

SOSC 13300/8: Social Science Inquiry III (Spring 2023)

Meeting Time: Mon & Wed 3:00-4:20 PM

Location: Cobb Hall 403

Instructor: Dr. Shu Fu, fushu@uchicago.edu

Office: Pick Hall 503

Office hours: Fri 3:30-5:00 PM or by appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

The primary purpose of this quarter is to help students develop their own social science research projects. Every class session will contribute toward some aspect of that project. Students can work on the research projects alone or in teams of two. 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:

- Week 3: Propose a research topic (in-class presentation)
- Week 5: Propose a research design (paper and in-class presentation)
- Week 9: Perform the analysis and summarize results (paper and in-class presentation)

Specific due dates are in the schedule below.

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.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

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.

1. Participation and Attendance: 10%

Students are expected to come to every class and to participate in class activities. You should read the assigned reading(s) for a particular class day prior to coming to class. If you ever need to miss a class for a medical, family, religious, or personal reason, just email me beforehand and text your coauthor.

- In-class participation
- Attendance

2. In-Class Presentations: 30%

Research teams are expected to make three presentations over the course. The requirements and rubrics will be available on Canvas.

- Research topic: 3-minute presentation (5%)
- Research design: 8-minute presentation (10%)
- Final Presentation: 15-minute presentation (15%)

3. Research Project: 60%

Research teams are expected to submit three assignments, which accumulate your efforts toward the final project. The requirements and rubrics will be available on Canvas. Each student must submit his/her assignment on Canvas individually, and team members should coordinate and submit the same document.

- Research design proposal (15%)
- Descriptive statistics report (15%)
- Final paper (30%)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 Monday (3/20) Introduction

Week 1 Wednesday (3/22) Social Science Research Paper

- Bellemare (2022). Doing Economics: What You Should Have Learned in Grad School—But Didn't. Chapter 2. Available free on his [website](#).
- Shu Fu and William G. Howell (2020). "The Behavioral Consequences of Public Appeals: Evidence on Campaign Fundraising from the 2018 Congressional Elections." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 50 (2): 325–347.

Week 2 Monday (3/27) Motivating Studies with Reverse Causal Questions

- Gelman and Imbens (2013). Why ask why? Forward Causal Inference and Reverse Causal Questions. NBER Working Paper.
- Rosenfeld et al. (2014). New York's Crime Drop Puzzle: Introduction to the Special Issue. *Justice Quarterly*.
- Rosenfeld and Fornango (2014). The Impact of Police Stops on Precinct Robbery and Burglary Rates in New York City, 2003-2010. *Justice Quarterly*.

Week 2 Wednesday (3/29) The Merits of Puzzlement as a Motivating Device

- Tom Pepinsky (2019). On Puzzles and Political Science. Blog post available [here](#).
- [Skim] Gustafsson and Hagström (2018). What is the point? teaching graduate students how to construct political science research puzzles. *European Political Science*.
 - 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*.

Week 3 Monday (4/3) **Research Topic Presentations**

Week 3 Wednesday (4/5) Imagining an Ideal Experiment

- Green and Spry (2014). Hate Crime Research: Design and Measurement Strategies for Improving Causal Inference. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*. Pages: 228-234; 236-238.
- Keizer et al. (2008). The Spreading of Disorder. *Science*.

Week 4 Monday (4/10) Approximating an Ideal Experiment with Observational Data

- Andersen et al. (2011). A Step-by-Step Guide to Using Secondary Data for Psychological Research. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*.

Week 4 Wednesday (4/11) Developing and Using Social Measures Defensibly

- Jacob and Rothstein (2016). The Measurement of Student Ability in Modern Assessment Systems. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*.

Week 5 Monday (4/17) Research Design Presentations I

Week 5 Wednesday (4/19) Research Design Presentations II

Sunday 4/23 11:59 PM, Research Design Proposal Due

Week 6 Monday (4/24) The Benefits of Thinking Graphically

- Cunningham (2021). Chapter 3: Directed Acyclic Graphs. In *Causal Inference: The Mixtape*. [Available free online](#).

Week 6 Wednesday (4/26) Providing Evidence on the Causal Mechanisms

- Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan, and Anthony Fowler. (2021). *Thinking Clearly with Data: A guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 14: Assessing Mechanisms.

Week 7 Monday (5/1) Evidence of Absence, or Absence of Evidence? Making sense of insignificant results

- Bernardi et al. (2017). ‘Sing Me a Song with Social Significance’: The (Mis)Use of Statistical Significance Testing in European Sociological Research. *European Sociological Review*.
- Shu Fu and William G. Howell. Forthcoming. “The Filibuster and Legislative Discussion.” *The Journal of Politics*.

Week 7 Wednesday (5/3) Presenting Empirical Evidence

- Healy (2019). *Data Visualization: A Practical Introduction*. Chapter 1: Look at Data

Sunday 5/7 11:59 PM, Descriptive Statistics Report Due

Week 8 Monday (5/8) Going from Evidence to Conclusion & Wrapping up the Sequence!

- Burgess and Briggs. (2010). School assignment, school choice and social mobility. *Economics of Education Review*.

Week 8 Wednesday (5/10) Final Presentations I

Week 9 Monday (5/15) Final Presentations II

Week 9 Wednesday (5/17) Final Presentations III

Tuesday 5/23 11:59 PM, Final Paper Due