

Masterclass in Social Research

Welcome and Introduction



Plan for today

► **About Masterclass**

- History and objectives
- Weekly syllabus
- Assessment and requirements
- Module contact

► **Introduction:** Tell us about yourself

► **Exercise:** The mysterious case of "AI for Social Research"



History and objectives

- ▶ The **Masterclass in Social Research** is the final compulsory module for **MSc Social Research** students
 - Masterclass was created at the beginning to provide SR students with a variety of methods training
 - While serving as a compulsory module for MSc SR students, Masterclass is also open to PGR students
 - The topics covered may change from year to year based on staff availability and new developments in social research
- ▶ Following recent program restructuring, Masterclass now serves two main objectives
 - Produce a new group of competent social researchers with different career and academic objectives
 - Showcase cutting-edge social research methods while helping students reflect on some of the most common ones



Module organization

- ▶ "Master" lecture series (6-7:30pm)
 - Each week will feature a speaker who is an expert in the selected issue and method
 - The speakers will decide how they will deliver the lectures, with the use of different pre-sessional and/or in-class activities
 - **The lecture series is open to all taught and research postgraduate students and their participation will not be credited**
- ▶ "Pieces-of-the-craft" workshops (7:40-9pm)
 - Each week will focus on a social research "skill" and the workshop activities will help students complete the required assessment
 - Between Weeks 8-11, students will participate in the "dissertation fairs" where they share their research ideas and receive feedback
 - **The workshops are only open to students who are taking Masterclass for credits**



Week	Date	Speaker Series	Pieces-of-Craft Workshops
2	8-May-25	Critical Discourse Analysis Margarita Aragon (Sociology)	AI for Social Research: Overview
3	15-May-25	Historical Research and Archives Brodie Waddell (History)	AI for Qualitative Social Research
4	22-May-25	Multi-Sited Fieldwork Mara Nogueira (Geography)	AI for Quantitative and Computational Social Research
5	29-May-25	Researching Creative and Cultural Industries Simone Wesner (Creative Arts)	Transparency and Open Social Science
6	12-Jun-25	Mixed-Methods Research Jasmine Bhatia (Politics)	Communicating Your Research
7	19-Jun-25	Geographic Data Science Roberto Murcio (Geography)	Social Research Dissertations Fair Part 1
8	26-Jun-25	Surveys Barry Maydom (Politics)	Social Research Dissertations Fair Part 2
9	3-Jul-25	Text-as-Data Laszlo Horvath (Politics)	Social Research Dissertations Fair Part 3
10	10-Jul-25	Quali-Quant Methods for Social Media Research Scott Rodgers and Rob Topinka (Media and Communication Studies)	



Assessment (if you are taking Masterclass for credits)

- ▶ **Two blog posts (40%):** Write a blog post to summarize and reflect on **two of the lectures**; one lecture from Weeks 2-5 with the other one from Weeks 7-11
- ▶ **A critical reflection paper (60%)**
 - Write a critical reflection paper (4,000 words max) to discuss how Masterclass helps with you research
 - Provide (1) a summary of your research project, (2) a discussion on how AI can help with your project and (3) a response to the questions/comments/critiques you receive during the presentation



Role of the moderator (i.e., Chao-yo)

- ▶ The moderator will join the lecture series to
 - Introduce the speaker
 - Moderate the Q&A or discussion, if necessary
- ▶ The moderator will lead the workshops and provide feedback on your assignments
- ▶ The moderator is available to answer your questions
 - Students are encouraged to schedule 1:1 meetings during my office hours (Friday 3-5pm) or by appointment
 - All meetings take place via Teams by default – email if you'd like to meet in person
 - Read the module handbook for details contact policy



Knowing each other

- ▶ Please share your name, course, and subject area (e.g., political science) with us
- ▶ What are the methods you have learned or used previously?
- ▶ What project are you working on at this moment?



Recap: Investigating the social world as a vocation

- ▶ As a social researcher, we aim to produce "valid" knowledge about the social world
- ▶ The production of valid knowledge involves a series of careful thinking about ontology/epistemology, theory-building, and methodology (or the theory-empirics alignment)
 - **Reveal nuances of the real world:** constructivism and interpretivism ; theory as approach; interpretation; qualitative; inductive/abductive
 - **Search for the "ultimate" truth:** positivism; theory as paradigm; explanation; quantitative; deductive
- ▶ A new definition of "better" social research is emerging as boundaries across subject areas and research methods are constantly being contested and redefined

