Course Goals

This course has two goals. One, it is designed to expose students in the QMSS degree program to different methods and practices of social science research. Seminar presentations are given on a wide range of topics by faculty from Columbia and other New York City universities, as well as researchers from other settings. Two, it is also designed to give students important professional development skills, particularly around academic writing, research methods and job skills.

Course Expectations

Attendance and Class Participation. Your attendance and participation are expected, but you may skip up to 2 presentations this semester.

Assignments. Here they are below.

--- Assignment #1: A 3-minute TED-style Talk ---

I will provide an example of what I am looking for, but this is a chance to craft a presentation to try to convince others of the importance of your topic. I will provide some options for how to structure the talk.

--- Assignment #2: Three Reaction Memos ---

You can pick any 3 weeks to react to. (Wherever possible, the slides and papers will be posted to Courseworks for you reference.)

A. If the talk was substantive, the reaction could include the following:
   1. What were the researchers trying to do?
   2. How did they do it (methods and data)? Are there any ideas/lessons you took away from these methods?
   3. How well did they do it? What made the project strong? What would they still need to work on? What remaining questions do you have?
   4. Any other thoughts of how this could relatively directly apply to your research.

B. If the talk was methodological, the reaction could include the following:
   1. What was the speaker trying to explain/give advice on?
   2. How did the speaker try to explain or give advice?
   3. What did you learn from the talk that was helpful?
   4. What else would have been helpful for you to learn about this topic/issue?
   5. Any other thoughts of how this could relatively directly apply to your research.

Total page requirement: 1 and a half pages per reaction memo

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Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: Students must do all their work within the boundaries of acceptable academic norms. See the Academic Honesty page of the CU website regarding college policy on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty - http://www.columbia.edu/cu/history/ugrad/main/handbook/academic_honesty.html. Students found guilty of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, which may include reduction of grade, a failure in the course, suspension or expulsion. This includes lab reports – if they are copied from another student, severe penalties may be applied.

Late Assignments. Students will lose points for handing in late assignments, at the discretion of the instructor.

Proposed Schedule for the Course Lectures
(dates are subject to change, depending on speaker schedules)

Jan 20 – Does Earning More Than Your Spouse Increase Your Financial Satisfaction? (Greg Eirich, QMSS)
Jan 27 – Health Disparities Over the Life-Course (Julien Teitler, School of Social Work, Columbia)

Feb 3 – Neighborhood Gentrification and Social Altruism in Manhattan’s West Side (Van Tran, Sociology, Columbia)
Feb 10 – Day 1 of 3-Minutes TED-style talks (QMSS Students)
Feb 17 – Day 2 of 3-Minutes TED-style talks (QMSS Students)
Feb 24 – Quantitative Causal Inference in Education Research (Sarah Cohodes, Teachers College)

March 2 – Research on Corruption and the Modern State (Paul Lagunes, SIPA, Columbia)
March 9 – Social Research in the Digital Age (Matthew Salganik, Sociology, Princeton)
March 16 - Spring Break! (no class)
March 30 - Practical Data Science: The North American Oil and Gas Industry (Eric Novik, formerly of TIBCO Spotfire)

April 6– Panels, Polls and the Modern Era of Survey Research (Donato Vaccaro, GfK)
April 13 – Improving Socioeconomic Metrics Using Satellite Imagery (Jeff Chen, Department of Commerce)
April 20 – Using Twitter Sentiment Data to Predict Equity Returns (Rob Trangucci, iSentium)
April 27 – Marketing Analytics at a Cultural Institution (Elena Villaespesa, The Metropolitan Museum of Art)