

SOSC 13100, Section 2

SOCIAL SCIENCE INQUIRY I

Jon Rogowski

jrogowski@uchicago.edu

<http://www.jonrogowski.com>

Pick 523

Office hours: Tuesdays, 2pm to 4pm.

University of Chicago

Autumn 2022.

Scheduled meeting time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00am–12:20pm.

Course Description and 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 the student with an introduction to the principles of social science inquiry, a sense of how that inquiry is conducted, and an understanding of how policy implications can be drawn responsibly from evidence provided by empirical social science. The sequence’s objective is to convey both the promise and the pitfalls of social science and a sense of its uses and abuses.

The Autumn Quarter course, Social Science Inquiry I focuses on introducing students to the fundamentals of social science research design with a focus on understanding how social scientists make inferences about cause and effect from empirical data and use empirical observations to inform theory-building. The Winter Quarter course will introduce you to statistical methodology that is essential to understanding and engaging with scientific research in an informed way. Finally, the Spring Quarter will guide you through the development of your own research project using the tools you’ve learned in the Autumn and Winter.

This course will involve a combination of lectures/discussion sessions and written essay assignments.

Course Meetings

The course meets Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00am-12:20pm in Rosenwald Hall, 432. Meetings will consist of a combination of lecture and group discussion. My goal is to ensure that lectures are interactive and involve student participation, so please be prepared to ask questions and interrupt me when something seems unclear or confusing.

Attendance at lectures is a natural expectation and will constitute an important part of your grade through in-class participation. However, due to the ongoing pandemic,

this course will remain somewhat flexible with respect to attendance. You may miss one day of class with no questions asked. You may also miss days due to documented illness or other excused reasons (e.g., religious observance), which will not count towards your one free absence. All lecture slides will be made available on the Canvas website.

Course readings will be posted online on the Canvas website. Students are responsible for all assigned readings, which should be completed prior to the course meetings (with the exception of the first day of class). Lecture and discussion will reference and build on the material in the readings. You also will likely have questions about the material, which I strongly encourage you to raise during class.

Office Hours

My office is open to you on Tuesdays from 2pm to 4pm. I encourage you to join me for office hours to talk about the readings and course materials and ask any questions that you would like. If you are unable to attend for this block of time, please send me an e-mail and we can schedule an appointment for an alternative time. I am also open to conducting meetings via Zoom in the event that provides a more convenient or safe option for you.

Course Requirements

Your evaluation for the course will be based on the components described below. All assignments are graded on a standard A through F grading scale.

Essays: 70%. Students will complete four essays over the course of the quarter. The first three will be short papers approximately 2-3 pages (double-spaced) in length. Each will address a specific module of the course. The last paper will be longer (approximately five pages, double-spaced) and will ask students to consider the entirety of the course material. Each of the three shorter essays will count 15% of the course grade and the longer essay will count 25%. Assignments should be submitted to Canvas by 11:59PM Central time by the following dates:

- Essay 1: October 18
- Essay 2: November 3
- Essay 3: November 17
- Essay 4: December 8

Participation: 30%. Participation grades are earned via three components. First, **active participation** (10% of total) in class meetings is expected, subject to the attendance policy outlined above. Participation credit is not assessed on the basis of the number of comments students make in class, but rather on the quality of their engagement.

Second, students are expected to serve as **online discussion leaders** (10% of total) for three class meetings, beginning the week of October 3. This will involve posing a *short* question or comment that engages critically with the readings and invites other students to respond. These questions should be posted to Canvas Discussions by 12pm noon Central time on the day before the class meeting.

Third, students should **engage with the discussion posts** (10% of total) from their classmates on Canvas. Over the course of the term, students provide 10 comments on their classmates' posts, with no more than three in a single week. These responses need not be either formal or long; a few sentences is sufficient. However, they should engage the original posters, or responses to them, in a constructive and considerate manner. Generally, these comments should be provided within one week of when the thread was initiated, but all comments must be posted by December 2 at 11:59PM Central time.

Late assignments

Late assignments are extremely discouraged and will be penalized without appropriate documentation. Written assignments will be penalized two-thirds of a letter grade (e.g., from B+ to B-) for every day late.

Collaboration

Collaboration, discussion, and the exchange of ideas is essential to the course and to academic research more generally. You are permitted and in fact encouraged to discuss the material from the course with classmates and others. However, all submitted work must be your own. **You may not prepare your essay submissions while working with other students.** In addition to avoiding plagiarism, your written work must reflect your own ideas and your own writing.

Resources for writing

We all need help with our writing. Fortunately, the Writing Program (<https://writing-program.uchicago.edu/writing-support/ccwt-2/>) is available for just this purpose. Please do not hesitate to contact the Writing Program if you would like

assistance with developing or communicating your ideas for the course's written assignments. You can schedule an appointment (<https://collegescheduling.uchicago.edu/samonline/BookAppt?C=C&T=P&P=98>) or email with questions (writing-program@uchicago.edu).

Course reading schedule

Course readings are available from the *Files* section of the course Canvas site unless otherwise noted. Readings should be completed in advance of the class meeting for which they are listed. Completing the reading prior to class will enable students to get the most from that day's lecture. A sound understanding of the assigned readings is also critical for effective class discussions.

Part One: Designing Social Science Research

Class 1 (September 27). Introduction: how to think about modern social science

Podcast: "A Nobel prize for an economics revolution." October 12, 2021. The Indicator from Planet Money, National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/2021/10/12/1045462268/a-nobel-prize-for-an-economics-revolution>.

Mlodinow, Leonard. *The Drunkard's Walk: How Randomness Rules Our Lives*. Vintage, 2009. Chapter 1.

Class 2 (September 29). Thinking about social science concepts and asking good empirical questions

Freedman, David A. 1991. "Statistical Models and Shoe Leather." *Sociological Methodology* 21: 291-313.

Friedman, Milton. 1953. "The Methodology of Positive Economics." In *Essays in Positive Economics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Class 3 (October 4). Measurement and description.

Kellstedt. Paul and Guy Whitten. 2009. *Fundamentals of Social Science Research*, 3rd edition. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5.

Meijers, M. J., & Zaslove, A. 2021. "Measuring Populism in Political Parties: Appraisal of a New Approach." *Comparative Political Studies* 54: 372-407.

Class 4 (October 6). Relationships and causes.

Angrist, Joshua D., and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. 2008. *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.

Imbens, Guido W., and Donald B. Rubin. 2015. *Causal Inference in Statistics, Social, and Biomedical Sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

Class 5 (October 11). Ethics in research.

Hubert, Lawrence, and Howard Wainer. 2012. *A Statistical Guide for the Ethically Perplexed*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press. Chapter 16.

Pridemore, William Alex, Matthew C. Makel, and Jonathan A. Plucker. 2018. "Replication in Criminology and the Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Criminology* 1: 19-38.

Part Two: Experiments

Class 6 (October 13). The Importance of Randomness.

Mlodinow, Leonard. 2009. *The Drunkard's Walk: How Randomness Rules Our Lives*. Vintage. Chapter 7.

Angrist, Joshua D., and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. 2015. *Mastering 'Metrics: The Path from Cause to Effect*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.

Class 7 (October 18). Internal and external validity

McDermott, Rose. 2002. "Experimental Methods in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 5: 31-61.

Sears, David O. 1986. "College Sophomores in the Laboratory: Influences of a Narrow Data Base on Social Psychology's View of Human Nature." *Journal of*

Personality and Social Psychology 51: 515-530.

Class 8 (October 20). Lab experiments.

Iyengar, Shanto, Mark E. Peters, and Donald Kinder. 1982. "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs." *American Political Science Review* 76: 848-858.

Zeitzoff, Thomas. 2014. "Anger, Exposure to Violence, and Intragroup Conflict: A 'Lab in the Field' Experiment in Southern Israel." *Political Psychology* 35: 309-335.

Class 9 (October 25). Survey experiments.

Wood, Thomas, and Ethan Porter. 2019. "The Elusive Backfire Effect: Mass Attitudes' Steadfast Factual Adherence." *Political Behavior* 41: 135-163.

Mutz, Diana C., and Eunji Kim. 2017. "The Impact of In-Group Favoritism on Trade Preferences." *International Organization* 71: 827-850.

Class 10 (October 27). Field experiments (part I).

Butler, Daniel M. and David E. Broockman. 2011. "Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators." *American Journal of Political Science* 55: 463-77.

Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108: 937-975.

Class 11 (November 1). Field experiments (part II).

Baicker, Katherine, et al. 2013. "The Oregon Experiment: Effects of Medicaid on Clinical Outcomes." *New England Journal of Medicine* 368: 1713-1722.

Part Three: Observational designs

Class 12 (November 3). Observational studies: Cross-sectional designs

Washington, Ebonya L. 2008. "Female Socialization: How Daughters affect their Legislator Fathers." *American Economic Review* 98: 311-32.

Ba, Bocar A., et al. 2021. "The Role of Officer Race and Gender in Police-Civilian Interactions in Chicago." *Science* 371: 696-702.

Class 13 (November 8). Observational studies: Panel designs

Card, David, and Alan B. Krueger. 1993. "Minimum Wages and Employment: A Case Study of the Fast Food Industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania."

Miller, S., Johnson, N., & Wherry, L. R. 2021. "Medicaid and Mortality: New Evidence from Linked Survey and Administrative Data." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 136: 1783-1829.

Class 14 (November 10). Observational studies: Perils of collider bias

Rohrer, Julia M. 2018. "Thinking Clearly about Correlations and Causation: Graphical Causal Models for Observational Data." *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science* 1: 27-42.

Elwert, Felix, and Christopher Winship. 2014. "Endogenous Selection Bias: The Problem of Conditioning on a Collider Variable." *Annual Review of Sociology* 40: 31-53.

Class 15 (November 15). Observational studies: "Natural" "experiments."

Dunning, Thad. 2008. "Improving Causal Inference: Strengths and Limitations of Natural Experiments." *Political Research Quarterly* 61: 282-293.

McCauley, John F., and Daniel N. Posner. 2015. "African Borders as Sources of Natural Experiments: Promise and Pitfalls." *Political Science Research and Methods* 3: 409-418.

Class 16 (November 17). Observational studies: Instrumental variables

Angrist, Joshua D., and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. 2015. *Mastering 'Metrics: The Path from Cause to Effect*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 3.

Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 94: 653-663.

Class 17 (November 29). Observational studies: Regression discontinuity

Eggers, Andrew C., and Jens Hainmueller. 2009. "MPs for Sale? Returns to Office in Postwar British Politics." *American Political Science Review* 103: 513-533.

Bleemer, Zachary, and Aashish Mehta. 2022. "Will Studying Economics Make You Rich? A Regression Discontinuity Analysis of the Returns to College Major." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 14:1-22.

Class 18 (December 1). Computer-assisted learning and computational social sciences.

King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. 2013. "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression." *American Political Science Review* 107: 326-343.