SOSC 13300: Social Science Inquiry-3  
Spring 2020  
TTH 12:30-1:50P (Central Time Zone)

**Instructor:** Helen Lee  
**Email:** helenlee@uchicago.edu  
**Group Office Hours:** Thursdays 3pm to 4:30pm (via Zoom)  
*Schedule one-on-one meetings with me using Calendly*

**Reference Librarian and ICPSR Specialist:** Elizabeth Foster  
**Email:** ehfoster@uchicago.edu  
*Schedule one-on-one meetings with Elizabeth via the library*

**R Program Specialist:** Krista Chan  
**Email:** kristachan@uchicago.edu

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Social science provides us with the tools and frameworks to investigate and understand how society works – from causes in migration patterns to how people vote to the processes that shape test performance. It is, in the most general sense, a way to study social relationships and behaviors. In this course, you will translate your own questions about the social world into a substantial research endeavor.

Specifically, you will learn how to define an original empirical research question and complete a study that employs quantitative analysis to answer it. To support you in your social scientific inquiry, you will:

- review literature to identify an original research question and to define theoretical constructs relevant to your question
- identify a secondary data set in which you can explore your research question
- develop a plan for quantitative analysis
- provide feedback on your peers’ research projects
- incorporate feedback from others about your research project
- communicate your findings to academic and non-academic audiences

Our introductory course on research design and development will utilize collaborative practices to help you develop your independent research project, as well as your understanding of the social science inquiry process.

**This is a working document, meaning I may make slight adjustments and additions as the course progresses. Last updated 4/14/20.**
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CIRCUMSTANCE AND CALL FOR COMMUNITY

This is an extraordinary time for teaching and learning, and for life in general. I will do my best to make the transition to remote learning online as seamless as possible. We will likely experience challenges with technology and online communication, and perhaps challenges in our personal life as well. As such, I will periodically check in with you and make adjustments to facilitation accordingly. Please do your part by engaging fully and addressing challenges proactively, including reaching out to discuss accommodations you may need as circumstances arise.

We are going to have an interesting quarter. I hope we'll emerge from this time a more resilient and supportive community – equipped with a more developed set of social science tools.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Readings


Note: The electronic version of this book is not yet available through the Regenstein Library. However, you can rent or buy this book through the Seminary Co-op and University Bookstores, as well as Amazon. The first few chapters are available on our Canvas site.


All other readings will be available as a file or hyperlink in Canvas (under "Modules"). You are expected to complete all assigned reading(s) prior to our scheduled zoom discussions.

Statistical Software

You will need access to a statistical software program, such as STATA, R, or SPSS. R is available for free, whereas STATA and SPSS are only accessible through the University’s server (unless you purchase the program).

Assignments, Tasks, and Discussions

The general structure for weekly activities will be:

- complete reading(s)
- watch a short pre-recorded lecture/video
- complete task(s) and/or assignment(s)

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Activities are organized by week and class date under “Modules” on the course Canvas page. Each class is organized around a "step" in the social science research process. Generally, you are to complete assigned readings and watch a pre-recorded lecture. The lectures will complement your readings and provide additional guidance on the research process. I will also elaborate on tasks and assignments in these lectures.

Tasks are ungraded, scaffolded exercises intended to help you develop your research project and understanding of social science research. (They are my attempts to translate what we would have done in our in-person classes to the remote learning context.) Assignments also build off of each other and reflect a different component of your final research paper. They are more formal assessments of your learning, and so should be submitted on Canvas by the due date for a grade. Expectations for assignments can be found here.

Zoom discussions will happen once a week unless otherwise noted and will usually be no longer than an hour. The link to the Zoom discussions can be found under "Zoom" on the Canvas page.

Research team meetings will also occur about once a week starting in Week 2. These meetings will serve as opportunities to share your works-in-progress and to give and gather feedback. I recommend using Zoom, but you can decide with your team members your preferred platform for interaction and the best time to meet. For more guidance on what type of feedback to share and structuring your meetings, please consult this document.

Class Participation and Attendance

During Week 2, you will be grouped with a set of your peers based on research interests. Throughout the course, you will share your works-in-progress with each other for constructive feedback. You will also receive focused feedback from me on assignments. Your final research paper should reflect a serious consideration of the feedback you receive throughout the course.

Zoom discussions will be spent engaging in conversations about research design and data analysis, presenting your works-in-progress, and/or workshopping each other’s projects. You are expected to complete the assigned readings, lectures, and tasks on time before our scheduled discussions.

Lastly, we will co-construct expectations for participation during the first Zoom discussion. We will also discuss how participation will be assessed.

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Technology and Internet Access

Given the sudden and unexpected move to remote learning, we are relying more heavily on technology than previously planned.

- **Canvas**: Important information and reminders will be shared via “Announcements.” For the most part, you can find weekly instructions, links, and materials under “Modules.” All final drafts of assignments will be uploaded and submitted in “Assignments.” Occasionally, the exchange of ideas will be facilitated asynchronously via the “Discussions” feature.

- **Zoom**: We will engage in live discussions on the Zoom platform at least once a week during the regularly scheduled canonical hours. You may wish to host your weekly research team meetings via Zoom but your group can decide the best platform for yourselves. Please note that all Zoom discussions will be recorded in case you have challenges connecting synchronously. In accordance with the University’s Recording Policy, recordings should not be shared with anyone outside of the course. Please consult the policy should you have further questions.

- **Google Drive**: Works-in-progress will be shared with me and your peers via Google Drive. Please use your UChicago account and not your personal account.

Quick Start Guides

Under “Modules” in Canvas, you can find a guide/additional resources for

- remotely accessing STATA/SPSS through the University
- getting started on Zoom (you may also wish to explore the features of Zoom in real time and can do so by organizing a meeting with your peers)
- navigating Canvas

GRADE COMPOSITION

- Participation (30%)
- Assignments (30%)
- Final Paper (30%)
- Dissemination of Research (10%)

ACCESSIBILITY & ACCOMMODATIONS

This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are ways I can make this course more accessible, please let me know, as I am

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committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students. Any student who has documented a need for accommodation must work with Student Disability Services to request and establish an accommodation. SDS can be reached at 773-702-6000, or disabilities@uchicago.edu.

Students with disabilities who have been approved for the use of academic accommodations by Student Disability Services (SDS) and need a reasonable accommodation(s) to participate fully in this course should follow the procedures established by SDS for using accommodations. Timely notifications are required in order to ensure that your accommodations can be implemented. Please meet with me to discuss your access needs in this class after you have completed the SDS procedures for requesting accommodations.

PREFERRED COMMUNICATION

1. I appreciate emails to let me know your preferred pronouns (he/she/they). I also ask that students pay attention to the pronouns that I use for students and follow my lead.
2. I am happy to meet with you during virtual office hours to discuss questions or concerns you may have as you work through your research project. However, I do expect that you’ll come to these sessions having fully engaged in the work assigned.
3. I usually do not respond to email between 8pm and 8am (Central Time Zone). If I don’t respond within 24 hours, please feel free to send me a polite reminder. I don’t intend to be unavailable, but sometimes I get quite a lot of email and/or am just busier than usual. Reminders do not offend me.
4. If there is anything I need to know about you in order to make this course work well for you and maximize your ability to learn and grow as a scholar, please send me an email. My goal is to make this a comfortable and productive space for us all.

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