

Lingnan University 2010 Spring
SSC 107 Research Methods in Social Sciences

Instructor Dr Lucia Siu
Department of Sociology & Social Policy

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Office hours: Mon 10:30-11:30am; 2:30pm-3:30pm
 Tue 11:30am-12:30pm; Fri 11:30am-12:30pm

Course Description

This is an introductory course on social science research methods. Students will be familiarized with a spectrum of generic research skills; they will also work in teams to propose and implement a small research project. By emphasizing action and practice, each tutorial will provide hands-on exercise on one focused area of research skills.

Aims

The course will prepare students to become literate and critical users of social science research findings. It may also serve as the foundation of a senior thesis or a career with some research components. As an overview of the process and skill-set of social science research, the course covers the logic of scientific inquiry, research ethics, research design, sampling strategies, data collection, data analysis, and report writing. Different theoretical and methodological camps (e.g. quantitative and qualitative) will be introduced and compared.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this course, students are expected to be able to:

1. Understand the principles of scientific research.
2. Beware of issues that may constrain or limit the quality of research; evaluate the reliability and validity of research information that appears in the media and elsewhere.
3. See how different research methods can be applied to address key social science questions.
4. Conceptualize a research problem, develop complementary research designs, and implement corresponding strategies to deliver the research design(s).
5. Demonstrate skills in data collection and data analysis.
6. Develop the ability to lead and participate in group discussions, work with others as a team, give presentations, complete written reports that require comprehension and analysis, and articulate coherent arguments.
7. Cultivate an attitude of evidence-based enquiry of knowledge.
8. Foster an ethical and responsible attitude when dealing with human field subjects.

Assessment

Participation and attendance	10%
Short assignments	20%
Group project	30%
Presentation 1	(10%)
Presentation 2	(10%)
Written report	(10%)
Final Examination	40%

Course policy**Warning against plagiarism**

With regard to your coursework in particular, you are reminded: You must note the sources of quotations, data and general information in essays and other submitted works. These sources/references should appear in alphabetical order in your list of references/bibliography. According to Lingnan University and Social Sciences Faculty policy, plagiarism is "presentation of another person's work without proper acknowledgment of the source". Plagiarism (unattributed copying) will be heavily penalised and may attract a zero mark and disciplinary action.

Missed Exam / Presentation

Supplementary assessment will only be arranged for students with medical or other compelling reasons under exceptional circumstances. To be eligible for consideration, you must provide a formal letter and supporting evidence to your instructor within 24 hours of the missed exam or presentation. Otherwise a missed assessment item equals to zero mark.

Submission of Coursework and Late Penalty

Students may be required to submit both electronic and printed copies of their written reports for coursework assessment purpose. Late submissions within 5 working days after the due date: Deduct one subgrade, e.g. "B" to "B-". Late submissions beyond 5 working days of the due date: "F" grade for that particular coursework component.

Teaching Method

To emphasize action and practice, each tutorial will provide hands-on exercise on one focused area of research skills, e.g. evaluating validity and reliability, using database portals to compile a reference list, sampling, interview, and SPSS lab. Students are expected to take an active role in these classroom activities, and sometimes to submit short written assignments on class / after class. To link up conceptual knowledge with existing research practice, the instructor will provide samples of research work on lectures to illustrate different modes of research. Students will go through the whole

research process (proposal, data collection, data analysis, and reporting) in a collaborated group project throughout the course. Consultation sessions are provided before the final presentation (reporting stage).

Class time and venue

Two-hour lecture		Fri 9:30 - 11.20 (SO 201)			
One-hour tutorial		Mon 11.30 – 13.20 (SO111) Tue 10.30 – 11.20 (SO103) Wed 12.30 – 13.20 (SO113)			
Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Fri	
1	---	---	---	L1	15 Jan
2	T1 18 Jan	T1 19 Jan	T1 20 Jan	L2	22 Jan
3	T2 25 Jan	T2 26 Jan	T2 27 Jan	L3	29 Jan
4	T3 1 Feb	T3 2 Feb	T3 3 Feb	L4	5 Feb
5	T4 8 Feb	T4 9 Feb	T4 10 Feb	L5	12 Feb
6	Chinese New Year Holidays				
7	T5 22 Feb Present 1	T5 23 Feb Present 1	T5 24 Feb Present 1	L6	26 Feb
8	T6 1 Mar	T6 2 Mar	T6 3 Mar	L7	5 Mar
9	T7 8 Mar	T7 9 Mar	T7 10 Mar	L8	12 Mar
10	T8 15 Mar	T8 16 Mar	T8 17 Mar	L9	19 Mar
11	T9 22 Mar	T9 23 Mar	T9 24 Mar	L10	26 Mar
12	T10 29 Mar	T10 30 Mar	T10 31 Mar	Good Friday	
13	Easter / Ching Ming				Consultation 9 Apr
14	T11 12 Apr Present 2	T11 13 Apr Present 2	T11 14 Apr Present 2	Consultation 16 Apr	
15	T12 19 Apr Present 2	T12 20 Apr Present 2	T12 21 Apr Present 2	L11	23 Apr

Course Outline

Week	Indicative Content	Assignment /Activity
L1	Housekeeping - Course Introduction and course administration What is Research - How to think critically? - Inductive and deductive reasoning - Stages of the research process Research Ethics (1)	Research in the news Samples of bad research

Essential readings (textbook)

Babbie, Earl (2011) *The Practice of Social Research*. international ed, Belmont, California: Wadsworth.

Recommended readings

香港中文大學社會學系〔2002〕，《社會研究一本通》，香港：中文大學出版社。

Blaikie, Norman (2000) *Designing Social Research*, Cambridge: Polity.

Cole, Stephen (1992) *Making Science: between Nature and Society*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Neuman, W. Lawrence (1997) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 4th ed, Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Punch, Keith (2005) *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, 2nd ed, London: Sage.

Supplementary readings

Burgess, Robert G (1984) *In the Field: an Introduction to Field Research*, London: Routledge

Crotty, Michael (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the research process*, London: Sage.

Denzin, Norman (1978) *The Research Act- a Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*, London: McGraw-Hill.

Fielding, Nigel (1993) *Researching Social Life*, London: Sage.

Fielding, Jane and Nigel Gilbert (2000) *Understanding Social Statistics*, London: Sage.

Hammersley, Martyn (2000) *Taking Sides in Social Research – Essays on partisanship and bias*, London: Routledge

Kent, Williamson, Goodenough & Ashcroft (2002) 'Social Science Gets the Ethics Treatment: Research governance and ethical review', *Sociological Research Online*, vol.7, no.4, <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/7/4/williamson.html>>

Robson, Colin (1993) *Real World Research: a Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers*, Oxford: Blackwell

Ruspini E (2002) 'Longitudinal research in the social sciences', *Social Research Update* 28, <<http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU28.html>>

Silverman, David (1993) *Interpreting Qualitative Research: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*, London: Sage.

The Social Research Update website at <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/>

[Contains a rich list of practical issues, such as telephone interviewing, visual research methods, focus groups, pilot studies, translation issues etc.]

Whyte, W. F. (1955) *Street Corner Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.