

As of January 6, 2022

SOCI 3238: Digital Sociology
Department of Sociology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Spring, 2022

Tuesdays 14:30-16:15
Cheng Yu Tung Bldg 203

Contact Information

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Course Description

Changes in technology—specifically the transition from the analogue age to the digital age—request a new visit to longstanding sociological questions and a comprehensive approach to the epistemic, methodological and normative issues of “computational social science” as an emerging interdisciplinary field. This undergraduate-level course introduces digital forms of research that advances theories of human behaviour by applying computational techniques to large-scale data from social media, dynamic networks, real-time digitised and administrative records, and social simulations. Students will learn and practice social research methods in the digital age. Particular attention throughout the course will be paid to learning and implementing the **R** statistical program.

Assessment and Grading

The grade for the course will be calculated as a weighted average of the following components:

Attendance (Lecture & Tutorial)	15%
Assignment (1): Online Discussion	20%
Assignment (2): Programming	20%
Presentation	10%
Final Paper	35%

Attendance (15%)

- Attendance will be a crucial part for your success, as the material builds on itself cumulatively throughout the course. Do not fall behind. If you start falling behind, see your tutor immediately, in order to catch up.
- To attend or skip is an adult's decision, so I do not want to punish your few times of absence/lateness with a harsh grade. However, I will highly compensate diligent and active students.
- Class starts promptly on time. Arrivals after 5 minutes of the class beginning will be counted as lateness.
- Equal weights will be given for participation in tutorials.

Assignment (1): Online Discussion (20%)

- We will use a social mobile video-based learning app, *Soqql*, to interactively discuss real-world problems in the digital age. The instructor will introduce 2-3 topics and address discussion questions.
- The resulting app data of your interactions with classmates will be a source for a collective analysis in the class.
- Detailed plans and assessment criterion TBA.

Assignment (2): Programming (20%)

- There will be 2-3 coding exercises as homework assignments.
- You are allowed to help each other to understand materials or programming techniques. But do not, under any circumstances, copy another person's code or answers.
- All submissions should be done on Blackboard.
- For all assignments, late submission is not allowed without at least 24 hours prior notice.

Final Paper (45% in total)

- Final paper should involve some elements of computational social science methods and digital data.
- You can choose to write a research paper or journalism report. While the former is a typical form of social science research, the latter applies academic insights/analysis to a real-world case.
- Presentation (15-20 minutes) is required and will take place in the last two weeks. Goal is to spread good ideas to everyone.
- Due dates, specific instructions, and assessment criterion TBA.

Grading

Grade Descriptors

- A Excellent: Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
 - A- Very Good: Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
 - B Good: Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
 - C Fair: Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
 - D Pass: Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.
 - F Failure: Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.
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Textbook

It is your responsibility to do the reading *before* class. Readings will be mainly based on the combination of the following books, but supplemented by other articles/sources that will be uploaded on Blackboard:

Salganik, Matthew. 2019. *Bit by Bit: Social Research in the Digital Age*. Princeton University Press. This book is freely accessible at <https://www.bitbybitbook.com/en/1st-ed/preface/>

Kumar, Ashish, and Avinash Paul. 2016. *Mastering text mining with R*. Packt.

Academic Honesty

Please keep in mind [the university's policy on academic honesty](#). Plagiarism will not be tolerated in the term paper and assignments. The ideas and language should be your own, and any outside sources must be clearly and properly cited. There are severe consequences if you commit any acts of academic dishonesty. In addition to the [department's policy and guidelines for citations](#), please refer to the [university-level disciplinary guidelines and procedures](#). The Faculty of Social Science has also compiled a [handout](#) to alert students of the importance of academic honesty and the consequences of violating the University's Rules. To this end, the final term paper should be submitted to [VeriGuide](#).

Schedule

Lectures

Week	Date	Topic	Reading (TBA)
1	Jan-11	Course Overview	
2	Jan-18	Research Designs (1)	
3	Jan-25	Research Designs (2)	
4	Feb-01	NO CLASS: Chinese New Year	
5	Feb-08	Data Collection (1)	
6	Feb-15	Data Collection (2)	
7	Feb-22	Text analysis (1)	
8	Mar-01	Text analysis (2)	
9	Mar-08	Text analysis (3)	
10	Mar-15	Networks (1)	
11	Mar-22	Networks (2)	
12	Mar-29	Networks (3)	
13	Apr-05	NO CLASS: READING WEEK	
14	Apr-12	Wrap-up; Student Presentation	
15	Apr-19	Wrap-up; Student Presentation	

Tutorials

TBA