

Lingnan University
Bachelor of Social Sciences Program

SSC 116
Introduction to Research Methodology in the Social Sciences
Spring 2010

1. Instructors' Correspondences

Instructor	Mr. Lawrence HO	Dr. Lucia SIU	Dr. Lin ZOU
	<i>Department of Political Science</i>	<i>Department of Sociology & Social Policy</i>	<i>Department of Economics</i>
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Mathematics Tutor

Mr. Ma Yiu Chung (*Department of Economics*)

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

2. Course Description and Objectives

This course introduces the process, structure, and tools of research in social sciences. It deals with the general logic of scientific inquiry, research design, sampling, measurement and the various modes of research. It also teaches students how to use the fundamental tools of data analysis including basic quantitative and statistical techniques.

This course does not aim at training expert social scientists, but at familiarizing students with 1) the theoretical principles which scientific research is based on, 2) established techniques that can be applied in research. The 14-week lectures are organized into three major parts: Research Methods, Statistics and Mathematics. Research Methods part touches on the key concepts of research methodologies. Statistics part offers an introduction to statistics that helps students to describe, interpret and design social science research. The focus of Mathematics part is on basic algebra, calculus and more importantly on their applications to real life problems.

3. Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course, successful students are expected to

- 1) Understand the basic logic, concepts and theoretical principles of social science research.
- 2) Conceptualize a research problem and develop appropriate methods and measures to study the problem.
- 3) Use basic statistics to describe and interpret issues in economic, political and social life.
- 4) Demonstrate basic skills of algebra and differentiation relevant to economics and the social sciences.

4. Assessment

Assessment of student performance is based on the following **FOUR criteria**:

- 1) Class attendance and participation **(10%)**
- 2) Mini research project
 - Group presentation **(10%)** in Week 13-14;
 - Group report **(15%)** due on April 23 by 5:00 p.m. (General Office SO 321)
- 3) Seven Assignments **(25%)**
- 4) Final exam **(40%)**.

University policy to tackle 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 submitted works. These sources/references should appear in alphabetical order in your list of references/bibliography.

According to Lingnan University and Social Sciences Program policy, plagiarism is "presentation of another person's work without proper acknowledgment of the source". Plagiarism (unattributed copying) will be heavily penalized and may attract a zero mark and disciplinary action.

Academic Integrity

Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations.

Missed Exam

A student who missed an exam may be allowed to take a makeup. To be eligible for consideration, the student must provide a written official letter and relevant evidence to your instructor(s) within 24 hours of the missed exam. Otherwise a missed exam equals zero point.

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 the course work component*

5. Reading List

Ng, P. (2003) *Effective Writing: A Guide for Social Science Students*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press.

Punch, K. (2005). *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* (2nd edition). London: Sage Publications Limited.

Healey J. (2009). *Statistics: A tool for Social Research* (8th edition). Belmont: Wadsworth Cengage.

Haeussler, E. & Richard, P. (2007). *Introductory Mathematical Analysis for Business, Economics and the Life and Social Sciences*, 12th edition. Pearson Prentice Hall.

6. Class time, venue & schedule

2 Lessons/ week	Class A	Class B	Class C
Lesson 1	Tuesday 13:30 – 15:30 <i>SO 104</i>	Monday 15:30 – 16:30 <i>SO 102</i>	Monday 13:30 – 14:30 <i>SO 110</i>
Lesson 2	Wednesday 11:30 – 12:30 <i>SO 102</i>	Wednesday 14:30 – 16:30 <i>SO 106</i>	Wednesday 9:00 – 11:00 <i>BU 220</i>
Week	Class A	Class B	Class C
1	12 & 13 Jan	11 & 13 Jan	11 & 13 Jan
2	19 & 20 Jan	18 & 20 Jan	18 & 20 Jan
3	26 & 27 Jan	25 & 27 Jan	25 & 27 Jan
4	2 & 3 Feb	1 & 3 Feb	1 & 3 Feb
5	9 & 10 Feb	8 & 10 Feb	8 & 10 Feb
6	Chinese New Year Holidays		
7	23 & 24 Feb	22 & 24 Feb	22 & 24 Feb
8	2 & 3 Mar	1 & 3 Mar	1 & 3 Mar
9	9 & 10 Mar	8 & 10 Mar	8 & 10 Mar
10	16 & 17 Mar	15 & 17 Mar	15 & 17 Mar
11	23 & 24 Mar	22 & 24 Mar	22 & 24 Mar
12	30 & 31 Mar	29 & 31 Mar	29 & 31 Mar
13	Easter & 7 Apr	Easter & 7 Apr	Easter & 7 Apr
14	13 & 14 Apr	12 & 14 Apr	12 & 14 Apr
15	20 & 21 Apr	19 & 21 Apr	19 & 21 Apr
Exam week	Final Exam		

7. Course Outline

Week	Indicative Contents	Assignment /Activity
Lawrence, Lucia and Lin	Housekeeping - Course Introduction and course administration	
1 & 2 Lawrence	What is Research? - Inductive and deductive reasoning - How to think critically? - Stages of the research process - Research ethics Identifying the Research Problem & Literature Review - Selection of research topic and setting research questions - What is a literature review?	Film review (5%) Paper review (5%)
3 Lucia	Choice of Research Method - Quantitative and qualitative research methods - Their relative strengths and weaknesses Sampling and Probability - Sampling methods (probability and non-probability sampling) - Issues with the sample size - Probability and the normal curve	Sampling game
4 Lucia	Quantitative Research Methods: Surveys - Questionnaire design - Why numbers matter? On variables and indicators - Levels of measurement	
5 Lawrence	Qualitative Research Methods - Observation, case study, interview & focus group - Grounded theory - Analyzing qualitative data	Mini interview (5%)
6	Chinese New Year	
7 & 8 Lucia	Introduction to a Statistical Software (SPSS lab session) - Structure of a dataset - Designing your dataset - Data entry Descriptive Statistics - Description of grouped data - Central tendency: mean, median, mode - Dispersion: standard deviation and Z score - Compiling SPSS output: tables and graphs - Relationship between 2 variables: direction and strength	Statistics exercise 1 (2.5%) Statistics exercise 2 (2.5%)
9 Lin	Review of Basic Algebra - Real numbers - Operations - Factoring - Absolute value - Summation notation	

<p>10 & 11 Lin</p>	<p>Linear Functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Functions and Graphs - Lines - Systems of linear equations - Applications and Linear Functions <p>Nonlinear Functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quadratic functions - Exponential functions - Logarithmic functions 	<p>Math exercise 1 (2.5%)</p>
<p>12 Lawrence</p>	<p>Report writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structure of a report - Interpreting data - Good and bad practices - Referencing 	
<p>13 - 14 Lawrence, Lucia and Lin</p>	<p>Student Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research question, research design, findings - Q/A, feedback 	<p>Presentation (10%) Report (15%)</p>
<p>14 – 15 Lin</p>	<p>Basic Calculus: Differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The meaning of derivative as slope of a function - The derivative - Rules of differentiation - Applications of differentiations 	<p>Math exercise 2 (2.5%)</p>
<p>Exam Week</p>	<p>Final Exam</p>	<p>40%</p>