

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Department of Sociology

SOCI 2003 Social Research Methods

First Term 2024-25

Instructor: Dr. LI Hang 李鏗
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Time: 8:30am – 10:15am Thursday
Venue: YIA505
Course website:
<https://blackboard.cuhk.edu.hk/>

Teaching assistant

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Course Description

This course introduces the fundamental principles and procedures of empirical research in sociology. We will address the theoretical and practical challenges involved in problem formulation, research design, data collection, and data analysis. The course will cover major types of both quantitative and qualitative social research methods, such as survey research, qualitative interviews, and ethnography. We will also discuss the sampling and measurement, and analysis issues associated with their use. Students are required to conduct and report on a basic research project using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain the process of scientific inquiry and the steps in social research.
2. Compare and contrast various methods of conducting social research.
3. Evaluate the reliability and validity of research findings.
4. Formulate a research project using appropriate research design.

Required and Recommended Readings

Textbook

Clark, T., Foster, L., Sloan, L., & Bryman, A. (2022). *Bryman's social research methods* (6th International edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- 6th International edition available for purchase at the university bookstore
- 6th International edition available for borrow at CC library (Reserve 2 hours)
- Online textbook (6th UK edition) available on the library website

Other Recommended Textbooks

Babbie, E. R. (2021). *The Practice of Social Research* (15th ed.). Boston, Massachusetts: Cengage Learning.

Carr, D., Boyle, E., Cornwell, B., Correll, S., Crosnoe, R., Freese, J., & Waters, M. (2020). *The Art and Science of Social Research* (2nd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton.

Course Syllabus

1. Introduction to Social Research

- 1.1. Course orientation
- 1.2. Nature and process of social research

2. Conceptual Issues in Social Research

- 2.1. Theory and research
- 2.2. Epistemological issues
- 2.3. Ontological issues
- 2.4. Differentiating between qualitative and quantitative research
- 2.5. Quality criteria in social research
- 2.6. Research design

3. Building Blocks of Social Research

- 3.1. Formulating research questions
- 3.2. Importance of literature review
- 3.3. The nature of quantitative research
- 3.4. The nature of qualitative research
- 3.5. Sampling in social research

4. Quantitative Research

- 4.1. Survey research
- 4.2. Experimental research
- 4.3. Evaluation research

5. Qualitative Research

- 5.1. In-depth interviewing
- 5.2. Focus group
- 5.3. Ethnography

6. Materials-Based (or “Unobtrusive”) Methods

- 6.1. Analysis of existing quantitative data
- 6.2. Content analysis

7. Analyzing Data (Optional)

- 7.1. Basics in quantitative data analysis
- 7.2. Basics in qualitative data analysis

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic
1	Sep 5	1. Introduction to Social Research
2	Sep 12	2. Conceptual Issues in Social Research
3	Sep 19	2. Conceptual Issues in Social Research
4	Sep 26	3. Building Blocks of Social Research
5	Oct 3	3. Building Blocks of Social Research
6	Oct 10	3. Building Blocks of Social Research
7	Oct 17	4. Quantitative Research
8	Oct 24	4. Quantitative Research
9	Oct 31	5. Qualitative Research
10	Nov 7	5. Qualitative Research
	Nov 14	No Class (Congregation)
11	Nov 21	6. Materials-Based Methods
12	Nov 28	In-class Quiz

Due date for written work: **Dec 9 (23:59)**

Teaching Modes and Learning Activities

The lecturer in person will conduct all lectures according to the schedule provided above. The teaching assistant will guide students through the completion of group research projects and provide help to students in understanding the course content during tutorials. The teaching assistant will schedule the class time for tutorials early in the term.

Assessment Tasks

(I) Group Research Project 40%

Students will form groups in your tutorial class for the group research project. The number of students per group will depend on the size of the class. Your group will complete three tasks on a simple research question of your choosing. One major goal of this assessment task is for students to understand the strengths and limitations of both quantitative and qualitative approaches by answering the same research question. Your group will first formulate a research question in Task 1. You will then design a questionnaire in Task 2 and conduct an in-depth interview in Task 3.

(II) Tutorial Participation 20%

Tutorials are an integral part of the learning experience. They give you opportunities to ask questions about the course content and engage in the group research project with your groupmates under the guidance of a teaching assistant. Students are expected to participate in the tutorial class actively.

(III) In-class Quiz 40%

An **open-book** quiz is scheduled for the last lecture on Nov. 28. Electronic devices are not permitted in this quiz, but textbooks and notes are allowed. This quiz is intended to assess your grasp of key course concepts rather than to be unnecessarily challenging. Please be aware that alternative arrangements will only be considered for medical reasons or exceptional circumstances, supported by relevant documentation and approval. The specific format of the quiz will be shared with all students near the end of the term.

Assessment Rubrics

Grade descriptors

- A A thorough understanding of the course materials and an outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
- A- A solid understanding of the course materials and an outstanding performance on almost all learning outcomes.
- B An adequate understanding of the course materials and a substantial performance, on average, on all learning outcomes.
- C A basic understanding of the course materials and a satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
- D A partial understanding of the course materials and an inadequate performance on a number of learning outcomes
- F A poor understanding of the course materials and an unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.