

**City University of Hong Kong  
Course Syllabus**

**offered by Department of Public Policy  
with effect from Semester B 2018 / 19**

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**Part I Course Overview**

<b>Course Title:</b>	Social Science Research Methods
<b>Course Code:</b>	POL2603
<b>Course Duration:</b>	One Semester
<b>Credit Units:</b>	3
<b>Level:</b>	B2
<b>Proposed Area:</b> <i>(for GE courses only)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Humanities <input type="checkbox"/> Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations <input type="checkbox"/> Science and Technology
<b>Medium of Instruction:</b>	English
<b>Medium of Assessment:</b>	English
<b>Prerequisites:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Nil
<b>Precursors:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Nil
<b>Equivalent Courses:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	SA2602 Data Processing and Analysis; SA2603 Social Science Research Methods
<b>Exclusive Courses:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Nil

## Part II Course Details

### 1. Abstract

*(A 150-word description about the course)*

This course presents the logic of social scientific inquiry and how it is brought into service of applied problem solving for our professional fields. Research problems and communication will be conceived in an interdisciplinary context. The course will discuss the multiple criteria often used to judge high quality, usable and persuasive research. Most importantly, this course will overview a variety of methods for conducting research.

### 2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

*(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)*

No.	CILOs <sup>#</sup>	Weighting* (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Devise and refine research questions from broad research areas as well as to find, evaluate critically and integrate the literature relevant to the chosen area(s) of research.		x	x	x
2.	Identify and compare competing theories and operationalize the concepts relevant to each research areas.			x	x
3.	Design survey questionnaire and other instruments to collect relevant data, choose to implement one of several possible survey sampling methods and be able to explain the strengths and limitations of any chosen methods.		x	x	x
4.	Discuss the key aspects of social science research, including hypothesis testing, causal inference, measurement, and validity.			x	x
5.	Devote particular attention to policy inferences and the design of policy-relevant research.		x	x	x
6.	Communicate clearly research findings orally and in writing and to use appropriate tabular and graphic format for explanatory presentations.			x	x
7.	Identify the ethical issues in the research process.		x		x
8.	Recognize the limitations of different research approaches and be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of alternative means of conducting social science research.		x		x

\* If weighting is assigned to CILOs, they should add up to 100%.

100%

<sup>#</sup> Please specify the alignment of CILOs to the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning outcomes (PILOs) in Section A of Annex.

**A1: Attitude**

*Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.*

**A2: Ability**

*Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.*

**A3: Accomplishments**

*Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.*

### 3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

(TLAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.								Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1	Introduction of basic knowledge and skills in lectures		x	x	x	x		x	x	2 hours/week
2	Case study, and in-class exercises in lecture		x	x	x	x	x			
3	Class interaction or feedback sessions in lectures	x	x	x	x	x	x			
4	Literature discussion, presentation, and practice sessions in tutorials	x	x	x	x	x				1 hour/week
5	Group study outside scheduled classes	x	x	x	x	x	x			Estimated 20 hours in total
6	Data analysis workshop					x	x			
7	Consultation sessions on data analysis and research report writing			x	x	x	x			Estimated 6 hours in total

### 4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.								Weighting g*	Remarks
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Continuous Assessment: <u>65</u> %										
Class and Tutorial Participation and Attendance		x		x		x	x	x	15%	Class and tutorial participation will be assessed according to the quality and contribution of discussion in lectures and tutorials. Marks will be deducted for absence (without just causes and presence of supporting documentation) in tutorials or lectures.
Term Project (written report and PowerPoint presentation)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	50%	Written and oral articulation of research ideas is integral to all stages of research. Each team, ideally composed of 6 people, will thus conduct a research-oriented project that includes 1) a statement and justifications of the research question, 2) research design, methodology and data (type and source, not actual), and 3) expected results.  Class instructor(s) or/and tutorial lecturer(s) decide on the format and content of the grading (possible

											grading areas include written report quality, project presentation, etc.)  In general, the group written report should be a maximum of 2,500 words (excluding the title page, references, and essential appendices), double-spaced, and draw on materials from the assigned readings or lecture slides.
Final Examination (duration: 2 hours)										35%	Examines students' understanding of the core concepts and issues in social science methodology. This final exam involves questions about materials covered in lectures, assignments, and readings. Mathematical competence is not required on the part of students to pass the exam, though it will help them to excel.
Examination: 35% (duration: 2 hours)											

\* The weightings should add up to 100%.

100%
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**Note:**

If a course has both coursework and examination components, students are required to pass BOTH the coursework assessment AND the examination before they can be awarded an overall passing grade of the course.

## 5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

Assessment Task	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. Class and tutorial participation & attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well prepared for lectures and tutorials. Engages in class discussions and demonstrates clear understanding of concepts via discussions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engages in class discussions and actively contributing ideas and questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engages in class discussion at times but generally more reserved to share ideas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unwilling to share ideas and undertakes a passive role in class discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-attendance of tutorials with no prior notice.</li> </ul>
2. Term Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong ability to identify a researchable question. Fully understand that research must always be responsive to audience. That is, the strategies for problem formulation in designing research will have importance.</li> <li>Excellent ability to structure credible and persuasive research arguments.</li> <li>Demonstration of excellent research, writing, teamwork, and presentation skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sufficient ability to identify a researchable question. Understand that research must always be responsive to audience. That is, the strategies for problem formulation in designing research will have importance.</li> <li>Very good ability to structure credible and persuasive research arguments.</li> <li>Demonstration of very good research, writing, teamwork, and presentation skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some ability to identify a researchable question. Somehow understand that research must always be responsive to audience. That is, the strategies for problem formulation in designing research will have importance.</li> <li>Good ability to structure credible and persuasive research arguments.</li> <li>Demonstration of good research, writing, teamwork, and presentation skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor ability to identify a researchable question. Marginally understand that research must always be responsive to audience. That is, the strategies for problem formulation in designing research will have importance.</li> <li>Limited ability to structure credible and persuasive research arguments.</li> <li>Demonstration of some research, writing, teamwork, and presentation skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unable to identify a researchable question. Fail to understand that research must always be responsive to audience. That is, the strategies for problem formulation in designing research will have importance.</li> <li>Little or no ability to structure credible and persuasive research arguments.</li> <li>Demonstration of little or no research, writing, teamwork, and presentation skills.</li> </ul>

3. Final Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All important concepts, cases, and learning materials are very clearly understood.</li> <li>• Demonstration of excellent critical thinking and analysis skills.</li> <li>• Excellent ability to apply the methods leant throughout the class in addressing a real-world conundrum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All important concepts, cases, and learning materials are well understood.</li> <li>• Demonstration of very good critical thinking and analysis skills.</li> <li>• Very good ability to apply the methods leant throughout the class in addressing a real-world conundrum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All important concepts, cases, and learning materials are adequately understood.</li> <li>• Demonstration of good critical thinking and analysis skills.</li> <li>• Good ability to apply the methods leant throughout the class in addressing a real-world conundrum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All important concepts, cases, and learning materials are marginally understood.</li> <li>• Demonstration of some critical thinking and analysis skills.</li> <li>• Some ability to apply the methods leant throughout the class in addressing a real-world conundrum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All important concepts, cases, and learning materials are hardly understood.</li> <li>• Demonstration of little or no critical thinking and analysis skills.</li> <li>• Fail to apply the methods leant throughout the class in addressing a real-world conundrum.</li> </ul>
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### Part III Other Information (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

#### 1. Keyword Syllabus

(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

The logic of social inquiry. Audience-oriented research. Causation. Paradigm and theory. Research design. Measurement. Conceptualisation and operationalisation. Sampling. Social survey. Quantitative data analysis. Qualitative research methods. Ethics of social research. Appreciation and evaluation of social research.

#### 2. Reading List

##### 2.1 Compulsory Readings

(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

1	Singleton, R. A. and B. C. Straits (2010) <i>Approaches to Social Research</i> , 5 <sup>th</sup> edition, Oxford University Press.
2.	Booth, W.C., G.G. Colomb and J. M. Williams (2008) <i>The Craft of Research</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition. University of Chicago Press.
3	Creswell J.W., (1994). <i>Research Design Qualitative &amp; Quantitative Approaches</i> . Thousand Oaks: Sage.
4	King Gary, Keohane O. Robert, & Verba Sidney, (1994). <i>Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press.

##### 2.2 Additional Readings

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

1.	Buchanan, David A. and Alan Bryman. 2007. "Contextualizing methods choice in organizational research." <i>Organizational Research Methods</i> 10: 483- 501.
2.	Vohs, Kathleen. 2013. "Its Not 'Mess'. Its Creativity." New York Times.
3.	Garrow, Eve E. 2011. "Receipt of Government Revenue among Nonprofit Human Service Organizations." <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i> 21: 445-471.
4.	Kuhn, Thomas, <i>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</i> , chapters 2, 3, 4, and 6;
5	King, Gary, Pan, Jennifer & Roberts, E. Margaret. "Reverse – engineering censorship in China: Randomized Experimentation and Participant Observation." <i>Science</i> 345:6199 (2014).
6.	Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record," <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 108(5): 937-975.
7.	Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz. 2006."A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research." <i>Political Analysis</i> 14(3): 227- 249.
8.	Hedström, Peter and Petri Ylikoski. 2010. "Causal Mechanisms in the Social Sciences." <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> 36: 49–67.
9.	Adcock, Robert and David Collier. 2001."Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 95(3): 529-546.
10.	Watters, J.K. and Biernacki, P., "Targeted Sampling: Options for the Study of Hidden Populations." <i>Social Problems</i> 36:4 (1989): 416 – 430.