SOSC 13300: Social Science Inquiry III

DETAILS
Building/room: Classics Building 405
Time: 3-4:20 M/W
Course website: Canvas
Instructor email: cooley@uchicago.edu

INSTRUCTOR
Scott Cooley
Office hours: 2-3:30 on Tuesdays, Pick 506
One-on-one Zoom meetings by appointment. My schedule is typically flexible on Fridays.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The Social Science Inquiry sequence explores classic and contemporary points of view about ways of gathering, analyzing, and interpreting information about public policy issues. The course aims to provide students with an introduction to the philosophy of social science inquiry, a sense of how that inquiry is conducted, and an understanding of how policy implications can be drawn responsibly from empirical evidence. The sequence's objective is to convey the promise and the pitfalls of social science, as well as a sense of its uses and abuses.

At this point in the sequence, students should be familiar with the basics of social science research design (particularly for causal inference), and familiar with how to produce empirical evidence through statistical testing. This final quarter will focus on helping students apply what they've learned in previous quarters to research questions of their own choosing. Each class session highlights a skill that students will need to practice, or decisions students will need to make when developing their own projects. Topically, class sessions touch on a variety of social science fields, often drawing on the substantive expertise of the course's instructor.

COURSE MATERIALS
Readings for this course will be available through Canvas, the University Library, or links in the syllabus. There are no books required for purchase.

RESEARCH PROJECTS
The primary purpose of this quarter is to help students develop their own social science research projects. Every class session will contribute towards some aspect of that project. Students can work on the research projects alone or in teams of two. Given that we have 19 students in the class, one three-person team is also acceptable. A team’s research project must use a statistical analysis (e.g.: those covered in the Winter Quarter) to test a theory about a social phenomenon.

Each team must complete several assignments over the course of the quarter. These are:
- Third week: Propose a research topic (in-class presentation)
- Fifth week: Propose a research design (paper and in-class presentation)
• Ninth week: Perform the proposed analysis and summarize results (paper and in-class presentation)

Specific due dates are in the schedule below.

**OUTLINE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

Students’ overall grades for this class will be out of 100 points, earned as listed below. Due dates are listed in the Course Schedule. More detailed guidelines are available on Canvas.

Participation and attendance (10 points, 10%)
- In-class participation
- Attendance

In-class presentations
- Research Topic (5 points, 5%)
- Research Design (10 points, 10%)
- Final Presentation (10 points 10%)

Papers
- Research Design Proposal (15 points, 15%)
- Descriptive Statistics Report (10 points, 10%)
- Final Paper (30 points, 30%)

Coding and data management exercises R / Stata (10 points, 10%)

**Schedule**

(Class 1, Monday March 28) Introduction

Read for today:

(Class 2, Wednesday March 30) Motivating studies with reverse causal questions

Read for today:

(Class 3, Monday April 4) The merits of puzzlement as a motivating device

Read for today:
• [Skim] Gustafsson and Hagström (2018). What is the point? teaching graduate students how to construct political science research puzzles. *European Political Science.*
  o More context on puzzlement to fill in the gaps in Pepinsky’s blog post
• Glass (2010). A critique of the hypothesis, and a defense of the question, as a framework for experimentation. *Clinical Chemistry."

(Class 4, Wednesday April 6) Developing useful social theories
Read for today:

(Class 5, Monday April 11) Research topic presentations

(Class 6, Wednesday April 13) Imagining an ideal experiment
Read for today:

(Class 7, Monday April 18) Approximating an ideal experiment with observational data; developing and using social measures defensibly
Read for today:

(Class 8, Wednesday April 20) Research design presentations, 1
Read for today:

(Class 9, Monday April 25) Research design presentations, 2

(What should be Class 10, Wednesday April 27) No class due to instructor conflict

Sunday May 1 11:59PM, Research Design Proposal due

(Class 11, Monday May 2) The benefits of thinking graphically
Read for today:

(Class 12, Thursday May 4) Providing evidence on the causal mechanisms
Read for today:

(Class 13, Monday May 9) Evidence of absence, or absence of evidence? Interpreting insignificance.
Read for today:

(Class 14, Wednesday May 11) Presenting empirical evidence
Read for today:

Sunday May 15th 11:59PM, Descriptive Statistics Report due

(Class 15, Monday May 16) Going from evidence to conclusions
Read for today:

(Class 16, Wednesday May 18) Wrapping up the sequence and in-class troubleshooting
No readings

(Class 17, Monday May 23) Final presentations, 1

(Class 18, Wednesday May 25) Final presentations, 2

Tuesday May 31st 11:59PM, Final Paper due