

SOSC 13100: Social Science Inquiry I

DETAILS

Fall 2021, Walker Museum 302

TuTh 12:30PM – 1:50PM (section 4) / 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM (section 6)

Course website on Canvas

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. William Schultz

wschultz@uchicago.edu

Office hours: Wednesday (1-3PM), contact me for other appointments

Office: Remote (Zoom links in Canvas announcements)

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 the student 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 evidence provided by empirical social science. The sequence's objective is to convey both the promise and the pitfalls of social science and a sense of its uses and abuses.

The Fall Quarter in this sequence focuses on the basics of social science, and the basics of quantitative research design in the social sciences. The Winter Quarter will introduce you to various statistical topics that are foundational to engaging with quantitative social science in an informed way. You'll also learn some basics of statistical computing. Finally, the Spring Quarter is more of a workshop, where you will be guided through completing your own research project.

COURSE MATERIALS

Readings for this class are available on Canvas. It's important that you do them. I do my best to limit the amount of reading I assign without threatening your education. That's my end of the bargain. Your end of the bargain is keeping up with the readings I do assign. Sometimes the readings will cover the same material covered in class to reinforce it, other times they will cover different material to help you think about that day's topic in a broader way.

OTHER COURSE DETAILS

I'll post presentation slides for each class day on Canvas (after class). Some class sessions this quarter will be more discussion oriented, while others will lean more towards lecture. I'll happily answer questions over email, but I encourage students to ask questions in class or post questions on the Canvas discussion board (to the extent that you feel comfortable). Often, if something is confusing you, it is confusing to others as well. It's helpful for me to know what material students are struggling with.

EARNING YOUR GRADE

Your overall grade will be out of 300 points.

Participation: 75 points = 25%

- (Attendance) To participate, you must attend class. Therefore, attendance factors into your grade. You can skip one class session no questions asked. Missed days due to documented illness (or other excused absences) will not use up your free day.
- (In-class participation) Your participation grade will also depend on your in-class participation. This *is not* just a record of how often you talk. I holistically consider other information as well, such as: demonstration that you have done the readings; synthesizing course material from different days; demonstration that you are thinking critically about the material; and the frequency of opportunities for substantial participation in different class sessions.
- (Optional short assignments) I will occasionally assign *optional* participation assignments. Generally, these will be discussion board posts on Canvas, but they could be other things. These will provide *some* opportunity to earn participation points in a different setting. However, note that they will not be enough to make up for never participating in person.

Four writing assignments: 225 points = 75%

- Due dates are also in the course schedule below: Sunday October 10th; Saturday October 30th; Sunday November 14th; and Thursday December 9th.
- Papers 1-3 are worth 50 points, and Paper 4 is worth 75 points. Rubrics on Canvas will explain the assignment options in more detail. All the papers will ask you to write on topics that require you to, in different ways, demonstrate your facility with the course material. The rubric for the first paper will be on Canvas at the beginning of the class.

MISSED/LATE ASSIGNMENTS

I accept missed assignments without penalty for documented medical reasons, family crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. I also give deference to parents with dependent children who are sick. Otherwise, late assignments drop 10% of their full worth for each day they are late, but you can still submit them to me through email.

EMAIL POLICY

Please include your first and last name and course information in the subject line of your email. When I receive your email, I will make effort to respond in a timely manner, usually within 48 hours. You may receive a reply sooner than that, but you should not expect an immediate response. Please treat all email correspondences with your instructor as you would treat any other professional exchange. I expect emails to be respectful and polite, to use correct grammar and complete sentences.

Schedule

I. Designing Social Research

Sep 28 Introduction; how do we study random social events as scientists?

- Mlodinow, Leonard. *The Drunkard's Walk (2009)*, Ch 1 ("Peering through the eyepiece of randomness"). New York: Vintage Books.

Sep 30 Thinking about social concepts and asking good empirical questions

- Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin (2000). "Ordinary Language and External Validity: Specifying Concepts in the Study of Ethnicity." Paper presented at the 2000 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC.
- Friedman, Milton. (1953). "The Methodology of Positive Economics," *Essays in Positive Economics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Oct 5 Measurement and description

- Kellstedt, Paul and Guy Whitten. *Fundamentals of Social Science Research*, 3d edition. DATE. selection, Ch5. LOCATION: PRESS.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. (2011). "The Order of Things," *The New Yorker*, Feb 14, 2011, 1-13. (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/02/14/the-order-of-things>)

Oct 7 Relationships and causes

- Banzhaf, H. Spencer, Lala Ma, and Christopher Timmins. (2019), "Environmental Justice: Establishing Causal Relationships," *Annual Review of Resource Economics*, 11:377-98.

Paper 1 due on Canvas: Sunday Oct 10th at 11:59PM

Oct 12 Ethics in research and replication

- Hubert, Laurence and Charles Wainer (2013), *A Statistical Guide for the Ethically Perplexed*, "Ethics of data collection ", Ch 16, 421-448. Boca Raton: CRC Press. (Available as an ebook through library website)
- Pridemore, William, Alex, Matthew C. Makel, and Jonathan A. Plucker. (2017). "Replication in Criminology and the Social Science," *Annual Review of Criminology*, 1:19-38.
- Freese, Jeremy and David Peterson (2017). "Replication in Social Science," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 47: 147-65. (Fig 2 is a useful visual aid)

II. Experiments for Social Science

Oct 14 Internal and external validity

- McDermott, Rose. (2002), "Experimental Methods in Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 5:31-61.
- Sears, David O. (1986). "College Sophomores in the Laboratory: Influences of a Narrow Data Base on Social Psychology's View of Human Nature," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 31(3): 515-530.

Oct 19 Why is randomness so special?

- Mlodinow, Leonard. (2009). *The Drunkard's Walk (2009)*, Ch 7. New York: Vintage Books.

Oct 21 Lab experiments: politics and psychology

- Iyengar, Shanto, Mark E. Peters, and Donald Kinder. (1982). "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs," *American Political Science Review*, 76(4): 848-58.
- Darley, John M. and Bibb Latané (1968). "Bystander Intervention In Emergencies," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8(4): 377-83.

Oct 26 Lab experiments: economics

- Miller, Gary J. and Andrew B. Whitford (2002). "Trust and Incentives in Principal-Agent Negotiations," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 14(2): 211-67.

Oct 28 Survey experiments

- Sanders, Michael, Emma Stockdale, Susannah Hume, and Peter John. (2021). "Loss aversion fails to replicate in the coronavirus pandemic: Evidence from an online experiment," *Economics Letters*, 199:109433.
 - (skim) Hameleers, Michael. (2021). "Prospect Theory in Times of a Pandemic: The Effects of Gain versus Loss on Risky Choices and Emotional Responses during the 2020 Coronavirus Outbreak – Evidence from the US and the Netherlands," *Mass Communication and Society*, 24(4): 479-99.
- Pepinsky, Thomas B., R. William Liddle, and Saiful Mujani. (2012). "Testing Islam's Political Advantage: Evidence from Indonesia," *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(3): 584-600.

Paper 2 due on Canvas: Saturday Oct 30th at 11:59PM

Nov 2 Field experiments

- Pager, Devah. (2003). "The Mark of a Criminal Record," *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(5): 937-75.
- Bertrand, Marianne and Sendhil Mullainathan. (2004). "Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination," *American Economic Review*, 94(4):991-1013.
- Butler, Daniel M. and David E. Broockman. (2011). "Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators," *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(3): 463-77.

III. Observational studies

Nov 4 Correlational studies – cross sections

- Kahan, Dan M. Ellen Peters, Maggie Wittlin, Paul Slovic, Lisa Larrimore Oullette, Donald Braman, and Gregory Mandel. (2012). "The polarizing impact of science literacy and numeracy on perceived climate change risks," *Nature Climate Change*, 2:732-35.
- Ba, Bocar, Dean Knox, Jonathan Mummolo, and Roman Rivera. (2021). "The role of officer race and gender in police-civilian interactions in Chicago," *Science*, 371:696-702.

Nov 9 Computer-assisted learning and computational social science

- King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. (2013). "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression," *American Political Science Review*, 107(2): 326-43.

Nov 11 Time-series

- Campbell, Donald T. and H. Laurence Ross. (1968). "The Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding: Time-Series Data in Quasi-Experimental Analysis," *Law & Society Review*, Aug 1968 (3): 33-54.
- Easterlin, Richard A. (1995). "Will raising the incomes of all increase the happiness of all?" *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 27(1995): 35-47.

Paper 3 due on Canvas: Sunday Nov 14th at 11:59PM

Nov 16 Establishing Control

- Levitt, Steven D. (2004), "Understanding Why Crime Fell in the 1990s: Four Factors that Explain the Decline and Six That Do Not," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 18(1): 163-90.

Nov 18 Creating 'as if' random conditions

- Glassberg Sands, Emily. (2016). "5 Tricks when AB Testing is Off the Table," *Teconomics – Medium*. (<https://medium.com/teconomics-blog/5-tricks-when-ab-testing-is-off-the-table-f2637e9f15a5/>)

Nov 30 "Difference-in-Differences"

- Card, David and Alan B. Krueger. (2004). "Minimum Wages and Employment: A Case Study of the Fast-Food Industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania," *American Economic Review*, 84(4): 772-93.

Dec 2 Regression Discontinuity

- Nekoei, Arash and Andrea Weber. (2017). "Does Extending Unemployment Benefits Improve Job-Quality? *American Economic Review*, 107(2): 527-61.
- Eggers, Andrew C. and Jens Hainmueller. (2009). "MPs for Sale? Returns to Office in Postwar British Politics," *American Political Science Review*, 103(4): 513-33.

Paper 4 due on Canvas: Dec 9th at 11:59PM (Thursday of finals week)