

PIA2030: TRADITIONS OF INQUIRY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Traditions of Inquiry in the Social Sciences

Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

Course Number

2030

Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

AIS2030 Traditions of Inquiry in the Social Sciences

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course explores major traditions of research inquiry in the social sciences and familiarizes students with the cross-disciplinary character of contemporary social scientific research. Through discovery-based interrogations of foundational ideas and questions in the disciplinary fields of sociology, anthropology, political economy, and development studies, students will gain an appreciation of the ways social researchers across disciplines have sought to pose intriguing questions and explain specific social phenomena. Students will work on a project which requires them to identify selected social problems and formulate a theoretically informed research proposal.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Review and appreciate traditions of inquiry in the social sciences		x	x	
2	Discuss and explain research puzzles based on selected social phenomenon		x	x	
3	Compare competing research hypotheses in accordance with relevant theoretical frameworks		x	x	
4	Propose a theoretically informed and empirically significant research inquiry		x	x	x
5	Formulate a high-quality and impactful research proposal of a chosen social phenomenon through the application of a substantive body of knowledge drawing from extensive literature review and empirical investigation		x	x	x

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 real-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.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lecture, readings, and exercises on differentiating social scientific inquiry from other modes of social commentary and analysis;	1	

2	2	Lecture, readings, and exercises on making legitimate social inquiry within sociology, political economy and development studies	1, 2, 3	
3	3	Lecture, readings, and exercises involving integration of different traditions of social scientific inquiry and thinking in a cross-disciplinary manner; consultation and guidance on group presentation will address specific social phenomenon from different disciplinary perspectives.	2, 3, 4	
4	4	The final project of formulating a quality research proposal will foster students' understanding and application of different disciplinary perspectives.	2, 3, 4, 5	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Short assignments	1, 2, 3, 4	60	To facilitate effective learning, students will submit short assignments to demonstrate continuous engagement with and accumulative application of the major themes covered in lectures	No

2	Research proposal	5	40	Students will integrate ideas from different traditions of social inquiry and formulate a quality research proposal for a selected social phenomenon with a view to resolving significant social problems.	No
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Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Short assignments

Criterion

Timely and quality submission of written assignments

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Demonstrates high level of conceptual thinking about traditions in of inquiry in the social sciences. Evidence of ability to fully comprehend and critique lecture and reading material concerning key concepts, ideas, and examples of research in the social sciences.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Demonstrates good ability to think conceptually reasonably about traditions in of inquiry in the social sciences. Evidence of good ability to comprehend and critique lecture and reading material concerning key concepts, ideas, and examples of research in the social sciences.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Demonstrates adequate ability to think conceptually reasonably about traditions in of inquiry in the social sciences. Evidence of adequate ability to comprehend and critique lecture and reading material concerning key concepts, ideas, and examples of research in the social sciences.

Marginal (D)

Indicates that the student has comprehended minimal or poor level of the material presented in lectures and readings concerning key concepts, ideas, and examples of research in the social sciences. Written work, if submitted, has been of a low standard.

Failure (F)

Indicates that through poor learning or lack of effort, the student has failed to demonstrate even a minimal capacity to analyze concepts and theories concerning key concepts, ideas, and examples of research in the social sciences. The students has failed even to attend most tutorials and performed very poorly in written work

Assessment Task

Research proposal

Criterion

Timely and quality submission of research proposal

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Demonstrates high level of conceptual thinking about traditions in of inquiry in the social sciences. Student is able to form sophisticated arguments and drawn insightful conclusions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Clear ability of independent thinking and critical analysis. Extensive range of references consulted, including good use of scholarly materials to support all key arguments made. Very well organized; coherent arguments presented with a high standard of expression

Good (B+, B, B-)

Demonstrates good ability to think conceptually reasonably about traditions in of inquiry in the social sciences. Student is able to form plausible arguments and reasonably convincing conclusions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Evidence of some good ability of independent thinking and critical analysis. A reasonably wide range of references consulted, including good use of scholarly materials to support all key arguments made. Well organized; coherent arguments presented with a high standard of expression

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Demonstrates adequate ability to think conceptually reasonably about traditions in of inquiry in the social sciences. Student is able to form reasonable arguments and conclusions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives Evidence of some attempts at analytical thinking. Barely sufficient use of scholarly materials. Reasonable standard of expression; average quality in terms of organization and coherence

Marginal (D)

Indicates that the student has comprehended minimal or poor level of the material presented in lectures and readings concerning key concepts, ideas, and examples of research in the social sciences. Student is able to form marginally acceptable arguments and conclusions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Little evidence of independent and critical analysis. Very limited use of scholarly materials. Acceptable citation and organization of a mostly descriptive essay.

Failure (F)

Indicates that through poor learning or lack of effort, the student has failed to demonstrate even a minimal capacity to analyze concepts and theories concerning key concepts, ideas, and examples of research in the social sciences. No scholarly materials consulted. Poor quality structure and presentation.

Part III Other Information**Keyword Syllabus**

Social sciences; Sociology; Political Science; Economic Sociology, Institutional Economics; Anthropology; Social Anthropology; Social Science Disciplines; Social order; Cross-Disciplinary Research

Reading List**Compulsory Readings**

	Title
1	Dillon, Michele. 2020. Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts, and Their Applicability to the Twenty-first Century. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell
2	Fassin, Didier, ed. 2012. A Companion to Moral Anthropology. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell
3	Flick, Uwe. (ed.) 2022. The SAGE handbook of qualitative research design. London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE
4	Miner, Horace. "Body Ritual among the Nacirema." American Anthropologist 58, no. 3 (1956): 503-507
5	Kuper, Adam. 2005. "The myth of primitive society," in his The Reinvention of Primitive Society: Transformations of a Myth. Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge.

6	Latour, Bruno. 2005. "Introduction to Part II: Why is it so Difficult to Trace the Social," pp. 159-164, in his <i>Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-network-theory</i> . Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press
7	Evans-Pritchard, E. E. "The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events." In <i>Classic Readings in Cultural Anthropology</i> , edited by Gary P. Ferraro, 102-110. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2009
8	Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. 2012. "The Consumption Junction: A Proposal for Research Strategies in the Sociology of Technology." In <i>The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology</i> , edited by Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas Hughes and Trevor J. Pinch, 253-272. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press

Additional Readings

	Title
1	To be updated in course outline