

GLB5020: Social Science Research Methods

Spring 2026 | CUHK-Shenzhen

Instructor: Prof. Yajie Wang

TA: Yunhai Hu

Class Time: 8:30 – 11:20 AM Mondays

Office Hours: 1:00 – 3:30 PM Mondays

First Class: January 5, 2026

Last Class: April 27, 2026

Course Description

This course introduces students to the methods of social science research with applications in global studies and political science. It combines theoretical reasoning with practical exposure to quantitative and qualitative methods, including basic formal modeling, causal inference, survey and experimental design, and qualitative methods. The course emphasizes research design, critical reading, peer evaluation, and communication of findings through a final research proposal and group presentation.

The course is intended as a first introduction to social science research to advance undergraduate and master's students. No pre-existing course is needed.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will:

- Understand key approaches to social science research
- learn how to understand and evaluate contemporary social science research
- Develop sound research questions and designs
- Apply basic quantitative and qualitative methods
- Design a feasible research project
- Critically evaluate peer research
- Engage actively in analytical discussions and constructive feedback

Course Requirements & Assessment

Component	Weight
Participation & Class Interaction	10%
Weekly Group Presentation	10%
Short Assignments (x2)	20%
Final Research Proposal (Group)	35%
Final Presentation (Group)	10%
Peer Review of 3 Projects (Individual)	15%

Class Interaction (10%): Includes thoughtful contributions to class discussions, peer feedback during presentations, group collaboration, and consistent engagement with weekly activities. Attendance alone does not count as participation. The TA and I will mark your participation for each class.

Weekly Group Presentation (10%): Students will present in small groups the supplementary (applied) readings assigned for the week, beginning in Week 2. Each student is required to participate in at least one group presentation during the semester. The goal of these presentations is to summarize the research question, methods, and findings of the selected readings and to critically evaluate how the methods discussed in class are applied in substantive research.

Short Assignments (20%): Two short assignments will on key skills for both quantitative and qualitative research.

Final Research Proposal (35%):

- Groups of 1 to 3 students
- 2,000–2,500 words
- 50% graded by instructor
- 50% based on average peer review scores. Students are strongly encouraged to form groups.

Final Presentation (10%): Each group presents a 6–7 minute pitch on their research proposal in Week 13.

Peer Review (15%): Each student completes detailed reviews of projects by 3 other teams. The reviews are graded by the instructor for fairness and quality.

Weekly Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Required Readings	Assignment Due
1	Jan 5	What Is Social Inquiry	Core: Babbie, Chapter 1; KKV, Chapter 1.1–1.2 Supplementary: Shapiro (2014); Brady & Collier (2004), Chapter 1	—
2	Jan 12	Theory Building and Explanation	Core: Babbie, Chapter 3; KKV, Chapter 3.5 Supplementary: Mearsheimer	—

			(2014), Chapters 1–2; Peters (2014)	
3	Jan 19	Formal Modeling (Game Theory)	Core: Snidal (2013); Morrow, pp. 1–25 Supplementary: Olson (1965); Fearon (1995)	—
4	Jan 26	Conceptualization, Measurement & Description	Core: Babbie, Chapter 6; Goertz & Mahoney, Chapter 10 Supplementary: Mearsheimer (2001), Chapter 3; Hanson & Sigman (2021)	—
5	Feb 2	Hypotheses and Experimental Methods	Core: Gerber & Green (2012), Chapter 1; Babbie, Chapter 9 Supplementary: Gerber & Green (2000); Bertrand & Mullainathan (2006)	—
—	Feb 9	Chinese New Year Holiday	—	—
—	Feb 16	Chinese New Year Holiday	—	—
—	Feb 23	Chinese New Year Holiday	—	—
6	Mar 2	Regression Analysis	Core: Babbie, Chapter 16; Freedman (1991)	—

			Supplementary: Fearon & Laitin (2003); Jensen (2012)	
7	Mar 9	Causality and Research Design	Core: Goertz & Mahoney, Chapter 3; Gerber & Green (2012), Chapter 2 Supplementary: Miguel (2004); Hainmueller & Hangartner (2013)	—
8	Mar 16	Causal Inference with Observational Data	Core: Angrist & Pischke (2015), Chapter 1; Dunning (2012), Chapters 1-2 Supplementary: Eggers & Hainmueller (2009); Acemoglu et al. (2001)	Short Assignment 1 Due
9	Mar 23	Surveys and Public Opinion Research	Core: Babbie, Chapters 5 & 8 Supplementary: Scheve & Slaughter (2001); Tomz (2007)	—
10	Mar 30	Mixed Methods	Core: Goertz & Mahoney, Chapter 14; Lieberman (2005) Supplementary: Mansfield & Snyder (2005);	—

			Posner (2004)	
—	Apr 6	Qingming Holiday	—	—
11	Apr 13	Process Tracing and Within-Case Analysis	Core: Goertz & Mahoney, Chapters 7–8 Supplementary: Van Evera (1984); Tannenwald (1999)	Short Assignment 2 Due
12	Apr 20	Interviews, Fieldwork, and Textual Methods	Core: Mosley (ed.) (2013) Supplementary: Shesterinina (2016); Cohen (2013)	—
13	Apr 27	Final Project Pitch	—	Final Proposal Due May 8; Peer Reviews Due May 15

Instructions on Reading

A detailed weekly reading list is distributed separately and includes materials from political science, international relations, and comparative social science. Weekly readings are divided into **core** and **supplementary** materials, which serve **distinct purposes** and should be read in different ways.

Core readings consist primarily of **research methods textbooks and methodological chapters**. These readings introduce foundational concepts, research logics, and analytical tools that will be used throughout the course. Students are expected to read core materials **carefully and intensively**, with close attention to:

- key concepts and terminology,
- the logic of research design and inference,
- methodological assumptions and trade-offs,
- and how different methods address social science questions.

You should aim to **fully understand** the core readings and be prepared to discuss them in detail during class. These materials provide the theoretical and methodological foundation for all subsequent weeks and assignments.

Supplementary readings are **applied research papers**—primarily journal articles and book chapters—that demonstrate how the methods discussed in the core readings are used in practice. These readings help students see how abstract methodological tools are implemented in real research contexts. For supplementary readings, students are generally expected to:

- read more selectively and efficiently,
- identify the main research question, argument, and method,
- understand how evidence is used to support claims,
- and situate the paper within the broader literature.

Unless you are **presenting in a given week**, you are *not* expected to master every empirical detail or technical appendix of the supplementary readings. Focus on the main idea and findings. However, students responsible for **weekly group presentations** should engage more deeply with both the core readings and the assigned supplementary papers and be prepared to explain them clearly to classmates.

Reading list:

- Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson. 2001. "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation." *The American Economic Review* 91 (5): 1369–401.
- Babbie, Earl R. 2013. *The Practice of Social Research, 13th Edition*. Wadsworth Publishing.
- Bertrand, Marianne, and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2004. "Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination." *The American Economic Review* (Nashville, United States) 94 (4): 991–1013.
- Brady, Henry E., and David Collier. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
- Cohen, Dara Kay. 2013. "Female Combatants and the Perpetration of Violence: Wartime Rape in the Sierra Leone Civil War." *World Politics* 65 (3): 383–415.
- Dunning, Thad. 2012. *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences : A Design-Based Approach*. Strategies for Social Inquiry. Cambridge University Press.
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=473256&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Eggers, Andrew C., and Jens Hainmueller. 2009. "MPs for Sale? Returns to Office in Postwar British Politics." *The American Political Science Review* 103 (4): 513–33.
- Fearon, James D. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49 (03): 379. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300033324>.
- Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *The American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 75–90.
- Freedman, David A. 1991. "Statistical Models and Shoe Leather." *Sociological Methodology* 21: 291. <https://doi.org/10.2307/270939>.
- Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *The American Political Science Review* 94 (3): 653–63. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2585837>.
- Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. 2012. *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*. W W Norton & Co Inc.

- Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. 2012. *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. Princeton University Press.
- Hainmueller, Jens, and Dominik Hangartner. 2013. "Who Gets a Swiss Passport? A Natural Experiment in Immigrant Discrimination." *American Political Science Review* 107 (1): 159–87. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000494>.
- Hanson, Jonathan K., and Rachel Sigman. 2021. "Leviathan's Latent Dimensions: Measuring State Capacity for Comparative Political Research." *The Journal of Politics* 83 (4): 1495–510. <https://doi.org/10.1086/715066>.
- Jensen, Nathan M. 2012. "Fiscal Policy and the Firm: Do Low Corporate Tax Rates Attract Multinational Corporations?" *Comparative Political Studies* 45 (8): 1004–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414011428594>.
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 2021. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research, New Edition*. Princeton University Press.
- Lieberman, Evan S. 2005. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99 (3): 435–52. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055405051762>.
- Mansfield, Edward D. D., and Jack Snyder. 2007. *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War*. MIT Press.
- Mearsheimer, John J. 2014. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Miguel, Edward. 2004. "Tribe or Nation? Nation Building and Public Goods in Kenya versus Tanzania." *World Politics* 56 (3): 327–62. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100004330>.
- Olson, Mancur. 1971. *The Logic of Collective Action*. With Internet Archive. Harvard University Press. http://archive.org/details/logicofcollectiv00olso_0.
- Peters, Margaret E. 2014. "Trade, Foreign Direct Investment, and Immigration Policy Making in the United States." *International Organization* 68 (4): 811–44. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818314000150>.
- Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *The American Political Science Review* 98 (4): 529–45.

- Scheve, Kenneth F., and Matthew J. Slaughter. 2001. "Labor Market Competition and Individual Preferences over Immigration Policy." *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 83 (1): 133–45. JSTOR.
- Shapiro, Ian. 2014. "9. Methods Are Like People: If You Focus Only on What They Can't Do, You Will Always Be Disappointed." In *Field Experiments and Their Critics: Essays on the Uses and Abuses of Experimentation in the Social Sciences*, edited by Dawn Langan Teele. Yale University Press.
<https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.12987/9780300199307-011/html>.
- Shesterinina, Anastasia. 2016. "Collective Threat Framing and Mobilization in Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 110 (3): 411–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055416000277>.
- Tannenwald, Nina. 1999. "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use." *International Organization* 53 (3): 433–68.
<https://doi.org/10.1162/002081899550959>.
- Tomz, Michael. 2007. "Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach." *International Organization* 61 (4): 821–40.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818307070282>.
- Van Evera, Stephen. 1984. "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War." *International Security* 9 (1): 58–107.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2538636>.