

RESEARCH METHODS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES (SOSC 2140)

Spring Semester, 2023
Rm 4582; Tue & Thu, 13:30-14:50

Instructor: Yifan Shen
(Email: see Canvas)
Office Hours: see Canvas
Office Address: see Canvas

Teaching Assistant: Mr. Stephen Choy
(Email: see Canvas)
Office Hours: see Canvas
Office Address: see Canvas

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Research is the heart of social sciences. It drives other activities in the field and offers a distinct form of knowledge. Social scientific arguments are grounded in rigorous, systematic research, which distinguishes them from other kinds of knowledge—including journalist accounts, political appeals, and media representations. Other academic disciplines share a commitment to collecting empirical material, but our methods for gathering and analyzing data distinguish social sciences from the natural sciences and humanities.

The best way to learn social scientific methods is to use them. First-hand experience will help you master the “tools of the sociological trade.” While the course begins with a discussion of the theory and logic of social scientific research, the second half of the course will require you to engage with social scientific methods. You will carry out your own research project as a group and produce a final research paper. A research project involves several steps, including: developing a social scientific research question, designing research to address the question, collecting and analyzing data, and writing a final research paper. These steps structure the course and are reflected in the assignments. Therefore, in this course you will not only learn skills to assess and evaluate social scientific research, but you will also learn to conduct your own research.

REQUIRED TEXT

None.

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

Any supplementary readings will be announced through Canvas. Please check with TA regarding accessing readings.

POLICY ON CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

It goes without saying, but zero tolerance is in effect. Any evidence of cheating or plagiarism (copying the work of others or having someone else complete one’s assignments) may result in failure of the entire course for any students involved. Scholarly work depends on honesty and integrity and students are expected to uphold academic standards. Refer to <https://registry.hkust.edu.hk/resource-library/academic-integrity> for more information.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

It goes without saying that you must attend class with ALL the readings completed. In addition to your on-going participation, you will be required to complete 4 research assignments and 2 presentations (once in the middle and once at the end of the semester) as a group (3-4 students a group), and to meet with TA (for no more than 25 min) twice during the semester (with your group members) to discuss your group project. We will devote class time to each of these assignments and each group's project will be discussed to improve the final product.

Grading

Class Participation (based on in-class quizzes and presentations in randomly selected weeks) — 25%

Research Assignment 1: Statement of Research Question and Plan for Data Collection (at most two pages) — 5%

Research Assignment 2: Topic Guides (at most one page) — 5%

Research Assignment 3: Interview Transcripts and Codebook — 15%

Research Assignment 4: Reflections and Feedbacks — 15%

Final Presentation — 10%

First meeting with TA — 5% (based on attendance)

Second meeting with TA — 5% (based on attendance)

Final Research Paper — 15%

Class participation, assignment 3 and assignment 4 will be graded on an individual basis (each student receives their own grade). All the other assignments and activities are graded on a group basis (everyone in the same group receive the same grade).

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change; updates will be posted on Canvas)

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Due*</i>
1	Course Overview	Feb 7	
	Introduction: What is Social Research?	Feb 9	
2	Processes and Problems of Social Research I	Feb 14	
	Processes and Problems of Social Research II	Feb 16	
3	Concepts and Measurement I	Feb 21	
	Concepts and Measurement II	Feb 23	
4	Sampling and Causation I	Feb 28	Form a team
	Sampling and Causation II	Mar 2	
5	Survey	Mar 7	
	Ethics in Social Research	Mar 9	
6	Elementary Quantitative Data Analysis I	Mar 14	Assignment 1
	Elementary Quantitative Data Analysis II	Mar 16	
7	Advanced Quantitative Methods	Mar 21	
	Qualitative Methods	Mar 23	Finish 1st meeting with TA
8	Qualitative Methods in Practice I	Mar 28	Assignment 2
	Midterm Presentation I	Mar 30	
9	Midterm Presentation II	Apr 4	
	Midterm break	Apr 6	
9	Midterm break	Apr 11	

	Qualitative Methods in Practice II	Apr 13	
10	Literature Review	Apr 18	Assignment 3
	Literature Review in Practice (Zotero)	Apr 20	Finish 2nd meeting with TA
11	Writing Social Research I	Apr 25	
	Writing Social Research II	Apr 27	Assignment 4
12	Presentation 1-3	May 2	
	Presentation 4-6	May 4	
13	Presentation 7-9 (last class session)	May 9	
		May 18	Submission of final paper

*: All assignments are due by 5pm on the specified dates.