

# SOSC 13300

## Social Sciences Inquiry I

Fall 2016

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### Course Objectives:

Welcome to Social Sciences Inquiry. In this first sequence of the course, you will be introduced to social science research methods, which will guide you to write a research paper in the last sequence of SSI (in Spring quarter) with the methodological training of 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 proposal 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.

## 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 11<sup>th</sup> edition, but if you find other editions (e.g. 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>) at a more reasonable price, you may use it.

[EB] Babbie, Earl. *The Practice of Social Research*. 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, or 12<sup>th</sup> Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

*Selected Journal Articles (See course outline below)*

### *Assignments:*

There will be 3 assignments. Homework assignments explore key ideas and techniques in greater depth. These assignments will help you learn course material, and will have components geared to build toward your final research proposal. The details for each assignment will follow as the course progresses and be posted on the assignment folder in blackboard. These assignments will cover the following topics:

- #1 Certification for NIH training
- #2 Variables/causality
- #3 Probability sampling

Also there will be sporadic reading questions for article reviews, which start from class 13. You will be expected to answer and submit them.

I expect that each of you will turn in assignments on the day that they are due. There will be penalty for late assignments. Assignments over a week late will not be accepted.

### *Midterm:*

There will be a mid-term exam (open-book).

### *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 Proposal:*

You will develop a research proposal during the quarter. 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?" or "what determines stock market indices?" will not be accepted). Submit the title and one paragraph

(about a half page, 2-300 words) of the description by **class 2**. This submission is to judge whether your topic is appropriate for this course, therefore will not be graded. We will discuss each of your topic shortly during the class. Then, you will have to submit a preliminary research proposal by **class 7**. It should include the objective of the research, literature review, variables for study, and measurement (refer to the guideline on the chalk). You will present it to your group and collect comments from your group members. During the second part of the quarter, you are expected to submit a full version of research proposal -- by **class 17**. You will be provided with detailed guidelines of what I (TA, & your colleagues) expect. This time, the full length research proposal will include longer and more detailed literature review, your own causal explanatory model, data and measurement section, and if possible, preliminary findings (extra credits). You will present this full version to the entire class and receive several comments from your instructor, TA, and other colleagues.

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 research proposal no later than March 15<sup>th</sup>, along with one-page response memo.

#### *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, productive comments on how to improve their works. Be prepared to take notes when they present. Be prepared to circulate your proposal and final papers to your class mates (we will use the discussion board on the chalk).

#### **Grading:**

Your grade will be measured as follows: Grading will NOT be on a curve:

<b>Component</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>%</b>
Mid-term	15			A	>= 93	A-	90-92
Research Proposal	40						
Preliminary	10						
The Final Paper 1 <sup>st</sup>	20	B+	87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
The Final Paper Revised	10						
Final Presentation	10	C+	77-79	C	73-76	C-	70-72
Assignments	15	D+	67-69	D	63-66	D-	60-62
				F	< 60		
In-Class Exercises	10						
Comments on Others' Works	10						
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>						

## DAILY ASSIGNMENTS

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### I. Research Design

#### ***Class 1:***

*Topic I: What are the course goals and requirements?*

*Topic II: What do you need to do to be successful in this class?*

*Assignment:* Read “The Silver Thief” by Stephen J. Dubner, The New Yorker, 17 May 2004, pp. 74-85.

*Topic III: What is a social research and how can we develop it?*

#### ***Class 2:***

*Topic I: Research Design and Writing (No Daily Review)*

*Assignment:* “The Art of Writing Proposals” by Przeworski and Salomon

*Topic II: How to Write an Article (No daily review)*

*Assignment:* “Writing for Social Scientist” by Howard S. Becker  
Read Summary at <http://www.brint.com/papers/writing.htm>

### ***Verbal Presentation of your Preliminary Idea***

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#### ***Class 3:***

*Topic I: Ethical Issues in Social Research*

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

*Topic II: Institutional Review Board*

*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 3. Pp. 63-82  
Read Shea, Christopher. 2000. “Don’t talk to the humans.” *Lingua Franca* 10(6) 28-34.

### **Assignment #1 Due Today**

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#### ***Class 4:***

*Topic: Causation in Social Research*

*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 4. Pp. 90-106.

*Assignment:* “Causation, Statistics, and Sociology” By John H. Goldthorpe, *European Sociological Review* 17: 1- 20  
(on our course document folder)

*Assignment:* “The Poverty Clinic” by Paul Tough, *The New Yorker* March 21, 2011

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## II. Measurement

### ***Class 5:***

*Topic I: Measurement: Conceptualization and Operationalization, Levels of Measurement*

*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 5: Pp. 122-132

*Topic II: Measurement: Levels of Measurement / Validity and Reliability*

*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 5: Pp. 134-39, 140-46

*Assignment: 'The Order of Things' by Malcomn Galdwell, The New Yorker, Feb 14 2011.*

Available at:

<http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=57991057&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

### ***Class 6:***

*Topic I: Questionnaire Construction*

*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 9: Pp. 244-56, 273-75

*Topic II: Variable Construction*

*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 6: Pp. 167-174

### **Assignment #2 Due Today**

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### ***Class 7: Student Research Proposal Presentations (within Groups)***

### **Preliminary Research Proposal Due (Prepare Six Hard Copies)**

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## III. Sampling

### ***Class 8:***

*Topic I: Generalization, Target Population, and Sampling Frames*

*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 7: Pp. 187-197, 199-201

*Topic II: Probability Sampling*

*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 7: Pp. 201-214

### ***Class 9:***

*Topic III: Types of Sampling Designs*

### **Assignment #3 Due Today**

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#### IV. Modes of Observation

##### ***Class 10:***

*Topic I: Experimental Design*

*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 8. Pp. 221-230

##### ***Class 11:***

*Topic I: Qualitative Field Research Techniques*

*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 10. Pp. 296-328

Read Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method" *Sociological Theory* 16: pp. 4-33.

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

*Assignment:* Read Lee, Jennifer. 2002. "From Civil Relations to Racial Conflict: Merchant-Customer Interactions in Urban America." *American Sociological Review* 67: 77-98.

*Topic III: Midterm Review*

##### ***Class 12: Midterm Exam***

##### ***Class 13:***

*Topic I: Internal and External Validity*

*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 8. Pp. 230-239

*Topic II: Article Review – Focusing on Field Experiments*

Read Pager, Devah. "The Mark of a Criminal Record" *American Journal of Sociology* 108 (March 2003) pp. 937-75.

##### ***Class 14:***

*Topic I: Article Review – Focusing on Measurement and Third Variables*

Read only Pp. 1369-83 in Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson. 2001. "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation." *American Economic Review* 91: 1369-1401.

*Topic II: Article Review – Focusing on Causal Pathways and Interpretation of Results*

Read Christakis, Nicholas and James H. Fowler. "The Spread of Obesity in a Large Social Network over 32 Years." *The New England Journal of Medicine* 357: 370-379.

***Class 15:***

*Topic I: Article Review – Focusing on Validity and Reliability*

*Assignment:* Read Lareau, Annette. 2002. "Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families." *American Sociological Review* 67: 747-776.

*Topic II: Article Review – Focusing on Internal Validity*

*Assignment:* Read Gerber Alan S. and Christopher W. Larimer. "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102.1: pp.33-48.

***Class 16:***

*Topic I: Content Analysis*

*Assignment:* Read [EB] Chapter 11. Pp. 332-344.

*Topic II: Article Review – Focusing on Causal Mechanism (Intervening Variables)*

*Assignment:* Read Roscigno, Vincent J. and William F. Danaher. 2001. "Media and Mobilization: The Case of Radio and Southern Textile Worker Insurgency, 1929 to 1934." *American Sociological Review* 66: 21-48.

*Topic III: Article Review – Focusing on Causal Mechanism (Alternative Explanations)*

*Assignment:* Read Christopher Muller, "Northward Migration and the Rise of Racial Disparity in American Incarceration, 1880–1950" *American Journal of Sociology* 118 (Sept. 2012): 281-326

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V. Applications

***Class 17 – Class 19 : Student Proposal Presentations***

***The Term Paper -- First Submission Due Today (Class 17)***

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

***The Term Paper -- Revise and Resubmit Due by noon March 15<sup>th</sup>  
(Post it on Discussion Board)***