

# Social Science Research Methods

## Version 1.1

Xiaoguang Fan [范晓光]\*

Office: Management Building  
1607-3, Zijinggang Campus.

Lecture: Teaching Building W  
1-207. Sat. 8:00-11:25

Office Hours: Fri. 9:30-11:30,  
and by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Yifei Ren [任  
奕飞]

## 1 Overview

This course provides an overview of the basic principles and methods in social research. We will first discuss the nature and purpose of social research and introduce some important ethical issues that you need to be aware of. We will then examine in detail how social scientists design a study, how they measure concepts, and how to draw samples to obtain meaningful information from a given population. In the second half of the semester, we will look at the various ways in which researchers conduct observations and analyze their data.

The main objectives of this course are for you 1) to understand the basic principles and main methods of social science; 2) to be able to systematically evaluate social scientific studies from a methodological perspective; and 3) to be able to design and carry out a simple research project using the appropriate method(s).

Both this course and the textbook we use are designed primarily with sociology majors in mind. However, students from other social science disciplines such as political science and public policy will also find this course useful because research in these disciplines shares very similar purposes, follows similar logics, and often faces similar challenges.

This course will be taught in two languages. PowerPoint and a few other course materials will be English. The textbook, most lectures, and exams will be in Chinese. I blend these two languages because while it is probably easier for you to learn in Chinese, it is also important that you be exposed to the terminologies and customary expressions in English.

## 2 Required Textbook

The required text for this course is:

- 艾尔·巴比, 2009, 《社会研究方法》第11版, 邱泽奇译, 北京: 华夏出版社.
- Earl Babbie. 2007. *The Practice of Social Research*, 11th edition. Cengage Learning.

## 3 Course Requirements

- Attendance: Our class meets every Saturday from 8:00am to 11:25am. I do not plan to take attendance, but do understand that as a student you are supposed to attend all classes.

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- **Reading:** All reading assignments come from the textbook. You can do the reading either before or after each class, depending on which way works the best for you. However, you must finish the reading before the next class to make sure that you are ready to move onto new materials.
- **Quizzes:** To encourage attendance and check on learning in a timely manner, I will give a total of six pop quizzes. Each quiz consists of 2 multiple choice questions and is worth 2 points. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped. There remaining five will be counted toward your final grade.
- **Homework:** There will be five homework assignments. Your scores on all five assignments will be counted toward your final grade. Homework must be submitted on time to receive full credit. Homework submitted by the first class session after the deadline will receive half credit; after that it will not be accepted at all.
- **Exams:** Final exam will be given in Week-9 and will account for 50% of your total grade.

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>% of Grade</b>
1. Final Exam	50%
2. Quizzes	10%
3. Homework	25%
4. Discussion	10%
5. Class Participation	5%

## 4 Class Schedule

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**Note:** The schedule below may change. All announcements regarding schedule changes will be emailed to you or announced in lecture. You are responsible for keeping up to date on these changes.

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### 9/14 Introduction: Science, Social Science and Methods

- Paradigms, Theory, and Social Research
- The Ethics and Politics of Social Research
- Homework-1 distributed

### 9/21 Research Design

- Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement
- Indexes, Scales, and Typologies
- Homework-1 due
- Homework-2 distributed

### 9/28 The Logic of Sampling

- Homework-2 due
- Homework-3 distributed

**10/05** Break

**10/12** Survey Research; Experiments

- Homework-3 due
- Homework-4 distributed

**10/19** Evaluation Research; Field Research

- Homework-5 distributed

**10/26** Quantative Data Analysis

- Homework-4 due
- Homework-5 due

**11/02** Qualitative Data Analysis; Reading and Writing Social Research

- Lecture: Text analysis using Python

**11/09** Final Exam

## **5 Feedback**

I am interested in hearing your reactions to the course, and your suggestions for improvement. Please feel free to e-mail me about comments or suggestions or make an appointment to meet me.