
BLHS 101: INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Overview

What does it mean to be a member of a particular society? How is it that individuals both form and are formed by a society? Who exercises power and in what ways? While all Core Courses address these questions in some way, it is especially the social sciences that are designed to explore them in depth. This course introduces students to the basic theories, methods, and particular contributions of anthropology, demography, economics, linguistics, political science, psychology, and sociology in attempting to answer such questions. It will provide students with a better understanding of the social and cultural worlds they inhabit and offer needed tools for analyzing the material covered in other Core Courses as well.

Faculty

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Learning Objectives

After completing this course a student should be able to:

1. Compare/evaluate social scientific research and the alternatives
2. Explain the limits/weaknesses of research approaches to knowledge
3. Identify various types of social research and describe their strengths/weaknesses
4. Describe the process of scientific inquiry
5. Describe how theory and research complement one another
6. Able to recognize ethical issues in social scientific research
7. Recognize the purpose of a literature review
8. Formulate a testable hypothesis
9. Compare quantitative and qualitative approaches to measurement
10. Discuss validity and reliability for measurement
11. Explain the basic purpose, strengths and limits of sampling
12. Execute a short survey
13. Propose an effective experimental design
14. Conduct a short content analysis
15. Design a simple field research project
16. Propose a research project using historical-comparative methods
17. Interpret the statistical significance of a finding
18. Identify the conditions of proving causality

Textbooks (required)

The Basics of Social Research

Earl R. Babbie

Cengage Learning; 6 edition (January 1, 2013)

ISBN-10: 113359414X

ISBN-13: 978-1133594147

Philosophy of Social Science

Alexander Rosenberg

Publisher: Westview Press; Fourth Edition, Fourth Edition (January 3, 2012)

ISBN-10: 0813345928

ISBN-13: 978-0813345925

Grading

The final grade will be determined as follows:

- 93% to 100% = A, 90% to 92% = A-
- 87% to 89% = B+, 83% to 86% = B, 80% to 82% = B-
- 77% to 79% = C+, 73% to 76% = C, 70% to 72% = C-
- 67% to 69% = D+, 60% to 66% = D, Below 60% = F

Work in this course is designed around the idea of you experiencing social science as a direct and hands-on experience. Grades will be based on a combination of assignments, an exam, and a project:

Class assignments represent **20%** of your overall grade. One exam will be given during the semester gauging your grasp of the material. This is **25%** of your grade. The examination is open-book and open-note. The centerpiece of the course is a research project. These can be done individually (single-investigator) or in groups (i.e., co-investigators). The topic, methods, and area of social science you work in will be determined by you or your group in consultation with your professor. Each project will be summarized in a “research note,” describing your research methods and results. Throughout the semester we will be discussing and developing these projects together as a class. Results will be presented at the end of the semester in an informal presentation session. This presentation and other in-class participation will account for **15%** of your grade. Following the last class each project will be summarized in a final written research note report (including any feedback or changes derived from in-class discussion). The paper should consist of a minimum of 2,400 words.¹ The written research note is worth **40%** of your grade.

Plagiarism & the Georgetown Honor System

The sources for all information and ideas in your papers must be documented using the style followed by the American Psychological Association (APA). In addition, all quotations must be identified as quotations, using quotation marks and documentation of the source of the quotation. Anything less than these standards is plagiarism and will be treated as such. Plagiarized work will be reported to Georgetown’s Honor Council (see below). If the council finds that the work has been plagiarized, the work will receive an F for a first offense; a second plagiarism will earn an F for the course.

¹ The paper should use a 12-point Times New Roman font and be double spaced with standard margins (1” top and bottom and 1.25” left and right). With these parameters a 2,400 word paper will be approximately 8 pages in length. Papers produced by co-investigators must be proportionately longer.

All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at www.georgetown.edu/honor, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, "What is Plagiarism?", "Sanctioning Guidelines", and "Expedited Sanctioning Process." Papers in this course will be electronically checked for plagiarism. Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or arc@georgetown.edu.

Attendance, snow and other emergencies

During inclement weather or other emergencies, check <http://preparedness.georgetown.edu> or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open.

We have only 14 class meetings together. Attendance is very important. If you are going to be missing a class please let the instructor know ahead of time. You are responsible for obtaining course material missed during any absence. Consistent with the policies of the Liberal Studies program, having two or more absences may result in failure of the course.

Course Schedule

Class and topic

- **Jan. 14:** Introduction to the social sciences, the course, and each other; the social scientific method
- **Jan. 21:** Paradigms & theory; ethical considerations in social scientific research; basic data description
- **Jan. 28:** Research in Economics; research design; conceptualization, operationalization & measurement; the visual display of quantitative data
- **Feb. 4:** Research in Political Science; sampling & survey research; basic inferential statistics and their interpretation
- **Feb. 11:** Research in Sociology; creating indexes, scales, & typologies; patterns of association
- **Feb. 18:** Research in Linguistics; content analysis and unobtrusive research; correlation

Primary readings, assignments, exams

Babbie Ch. 1, Rosenberg Ch. 1
Journal Article: Vindicating Anthony Downs [provided by professor]

Babbie Chs. 2-3, Rosenberg Ch. 2
Journal Article: No Booze? You May Lose: Why Drinkers Earn More Money Than Nondrinkers [provided by professor]

Babbie Chs. 4-5, Rosenberg Ch. 6
Journal Article: Clio and the Economics of Qwerty [provided by professor]

Babbie Chs. 7 & 9, Rosenberg Ch. 4
Journal Article: Some Like it Hot: Individual Differences in Responses to Group Feeling Thermometers [provided by professor]

Babbie Ch. 6, Rosenberg Ch.5
Journal Article: The Strength of Weak Ties [provided by professor]

Babbie Ch. 11, Rosenberg Ch. 7
Journal Article: Hospital Slang for Patients: Crocks, Gomers, Gorks, and Others [provided by professor]

- **Feb. 25:** Research in Psychology; experiments; linear estimation; data and library resources
Babbie Ch. 8, Rosenberg Ch. 8
Journal Article: On Being Sane in Insane Places Science [provided by professor]
- **Mar. 4:** Research in Anthropology; qualitative field research; APA citations; plagiarism
Babbie Ch. 10, Rosenberg Ch. 9
Journal Article: Ethnography for the Digital Age [provided by professor]
- **Mar. 18:** Basic Statistics Review
Rosenberg Ch. 3
- **Mar. 25:** Historical-Comparative research; evaluation research
Babbie Ch. 12, Rosenberg Ch. 10
- **Apr. 1:** Qualitative and quantitative research
Babbie Chs. 13-14, Rosenberg Ch. 11
- **Apr. 8:** Postmodernism; how social science is published, disseminated, and read; effective presentation of research
Babbie Ch. 15, Rosenberg Ch. 12
Journal articles: “Fashionable Nonsense” articles; Sokal (1996a, 1996b), Robbins & Ross (1996) [provided by professor]
- **Apr. 15:** How social science is published, disseminated, and read; effective presentation of research
Babbie Ch. 15, Rosenberg Ch. 13
Statistics and writing workshop
- **Apr. 22:** Final project discussions and presentations
Reports due **May 10** (electronic submissions suggested)
- **TBA:** Final Exam meeting
During scheduled time of finals week