

MLS 703: The Social Sciences
Prof. Elin Waring
Fall 2020

Synchronous meetings:
Wednesdays, 6:00-7:30pm (approx), Zoom
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Teams: Elin.Waring28@login.cuny.edu



This course provides an introduction to the social sciences through the application of different methodologies to important issues facing the contemporary world.

It is divided into three sections. The first (August 25-October 7) provides an introduction to the distinctive methodologies of sociology, economics, psychology, anthropology, political science, and history, supplemented by influential articles in these fields and exercises designed to introduce students to the state of the art in subfields from each discipline.

The second section (October 21-November 18) introduces students to practicing social scientists at Lehman, by assigning samples of their written work with in-person discussions about their approach to the field.

In the final section (December 2-December 16), we will discuss articles that students have selected to focus on in their final paper (see assignments 2 and 3 below).

Though scheduled for 2 hours and 40 minutes, the plan will be to meet “live” on Zoom for about 90 minutes each week. That will be supplemented with one-on-one discussions with me most weeks. These will usually be short, but a few will be more in depth especially as we move into the final sections of the course. There is also a lot of reading, which is important to do and that will take a substantial amount of time. Each week will also involve discussions or other assignments on the course Blackboard site.

During the first class meeting I will provide instructions for using these resources.
Grade distribution (please see my more detailed instructions on Blackboard)

Assignment 1 (25% of grade)

Pick journal articles that address the same topic from two different social sciences (from a list provided in class), and use them to compare and contrast the way these fields approach the topic. For this to work, you should pick subfields that either focus on the same topic (e.g., urban sociology and urban politics) or that borrow from the same discipline (e.g., psychological anthropology and behavioral economics). This paper should build on weekly online posts during the first part of the class, and I’ll make sure that you’ve picked at least two journals that will

work for this assignment. **Due on October 27.**

Assignment 2 (20% of grade)

Compile an annotated bibliography of twelve secondary sources that bring at least three different social-science perspectives to a research topic of your choice. You should write at least one paragraph about each source. Your list of sources is due **November 5**, the first draft of your annotated bibliography is due **November 12**, and the final draft is due **November 19**. To meet these deadlines, you will need to start working on this in early October.

Assignment 3 (30% of grade)

Using the sources you selected in assignment two, write a literature review using these sources. Due via Blackboard on **December 16**.

Class participation (including discussion posts)

25% of grade. Please inform me at least a day before class if possible, for whatever reason, you need to miss a class or will be late. I am aware that this is a challenging time for everyone, but you will benefit greatly from being present during class time. Also, make sure that you participate in the one on one meetings with me.

Participation includes your engagement in the discussion board threads. This means both participating in all of them and making quality contributions that advance the discussions and learning. At times they will help prepare for high quality discussions in our time together and at other times will continue an in person discussion or experience.

Note on readings

Most of articles assigned in the first six course meetings are among the most frequently cited journal articles published in their respective disciplines during the last ten years, as determined by the Social Sciences Citation Index. The selection has been made to ensure a diversity of methodologies and subjects within each discipline. Each of these weeks, students will also be assigned to provide a short online report on an academic journal from the social science discussed that week, which includes a discussion of the journal's scope and mission, an overview of the type of articles published during the last several years, and (if applicable) an overview of books covered in its book review section. Students are encouraged to draw from these reports in writing their first paper (see above).

Readings assigned in the second section of the course are designed to provide context for a discussion with the guest presenter. These readings will give us a framework to talk with our presenters about their disciplines and, more importantly, what the work of doing scholarship in the different disciplines is like. We will see how they differ as well as some aspects of intersection.

The readings for the final section of the course (November 26-December 10) will be selected from the annotated bibliographies that students hand in on November 19 (Assignment 2). The idea in this part of the course is to generate class discussions about these sources that will be helpful in writing Assignment 3.

All readings for the course are posted on Blackboard (in the "Content" section).

Discussion board posts

Click the "Discussion Board" link on Blackboard to access a number of discussion topics. Here is where you will post reports on different journals in the social sciences. These are important to your participation grade. I will discuss the mechanics of this in the first class and post a sign-up sheet for organizations/journals. See instructions in the content folder on Blackboard.

Course schedule

August 26 Introduction to course and to MALS

September 2 Sociology

- Student reports on Sociology journals (on Discussion Board, due September 1 5pm)

Read:

- Michael J. Strada, Through the Global Lens: An Introduction to the Social Sciences, pp. 31-42, and "Sociology," in Adam and Jessica Kuper (eds.), The Social Science Encyclopedia (Routledge, 2004).
- Jill E. Yavorsky, Claire M. Kamp Dush, and Sarah J. Schoppe-Sullivan, "The Production of Inequality: The Gender Division of Labor Across the Transition to Parenthood," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 77 (2015): 662-679.
- Bruce Western, Anthony A. Braga, Jaclyn Davis, and Catherine Sirois, "Stress and Hardship after Prison," *American Journal of Sociology* 120 (2015): 1512-1547.
- Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Karen A. Pren, "Why Border Enforcement Backfired," *American Journal of Sociology* 121 (2016): 1557-1600.

September 9 Psychology

- Student reports on Psychology journals (on Discussion Board, due September 8 5pm)

Read:

- "Psychology" in Adam and Jessica Kuper (eds.), The Social Science Encyclopedia (Routledge, 2004).
- Clancy Blair and C. Cybele Raver, "School Readiness and Self-Regulation: A Developmental Psychobiological Approach," *Annual Review of Psychology* 66 (2015): 711-731.
- Elke U. Weber and Paul C. Stern, "Public Understanding of Climate Change in the United States," *American Psychologist* 66 (2011): 315-328.
- Sail M. Kassin, Steven A. Drizin, Thomas Grisso et al., "Police-Induced Confessions: Risk Factors and Recommendations," *Law and Human Behavior* 34 (2010): 3-38.

September 16 Economics

- Student reports on Economics journals (on Discussion Board, due September 15 5pm)

Read:

- Strada, Through the Global Lens, 366-373, 402-405.
- Michael R. Carter and Christopher B. Barrett, "The Economics of Poverty Traps and Persistent Poverty: An Asset-based Approach," *Journal of Development Studies* 42 (2006): 178-199.
- David Autor, "Why Are There Still So Many Jobs? The History and Future of Workplace Automation," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 29 (2015): 3-30.
- Katherine N. Lemon and Peter C. Verhoef, "Understanding Customer Experience Throughout the Customer Journey," *Journal of Marketing* 80 (2016): 69-96.

September 23 Anthropology

- Student reports on Anthropology journals (on Discussion Board, due September 22 5pm)

Read :

- "Anthropology" in Adam and Jessica Kuper (eds.), *The Social Science Encyclopedia* (Routledge, 2004).
- Gustavo Oliveira and Susanna Hecht, "Sacred Groves, Sacrifice Zones and Soy Production: Globalization, Intensification and Neo-Nature in South America," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 43 (2016): 251-285.
- Elana D. Buch, "Anthropology of Aging and Care," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44 (2015): 277-293.
- Yarimar Bonilla and Jonathan Rosa, "#Ferguson: Digital Protest, Hashtag Ethnography, and the Racial Politics of Social Media in the United States," *American Ethnologist* 42 (2015): 1-17.

September 30 Political Science

- Student reports on Political Science journals (on Discussion Board, due September 29)

Read

- "Political Science," in Adam and Jessica Kuper (eds.), *The Social Science Encyclopedia* (Routledge, 2004).
- Andrei Boutyline and Robb Willer, "The Social Structure of Political Echo Chambers: Variation in Ideological Homophily in Online Networks," *Political Psychology* 38 (2017): 551-569.
- Brian F. Schaffner, Matthew Macwilliams, and Tatishe Nteta, "Understanding White Polarization in the 2016 Vote for President: The Sobering Role of Racism and Sexism," *Political Science Quarterly* 133 (2018): 9-34.
- Zoltan Hajnal, Nazita Lajevardi, and Lindsay Nielson, "Voter Identification Laws and the Suppression of Minority Voters," *Journal of Politics* 79 (2017): 363-379.

October 7 History

- Student reports on History journals (on Discussion Board, due October 20)

Read:

- Mark Gilderhus, *History and Historians* (Prentice Hall, 2010), ch. 6 and Postscript

- Tine De Moor and Jan Luiten Van Zanden, “Girl Power: the European Marriage Pattern and Labour Markets in the North Sea Region in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Period,” *Economic History Review* 63 (2010): 1-33.
- Matthew D. Lassiter, "Impossible Criminals: The Suburban Narratives of America's War on Drugs," *Journal of American History* 102 (2015): 126-140.
- Heather Ann Thompson, “Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History,” *Journal of American History* 97 (2010): 703-734.

October 14: No class, CUNY Wednesday schedule

October 21-Nov 18 Social science in action

Readings and guest speakers to be announced.

Discussion board discussion of each reading **prior to** the visit.

November 25: No Class, CUNY Friday schedule

December 2 Discussion of student-selected research articles

- All posts due December 1 (students must post a comment on at least two articles selected by your classmates).

December 9 Discussion of student-selected research articles

- All posts due December 8 (students must post a comment on remaining articles selected by your classmate).

December 16: Class wrap up

- Assignment 3 due via Blackboard.

Official course description

<http://lehman.smartcatalogiq.com/en/2015-2017/Graduate-Bulletin/Courses/MLS-Master-s-in-Liberal-Std/700/MLS-703>

The aim is to help students learn to evaluate critically the claims of social scientists by helping them appreciate more deeply the evidence and reasoning used to justify them. Study of both classical and contemporary studies demonstrating a wide range of theoretical approaches and methodologies of the social sciences. Also critical comparison and evaluation of the social sciences' general claims of scientific validity.

Course Learning Objectives

After completing this course, students will:

Have with a basic familiarity with the range of topics and approaches associated with six major social science disciplines (Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Political Science, and History) and be able to explain these.

Assignment 1, and oral presentations in the first section of the course, will contribute to this outcome.

Have and be able to apply research and reading skills in at least three of these disciplines. Be able to apply different social science methodologies and theories to a research

problem.

Assignments 2 and 3 will contribute to these outcomes.

Policies and Procedures

Zoom and other video platforms

<https://zoom.us/j/91534740578?pwd=azRlMjNQeHhBcUkza3V6bWdsUWxPd09>

Passcode: 684886

Students who participate in this class with their camera on or use a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded solely for the purpose of creating a record for students enrolled in the class to refer to, including those enrolled students who are unable to attend live. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all class meetings as scheduled, and are responsible for all class work missed as a result of late registration or absence. Excessive absences in any course may result in a lower final grade.

Disabilities

Lehman College is committed to providing access to all programs and curricula to all students. Students with disabilities who may need classroom accommodations are encouraged to register with the Office of Student Disability Services. For more information, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services, Shuster Hall, Room 238, phone number, 718-960-8441.

Academic support

Lehman's Instructional Support Services Program (ISSP) provides appointment based and drop-in tutoring in the humanities, social sciences, and writing, as well as general writing and academic skills workshops. To obtain more information please visit their website at <http://www.lehman.edu/issp>, or please call 718-960-8175, and the SLC at 718-960-7707.

Academic Integrity

For Lehman's policies on plagiarism and academic integrity please visit this website: <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/student-affairs/documents/studenthandbook-02.pdf>

Public Safety

The telephone number for the campus police is 718-960-8228.

Student Support Services

Lehman has support services including issues of food insecurity, housing insecurity and mental health. The Division of Student Affairs is the central coordinator of these. You can find more information here <https://www.lehman.edu/student-affairs/divisional-services.php>