team member needs to present each time. When one group is presenting, the other group will act as discussants, i.e. stopping and asking the presenters questions. Students need to submit the presentation slides through their email to the TA one day before the presentation. I will take a note of each group's performance for grading

Presentation 1 - 10%: 15 min presentation + 3 min discussion (Tentative)

Time: Oct 18 and Oct 20;

Aim: introduce the preliminary research idea, its significance, and relevant literature

Schedule: assign your presentation time using the Canvas Page on/before Oct 11.

Presentation 2 - 15%: 20 min presentation + 5 min discussion (Tentative)

Time: Nov 22 and Nov 24;

Aim: introduce your research question, data, and promising research design

Schedule: assign your presentation time using the Canvas Page on/before Nov 15.

Peer Evaluation Form:

Each group member is required to download the anonymous peer evaluation form from Canvas, fill it and send it to me before Dec 8 (after submission of the research proposal).

20% of your grade from the group works will be determined by the peer evaluations.

80% will be determined by the works' quality.¹

Grading Policy

- **Late submission:** late delivery of due items will NOT be accepted.
- **Re-grade policy:** If you want to ask for regrading, please submit your argument in writing along with your assignment. We will reassess your entire assignment using the copies we saved for regrading. The answer to "grade grubbing" is "no" and your grade may end up lower after reassessment.
- **Grading Guidelines**

E-mail Policy

Please put "SOSC2140" in the subject line of all e-mail correspondence. E-mail should be reserved for questions related to scheduling, appointments or administrative issues. The first contact person is our **TA**. So please send **ALL** of your inquiry to **her** first. We will normally reply the email not later than 48 hours during working days (normally within 24 hours). Moreover, I have found that it is not possible to answer questions about class materials by e-mail; please come to our office hours or schedule an appointment if you have any questions related to course materials. I will not respond to certain emails students sent including emails for missed class for which there was no presentation, emails to request an extension on an assignment for which the syllabus already established the deadline.

Free-rider Policy

- **Guidance to avoid or deal with the free-rider issue.**
- I will not define anybody to be "free rider" directly. If all the other team members agree that they don't want to keep collaborating with one person, please comply with the following rules to split the team:
 1. Each group member needs to send an email to TA to justify their request.
 2. The peer evaluation (10% of total score) will not be split.
 3. The student who leaves the group must find a new proposal & presentation topic.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

HKUST is committed to high standards of **academic honesty**. Cheat and plagiarism are not acceptable. According to guidelines of the university, plagiarism/cheat cases typically resulted in at least the failure of a course. If you have any concern about this, include a proper citation/quotes and use software (i.e., **turnitin**, **iThenticate**) to detect plagiarism.

¹The group works includes two group presentations and one research proposal, which count for 50% of your grade.

Class Schedule (Tentative)

Please check the class schedule for updates as class contents are subject to change, contingent on enrollment size, mitigating circumstances, and the progress we make as a class.

Week	Date	Topic	Notes	Due Date
1	Sept 1	Course Overview	Course Overview	
2	Sept 6 Sept 8	Introduction Propose a research	Research Example Research Questions	
3	Sept 13 Sept 15	Data Data	Types of Data Data Collection	
4	Sept 20 Sept 22	Data Data	Sampling Measurement	
5	Sept 27 Sept 29	Data Data	Ethics Class Activity 1	Form your team
6	Oct 4 Oct 6	Quantitative Analysis Quantitative Analysis	Review of Prob and Stat Review of Regression Framework I	
7	Oct 11 Oct 13	Quantitative Analysis Quantitative Analysis	Review of Regression Framework II Class Activity 2	
8	Oct 18 Oct 20	Presentation 1 Presentation 1	Let us know your ideas Let us know your ideas	
9	Oct 25 Oct 27	Research Design Research Design	Causality Treatment Effects	
10	Nov 1 Nov 3	Research Design Research Design	Randomized-controlled Experiment Class Activity 3	Reading report
11	Nov 8 Nov 10	Research Design Research Design	Longitudinal Studies Cross-sectional Studies	
12	Nov 15 Nov 17	Research Design Research Design	Misc Class Activity 4	
13	Nov 22 Nov 24	Presentation 2 Presentation 2	Your show time Your show time	
14	Nov 29	Summary and Conclusion	Proposal Submission	Dec 6th 5pm

Recommended Textbooks and Reference

Recommended Textbooks

Babbie, E. R. (2013) The practice of social research. 13th ed.

Adler, E. S. & Clark, R. (2008) How it's done : an invitation to social research. 3rd ed.

Angrist, J. D. & Pischke, J.-S. (2015) Mastering 'metrics' : the path from cause to effect. Princeton.

References

- De Vaus, D. A. (2001) Research design in social research. London : SAGE. [DV]
- Dixon, J. C. et al. (2016) The process of social research. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Reading List and Presentation papers (Canvas): A Selection of journal articles for either further reading will be available when time comes, please check the canvas website for the latest updates.

Resouces

Reading

- [Reading Guide](#)
- [A Review of the Literature](#)

Writing

- [Structure of Research Proposal](#)
- [How to Write an Effective Research Proposal](#)
- [Manuscript Template](#)
- [Writing Tips For Economics Research Papers](#)

Research sources

- [Introduction to Data Visualization](#)
- [References on Doing Research](#)

Course sources

- [Grading - Anonymous Peer Evaluation Form](#)