

Social Science Methodology

School of International and Public Affairs
Shanghai Jiao Tong University
Spring 2023

Class Time: Wednesday (Week1-16)

Class 6	12:55-13:40
Class 7	14:00-14:45
Class 8	14:55-15:40

Instructors: Yuan Tian (yuantian@sjtu.edu.cn)

Course Inquiry: Subject[PUM6004-Inquiry]

Course Description

This is an introductory class on social science research. The primary goal of this course is to help students familiarize with social science discipline and some basic social research methods (including both qualitative and quantitative methods). A number of issues central to social science research will be discussed in the class, such as key terms, logics, data collection, design, analysis, and write-up.

The course is divided into six sections. The first section is a fundamental instruction. The second section is the key concepts and two logics of empirical research/ The third section is the data collection instrument introduction. The fourth section is the research design. The fifth section is the data collection. The last section is the research communication and write-up.

Course Materials

There is no textbook for this course. Most of the required readings are available electronically at Canvas.

A note on the required readings: Each reading has been chosen because it includes information, concepts, arguments, etc., that comprise the foundation of sociological research methods. However, some readings include technical information or mathematical equations that may not be accessible to you at this stage of your training. The goal in assigning these readings is to expose you to the conceptual argument that the author makes (and there always is one) and to the reading as a potential future resource in your own research, when the technical aspects will become relevant. This course has chosen accessible readings, so if you keep an open mind as you read, you may be surprised how much

of the more technical aspects of the reading you can understand. In addition, in most sections recommended readings are provided. These are readings that may be beyond the scope of this class or that we do not have time to cover, but are important if you pursue the topic further in the future.

I highly recommend that everyone have at least one basic method textbook for future reference purposes. If you do not have one from an undergraduate class, you might want to purchase one from the list below (there are many others).

The required textbook (can be downloaded from library genesis):
Trochim, W. M., Donnelly, J. P. & Arora, K. (2016). *Research methods: The essential knowledge base*. Second Edition. Cengage Learning. Boston, MA.

There are many excellent methods resources for those who are looking for additional sources. The books listed below are highly recommended as handbooks that cover a variety of methodological topics in further depth.

- Babbie, E. R. (2015). *The practice of social research*. Nelson Education. (any edition will do)
- Booth, W. C., Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., Colomb, G. G., Williams, J. M., & Williams, J. M. (2003). *The craft of research*. University of Chicago press.
- Burton, D. (Ed.). (2000). *Research training for social scientists: a handbook for postgraduate researchers*. Sage.
- Della Porta, D., & Keating, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Approaches and methodologies in the social sciences: A pluralist perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (1994). *Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton university press.
- Wheelan, C. (2013). *Naked statistics: Stripping the dread from the data*. WW Norton & Company.

There are also many resources available for writing. Clear professional writing is one of the most important aspects of producing high quality research. A good resource for effective writing and the unique requirements of writing for social science research is:

- Pyszczak, F. (2016). *Writing empirical research reports: A basic guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences*. Routledge.

The recommended Stata text for data analysis is:

- Baum, C. F., & Christopher, F. (2006). *An introduction to modern econometrics using Stata*. Stata press.

Assessment Breakdown

Class participation 30%

Quiz 30%

In-class proposal presentation and report 40% (the last class)

Class Participation

Class periods will be organized around a mix of lecture and student-led discussion. Weekly readings are purposefully kept lighter than many graduate courses because it is critical that everyone read all the assigned readings each week and extended readings come to class ready to actively participate in the discussion—to ask questions, debate the literature, challenge what class members (including the instructors) have said, and relate the material to your own projects. Students will sign up to lead one or two class sessions (depending on class size and determined on the first day of class) during the semester. This involves selecting and preparing an academic literature as an example to help other students better understand and criticize part of the paper by using what we have learned in the previous week. It is important to understand that the purpose of the literature discussion is not to provide a summary of the readings to the class, but instead to engage the class in a critical analysis that synthesizes, compares, critiques, and draws conclusions about what we know of the topic based on the readings.

Quiz

Along the semester, it will be several quizzes posted on canvas for students to complete. The notification of quizzes will be sent through canvas to your university email.

In-class proposal presentation

The research proposal will be completed over the course of the semester. On the last day of class, you will present your proposal to the class and defend it.

15 mins presentation. 10 min for Q & A.

1. Background. social issues.
2. Potential research question? Significance, contribution
3. Method, how to collect data, how to answer your research question
4. Predicted results

Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1: Foundations

Textbook Chapter 1

Week2: Research ethics

Textbook Chapter 2

Week 3: Sampling

Textbook Chapter 4

Week 4: The theory of measurement

Textbook Chapter 5

Week 5: Scales, tests and indexes

Textbook Chapter 6

Week 6: Survey research

Textbook Chapter 7

Week 7-8: Qualitative approaches to research

Textbook Chapter 3

Week 9 Research design in positivism tradition

Textbook Chapter 8

Week 10: Experimental design

Textbook Chapter 9-10

Week 11: Case study

Assigned papers

Week 12: Research design in interpretivism tradition

Assigned papers

Week 13: Introduction to data analysis

Textbook Chapter 11

Week 14: Inferential analysis, research synthesis, meta-analysis, and evidence-based practice

Textbook Chapter 13

Textbook Chapter 16

Week 15: Write-up / Evaluation / Peer review

Assigned readings

Week 16: Student presentations