SOC SCI 189

Adv. Methods & Measurement in the Social Sciences

About the Course:

Number: SOC SCI 189
Title: Adv. Methods & Measurement in the Soc. Sciences
Quarter: Winter 2013
Meeting Time: T-TH 3:30-5:00PM
Meeting Place: Social Science Laboratory, Room 129
Special Info: This course is an elective for the Social Sciences
Final Exam: Tuesday, March 19, 2013, 4:00-6:00pm (SSL 129)

About the Instructor:

Name: Dr. James R. Hull
Nickname: Jim (please feel free to address me in this way)
Email: james.hull@uci.edu
Phone: 949.824.5691
Office: Social Science Plaza A, Room 4169
Education: Ph.D., Sociology, U. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Fun Fact: Jim has lived in four states: MI, NC, RI, CA

Office Hours:

By Appointment: Monday 11:00-12:20 pm
Drop-In: Wednesday 4:00-6:00pm

Communication Guidelines:

- To make a Tuesday appointment, use the SignupSheet tool on EEE
- Please restrict phone calls to drop-in office hours (Wed 4-6pm)
- Please put “SS189:” at the start of the subject line in emails
- Please allow 24 hours for an email response, 48 over the weekends
- Most responses will be much quicker than this, but please be patient

ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT OR USEFUL INFO IS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE SIDEBAR

Please read the communication guidelines for more guidance on how best to contact me.

You do not need an appointment during drop-in office hours, it's just first come, first serve.
You can also phone me during drop-in hours.

Email subject lines should read "SS189:“ followed by a descriptive subject so that I will notice them in my inbox.
Registrar Issues:

Drops and Adds: You are responsible for your own drops and adds. Please take care of these through WebReg, StudentAccess, or the Registrar’s Office. For complete information, please see: Official Registrar’s Drop Add Policy

Key Deadlines: Drop without approval: Friday of WEEK 2
Drop and avoid a “W” grade: Friday of WEEK 6
Add without approval: Friday of WEEK 3

Audits? No. Students must be officially registered to attend

Waitlist: Waitlisted students will be added automatically by the Registrar’s office if seats become available

Academic Honesty:

A study of over 4200 undergraduates at 99 schools determined that 55 percent of students had never cheated on an exam and 42 percent had never cheated on written work (McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield 2001). That leaves a lot of room for improvement! Among schools with “honor codes” these numbers jumped to 70 percent and 58 percent.

That’s one reason we will use an honor code in conjunction with UCI’s existing policies on academic honesty. The honor code is simple. It is a short document that each of you will sign at the start of the semester, Then, each time you submit a major assignment, you reaffirm your commitment to the code by writing out the statement, “I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment” and signing your name (*). I will remind you in the directions for each assignment.

It’s that simple.

The basic text of our class honor code derives from Appendix VIII of the UCI Academic Senate Manual. You should take time to read this document carefully, and view the reports at http://honesty.uci.edu/.

Let’s work together to keep our class “honesty percentage” at 100!

(*) Students having religious or moral objections to making such a pledge should arrange to speak with me in person during the first full week of class.
Course Text:

None for this quarter.

***Various Readings will be assigned. These will be provided via Dropbox one week in advance (two for students using DSC and CAM)

Course Website:

Over the course of the semester, we will rely heavily on UCIs in-house EEE system and related tools. Specifically, we will utilize the following:

- Course Website – announcements, general info, official schedule
- DropBox – distribution and collection of notes, homework, etc.
- Quizzes – we will rely heavily on in-class online assessment
- SignupSheet – this tool will enable you to make appointments
- Podcasts – view prerecorded lectures prior to arriving in class
- Survey – help me learn more about you and your learning needs
- Evaluation – your opportunity to provide useful feedback
- MessageBoard – this tool will be vital for asking questions in class
- GradeBook – Use this to keep track of your progress

There are even more tools than what we will use. Do explore them all!

Use of TurnItIn:

At your instructor’s discretion, the services provided by TurnItIn.com may be utilized to help ensure that all students are submitting only original work in keeping with the honor code pledge that they signed.

PLEASE READ THIS NOTICE

Students agree that, by taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

For more information, please visit www.turnitin.com/
Some Ground Rules for Class:

- Have respect for yourself and for your fellow students
- We start and end class on time: come late and you will miss out
- Remember to turn off or silence phones and other gizmos
- Check the website regularly for updates, assignments, grades, etc.
- Check email regularly. I will use email only for important things
- Respect discussion guidelines and other rules adopted by the class

In short, be a good citizen and always treat classmates with respect

Special Needs:

If you require special arrangements for testing, readings, assignments, or other aspects of the course, please contact the UCI Disability Services Center. Their website has detailed instructions on the procedures to follow to qualify and register. Official notice from DSC is required before accommodations will be made. Please also contact me within the first two weeks of class to discuss these arrangements.

Writing and Study Help:

UCI provides numerous resources to assist students in developing their maximum potential as writers. I suggest that you utilize these services, even if you feel assured that you are already a consummate wordsmith.

In particularly egregious cases, I reserve the right to require you to use LARC or the Peer tutors programs as a condition of passing the course.

Campus Resources:

Writing & Library Research Peer Tutors – help with writing & research
Learning and Academic Resource Center – help with academic skills
Social Sciences Academic Resource Center – help with career planning

A Few Writing Tips:

1.) Very few people are able to create and edit at the same time – if you feel blocked, try turning off your internal editor and just write – shred it later

2.) Still having trouble? Try setting a time limit – say, “I will write continuously for 30 minutes straight, and then take a break” – then be sure to do it

3.) Getting feedback from others WILL improve your writing – so seek it out

4.) Keep at it – writing is hard work – just ask Maya Angelou

5.) For much more, visit one or more of the pages at left
What is this Course About?

Economists, Sociologists, Anthropologists, Political Scientists, and other Social Scientists are actively engaged in providing valuable insights into the nature, motives, causes, and consequences of human behavior.

But then again, who isn’t these days? Where do these particular observations about the social world come from? How are they made? How do we know which ones are worth heeding and which are just errors magnified and repeated many times over?

To find answers to these and related questions we must travel deep into the realm of social research methodology. The disciplines constituting the UCI School of Social Sciences (those interested in who we are and what it means to be human) together possess some of the most varied investigative methods of any scientific enterprise.

These range from simple logical deduction to complicated mathematical modeling to active participation in social phenomena on the part of the researcher. Few methods of understanding the world have been overlooked by researchers in the quest for understanding our social selves. In this course, we will sample a broad range of these research techniques with the intent of understanding how and when they function best. We will do so from the standpoint of both information producers and information users.

The ability to evaluate the appropriateness of any technique for answering a given research question and to assess how well a researcher followed established practice are both crucial skills in becoming a critical scholar. These skills are equally important to the citizen who desires not to be misled by dubious and erroneous claims. We will practice each of these skills often, discussing along the way many other aspects of the responsible conduct of research. 

To become a great scientist, start by reading great science.

Below you will find a short list of a few of my own favorite science-themed blogs and news sites. While they are not all exclusively social science, they all share a common commitment to one sort of methodology or another and an ability to reflect critically on the strengths and weaknesses of each methodology (unless you are reading the comments section, in which case anything goes…)

Ted Talks
Wired Science
BBC Science Page
Science Daily
Science Magazine
Science Friday Podcasts
NIH News Releases
What are the Objectives of this Course?

- To develop a **solid understanding** of fundamental data collection and analysis techniques
- To learn thoroughly the **assumptions** and **conditions for use** associated with various methods
- To become adept at **evaluating** the **quality** of social research
- To **think critically** and use **evidence-based reasoning** when discussing and writing in class

What Will You Get Out of this Course?

I have **two major goals** for you as a student.

**First**, I want to help you find reasons to learn more about statistics. Important reasons. Reasons that matter to you.

**Second**, I do not simply want to teach you statistics. I want to show you how to learn statistics, with or without my guidance.

Above all else, this will require you to learn how to evaluate your own work objectively and diagnose your own statistical strengths and weaknesses. This will allow you to continue to learn long after our class is done. With these two things in hand, **desire** and **skill**, you will be prepared for a lifetime of attentive study in any field you find exciting.

For me, research methodology itself is such a field. I developed a passion for it early in my career as an academic sociologist. After a semester of thinking, analyzing, and discussing the best this subject has to offer, I hope that you will have a better sense of why I enjoy the challenges of conducting rigorous, high-quality research and the rewards it offers. For believe me, there is no area of life that has not received the studied attention of a curious researcher, and no greater satisfaction than uncovering an explanation for who we are and why.
How Can You Succeed in this Course?

1.) Participate actively in class and discussions
Learning information is only the first step in acquiring real knowledge and wisdom. In order to hone the higher-level thinking skills that are required to function successfully in today’s global society, you must practice them, and to gain practice, you must come to class and engage with others. Students who participate learn more, on average, than those who observe passively (Cross 1987).

2.) Read assigned books, chapters, and articles
Reading is the root of scholarship. In order for your mind to grow, you must fertilize it with provocative ideas, facts, and information. Before we can get to the meaning of what we have read as a group, each of you must do your part. Reading may sometimes seem slow and old-fashioned, but at present there is no substitute.

3.) Prepare for class
If there is an assignment due, please submit it by the deadline. Plan ahead to ensure that they are completed on time even in the face of technical glitches. Good time management is a requirement for present and future success.

4.) Contact me with questions
I am here to help you learn. Although not all college instructors share my view, I believe the teacher-student relationship extends beyond basic course content to include study skills, time management, critical thinking, reading, writing, and analysis. You are among the best and brightest students, but few of us can do without some improvement in one or all of these areas. Also, I hope you will be challenged by this class, but none of you should have to struggle. Please contact me with questions of all types. For simple questions that are not answered here, the quickest way to get an answer is to email me at james.hull@uci.edu.

5.) Visit me during office hours
For more challenging questions, you should visit drop-in office hours or make an appointment for more intensive focus. Making an appointment is easy, so please do it. You should learn to view office hours as an extension of class. I have found that many students are unaware of the tremendous learning opportunities that this individualized instruction provides. Here are some reasons you might want to stop in:

- Ask for an explanation of an idea that you did not understand in class
- Suggest a different way for me to teach some aspect of the material
- Discuss difficulties with assignments, classroom activities, or assessments
- Brainstorm ideas or topics for assignments and projects
- Have a conversation about a shared topic of interest
- Alert me to special learning concerns or needs that you may have
- Get suggestions and strategies for improving study habits

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." ~ Aristotle (384-322 BCE)

Most of the readings will require an hour or more of steady concentration to read and understand, and some may require that you read them more than once.

If you have not yet developed the skill of taking concise notes on the major themes and points of an article or chapter, make an appointment to come and talk with me. Effective note-taking is the key to remembering all of those messy details – practice it.
Evaluation and Grading

1.) Components of grade

Assessment of your performance in this class will be based on regular in-class quizzes, exercises and activities, the lab portion of class, a paper, and a final exam:

- Weekly In-Class Participation and Short Assignments (approximately 20)* 50%
- Paper or Project and In-Class Presentation 50%

Total 100%

(*) The above is an approximation provided to inform you of my general grading strategy. Final grades will roughly reflect these general proportions; specific contributions may differ.

2.) Grading Scale

I grade according to what is called a standard of excellence system, and do not use relative, or comparison grading in my course. This means that everyone who does “A” quality work will receive an “A” and so on.

At the end of the term, you will receive a grade based on the following scale:

- A = 93-100%
- A- = 90-92%
- B+ = 87-89%
- B = 83-86%
- B- = 80-82%
- C+ = 77-79%
- C = 73-76%
- C- = 70-72%
- D = 60-69%
- F = Below 60%

3.) Grade descriptions:

The descriptions below are provided as a courtesy to clarify the meaning of grades:

“A”
Mastery of course content at the highest level of attainment that can reasonably be expected of students at a given stage of development. The A grade states clearly that the students have shown such outstanding promise in the aspect of the discipline under study that he/she may be strongly encouraged to continue.

“B”
Strong performance demonstrating a high level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The B grade states that the student has shown solid promise in the aspect of the discipline under study.

“C”
A totally acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The C grade states that, while not yet showing unusual promise, the student has shown intellectual development.

“D”
A marginal performance in the required exercises demonstrating a minimal passing level of attainment. A student has given no evidence of prospective growth in the discipline; an accumulation of D grades should be taken to mean that the student would be well advised not to continue in the academic field.

“F”
For whatever reason, an unacceptable performance. The F grade indicates that the student’s performance in the required exercises has revealed almost no understanding of the course content. A grade of F should warrant an advisor’s questioning whether the student may suitably register for further study in the discipline before remedial work is undertaken.
Make-up Work and Special Circumstances

Please do not schedule appointments, trips, association meetings, or other activities during class time – it is only 4 hours a week with the lab.

If you do so, you run the risk of missing out on one of our many in-class assignments. Examinations and papers can only be made up with medical documentation or other valid excuse at the instructor’s discretion.

If you are celebrating a recognized religious holiday or absent on official University business you will be allowed to make up missed work. To be fair to other students, you must give notice of any planned absence at least one week in advance and turn in any quizzes or assignments due on the day of the absence IN ADVANCE of that day.

You will find that I am quite flexible if made aware of your upcoming absence ahead of time, and conversely, quite inflexible if notified after the fact. If you have questions about a particular set of circumstances, contact me as far in advance as possible and we can discuss solutions.

** CAREFULLY READ BELOW AND HEED IT**

From time to time, I encounter students who state that they need to achieve a certain grade in my course for any number of reasons (graduation requirements, honors and scholarships, sports eligibility, etc.). In fairness to all students, I will NEVER give special consideration to these types of circumstances in assigning final grades for the course. Do not ask.

That being said, I also recognize the importance of grades to all students and the additional pressures that such requirements may place on you. If you foresee finding yourself in such a situation, please bring this to my attention promptly at the beginning of the semester. I will do what I can to assist you in crafting a personal plan to work toward a specific grade in my course. But only you can determine the final outcome. I will meet individually with any student to discuss: 1.) progress and performance, 2.) general strategies to succeed in my class, 3.) specific mistakes on quizzes, exams, homework, or other assessments, and solutions.

Policy on Disputing Grades

All queries about specific grades for individual assignments or for past quarters must be presented in writing, with a detailed description of the alleged error and a justification of your response if necessary, before we can proceed. This written statement should be emailed to me, and followed up by making an appointment. I do not discuss grading matters via email ever. These discussions must be face-to-face.
Detailed Descriptions of Course Elements

A.) In-Class Participation and Short Assignments

I follow the motto, assess early and assess often. What does this mean? The need to assess your progress throughout the semester and not just at key junctures is the reason for quizzes. If you and other students are having trouble understanding a concept, waiting until “test time” to find out will not suffice because statistics is cumulative. In order to assess your understanding of course material and as a means of practicing and reinforcing skills and knowledge, I will use a variety of activities – ranging from structured assignments to free-writing – and occasionally even assign spontaneous work as the situation dictates. In all cases, students will be given sufficient time to complete any assignment, but they often must be in class in order to receive adequate instruction on how each assignment is to be completed. Failure to complete an assignment in the appropriate fashion due to absence will not be treated any different from not attempting the work at all, so please be present.

The net result of this approach is that most of you should receive very good grades on this part of the course. If you find that you are performing poorly on the dailies, you should schedule a time to meet with me to discuss options.

B.) Independent Research Paper or Project and Presentation

This is the primary measurable outcome of this course. You will select a research topic, identify weaknesses in current understanding, pose an answerable research question, identify issues related to measurement of key concepts, design a data-collection methodology, and if possible, construct and carry out a simple analysis. Your written report will describe in detail each step of your process, while your oral report to the class will focus on the more general issues of how to study your given topic. This would be the ideal choice for an individual who intends to pursue a career in social research.

Much more information will follow on this paper and on specific options (e.g. research proposal, research monograph, journal article, etc.). All will require approximately the same length paper and presentations of an equal length of time.
A Note on Formatting of Written Work

Any written assignments to be turned in for this class should be typewritten in a standard font such as Times, Times New Roman, Palatino, Garamond, Georgia, etc. (no mono-spaced fonts), 12 point, with 1-inch margins all around. The final paper should be double-spaced, all other work may be single-spaced.

All final papers should have a COVER SHEET including your full name, the title of the paper, your ID number, and the honor code pledge with your signature. All other pages of the paper should have ONLY your ID number at the top of each page and page numbers at the bottom. The reason is so that I can grade your work fairly and impartially. Before beginning, I will fold over the cover sheet and grade each paper anonymously. In the event that the cover sheet gets separated, having a PID number on each page will prevent mix-ups. Students who attempt to turn in papers with incorrect formatting will be asked to reformat them before the paper will be accepted.

Letters of Recommendation

Applying for a job, study abroad program, or similar competitive opportunity? Need a letter of recommendation? I am happy to consider writing recommendations for you if the following apply:

1.) You completed one or more full quarter or semester courses with a grade of "B-" (80 %) or better (I need a full quarter to evaluate you)

2.) You complete this form in full at least one month prior to the deadline for letters to be submitted

I will contact you upon receipt of your request. If you do not receive an acknowledgment within 48 hours, please email me.
Other Questions?

I have tried to include answers to the most commonly asked questions in these pages, but you may have others, either those specific to your circumstances, or of general interest to the entire class. Please contact me in the ways described in this document for more information.

References:


Abridged Course Schedule for SS189 (Hull), Fall 2013

*** For the most up-to-date version, consult the online course schedule ***

Week 0: Introductions to Students, Course and Content, Research Overview

Week 1: Student’s Choice: Proper Attribution of Other’s Contributions

Week 2: Student’s Choice: Using Verb Tenses and Voice for Better Writing

Week 3: Student’s Choice:

Week 4: Student’s Choice:

Week 5: Midterm Research Summary and Critical Evaluation

Week 6: Student’s Choice:

Week 7: Student’s Choice:

Week 8: Student’s Choice:

Week 9: Student’s Choice:

Week 10: Student Research Presentations