

Perspectives in Social Science Analysis

MAPS 30000 – Sections 7 (Dowling) & 8 (Hamilton); Autumn 2024

Class meetings:

Section 7 (Dowling): Tues/Thurs 11am - 12:20pm // 1155 Building Rm. 289B

Section 8 (Hamilton): Tues/Thurs 2pm - 3:20pm // 1155 Building Rm. 140B

Professor: Dr. Natalie Dowling

Contact: ndowling@uchicago.edu

Office hours:

Tues/Thurs 3:40pm - 5pm

1155 E 60th St. Room 404

Sign-up required: [Book an appointment](#)

Jump to:

Course Description.....	1
Requirements	2
Schedule	3
Policies	8
Expectations for Assignments and Participation .	10

Course Description

Perspectives in Social Science Analysis is an introduction to interdisciplinary social theory which aims to teach you how to read social science research at the graduate level and develop your ability to formulate and execute a successful master's thesis.

We will devote 6 weeks of this course to learning 6 influential theories and approaches (or perspectives) that social scientists use to understand the nature of social life and individual behavior. Although the course will not provide a comprehensive overview of all perspectives in the social sciences, it is designed to stimulate your thinking about how standards of argumentation and evidence are applied in social science research.

In these 6 weeks, we will read classic and contemporary social science research and discuss the perspective in our seminar sessions. These sessions will help you learn how to “reverse engineer” texts to identify and analyze the authors’ theoretical and methodological choices. Developing these skills is critical to success in your courses and on your M.A. thesis.

Our study of these 6 perspectives is intended to familiarize you with a broad range of ways that scholars use to study social life. As you will see during your time in the program, some of the most important work in the social sciences is the product of scholars who engaged multiple perspectives or traditions in social science analysis.

Why is this syllabus so long?!?!

Because it will answer almost any question you have about the course.

Perspectives is one of the first classes you’ll take at UChicago. One objective of this class is to get you comfortable being a graduate student here. This syllabus (over-)explains typical expectations, both what you can expect from classes and what your professors will expect from you.

Look here first when you have a question before asking me, because that’s one expectation *all* your professors will have.

The other three weeks of this course will be devoted to M.A. thesis preparation. You will apply your developing knowledge of social science research to begin formulating a thesis project. Written assignments will provide you with opportunities to analyze scholarship in your area and develop a thesis proposal.

Requirements

Materials & Resources

Course resources are managed through Canvas. The course Canvas page is organized into modules, so that all readings, assignments, slides, files, and other materials for the week are published in one place rather than using different pages for assignments, readings, files, etc.

All readings will be posted as PDFs on Canvas or available as free e-books via UChicago Libraries.

You will also have access to a UChicago Box folder with a “toolkit” of student resources. This includes materials that may be helpful as general resources for improving your writing, reading journal articles, navigating university culture, etc. [Access the Box folder here.](#)

Grading

Your grade for the course is based on active engagement in class, 1 written theory/analytical assignment, 2 thesis proposal preparation assignments, and your final proposal. Additional specifications for all assignments, including the self-evaluation component, will be provided as the quarter progresses.

Grade distribution is as follows:

- **40% - Active engagement.** Students are expected to attend and actively participate in all in-class and online discussions, including serving as a discussion leader for two weeks. At the end of the quarter, students will submit a self-evaluation with a short, written reflection and *suggested* grade.
- **20% - Perspectives theory assignment.** This written assignment (~3 pages) requires students to consider a psychological or social phenomenon with contemporary relevance from 2 theoretical perspectives then reflecting on how they are in complement and/or conflict. Due Friday, November 22nd (Week 8).
- **20% - Thesis preparation assignments (2).** Twice during the quarter you will submit written assignments working toward constructing your final thesis proposal, each worth 10% of your final grade. In Week 4, you will complete a brief introduction and literature review, due Friday, October 25th. In Week 7, you will complete the research design components of the proposal, due Friday, November 15th. Class meetings during these weeks will be workshops designed to help you complete these assignments.
- **20% - MA Thesis proposal.** The final assignment for the course will be a *final* draft of your thesis proposal. Class meetings during Week 9 will be workshops focused on feedback and revision. Your final proposal should incorporate peer feedback from these workshops and any comments you have received from your preceptor and advisor. Due Tuesday, December 10th.

Schedule

Course schedule is subject to change. Students will be notified of any changes to readings or assignments via Canvas announcements.

PERSPECTIVES WEEKS (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8): Come to class on Tuesday prepared for in-depth discussion of priority readings (those listed by Tuesday's date). Class discussion will be most productive if you read or preview all readings for the week before Tuesday's class. Come to class on Thursday prepared for in-depth discussion of *all* readings.

WORKSHOP WEEKS (4, 7, 9): Come to class on Tuesday with a draft of your written assignment. (Assignment instructions will be distributed the previous Thursday). We will use both Tuesday and Thursday class time to discuss matters relevant to that week's assignment and actively workshop your writing. Assignments should be submitted to Canvas for grading by Friday at 11:59pm unless otherwise noted.

Week	Topic	Dates	Assignments/Readings
Orientation	Introduction	Wednesday Sep. 25	PRECEPTOR GROUP ORIENTATION: Section 7 (Dowling): 9am-11am Section 8 (Hamilton): 3pm-5pm Location: 1155 Building, Rm 295
		Thursday Sep. 26	INTRODUCTORY LECTURE: recording posted to Canvas at 12pm READINGS: Booth et al. (2008). The craft of research. Chapters 1-11, 13-14
		Monday Sep. 30	Week 1 Canvas Discussion Board opens
1	Experimental Positivism	Tuesday Oct. 1	PRIORITY READINGS: 1. Danziger (1990). Constructing the subject: Historical origins of psychological research. <i>Excerpts</i> 2. King, Keohane, & Verba (1994). Designing social inquiry. <i>Excerpts</i>
		Thursday Oct. 3	ADDITIONAL READINGS: 3. Asch (1955). Opinions and social pressure 4. Clark & Clark (1947). Racial identification and racial preference in Negro children

Week	Topic	Dates	Assignments/Readings
			5. Festinger & Carlsmith (1959). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance 6. Platt (1964). Strong inference: Certain systematic methods of scientific thinking may produce much more rapid progress than others 7. Schnall, Haidt, Clore, & Jordan (2008). Disgust as embodied moral judgment 8. Warburton, Williams, & Cairns (2006). When ostracism leads to aggression: The moderating effects of control deprivation
		Monday Oct. 14	Week 3 Canvas Discussion Board opens
		Tuesday Oct. 15	PRIORITY READINGS: 1. Blumer, H. (2009). Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method. <i>Excerpts</i> 2. Goffman, E. (1967). On Facework. In <i>Interaction ritual: Essays in face-to-face behavior.</i>
2	Embedded Interactionism	Thursday Oct. 17	ADDITIONAL READINGS: 3. Bavelas, J. B., & Chovil, N. (2000). Visible acts of meaning: An integrated message model of language in face-to-face dialogue. 4. Du Bois, J. W. (2007). The stance triangle. 5. Ochs, E. (2003). Constructing Social Identity: A Language Socialization Perspective. 6. Rundquist, S. (1992). Indirectness: A gender study of flouting Grice's maxims.
		Monday Oct. 7	Week 2 Canvas Discussion Board opens
3	Structural Functionalism	Tuesday Oct. 8	PRIORITY READINGS:

Week	Topic	Dates	Assignments/Readings
			1. Durkheim (1912). The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. Introduction; Book I Ch 1; Book II Ch 7 2. DuBois (1899). The Philadelphia Negro. Chapter 16
		Thursday Oct. 10	ADDITIONAL READINGS: 3. Portes & Zhou (1993). The new second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants 4. Small (2017). Someone to talk to. Ch. 6
4	Proposal Workshops: Topic & Background	Tuesday Oct. 22	PREPARATION: Introduction zero-draft/outline WORKSHOP: Active Literature Review
		Thursday Oct. 24	WORKSHOP: Critical Reading Strategies
		Friday Oct. 25	PROPOSAL ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE: Draft of thesis proposal introduction through literature review
		Monday Oct. 28	Week 5 Canvas Discussion Board opens
5	Intersectional Identities	Tuesday Oct. 29	PRIORITY READINGS: 1. Alexander (2012). The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in an age of colorblindness. Chapter 3 2. Butler (1988). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. 3. hooks (1984). Feminist theory: From margin to center. Chapters 1 & 4
		Thursday Oct. 31	ADDITIONAL READINGS: 4. Bowleg (2008). When Black + lesbian + woman ≠ Black lesbian woman: The methodological challenges of qualitative and quantitative intersectionality research.

Week	Topic	Dates	Assignments/Readings
			5. Cohen (1997) Punks, bulldaggers, and welfare queens: The radical potential of queer politics? 6. Dunham, Y., & Olson, K. R. (2016). Beyond Discrete Categories: Studying Multiracial, Intersex, and Transgender Children Will Strengthen Basic Developmental Science. 7. Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach (2008). Intersectional invisibility: The distinctive advantages and disadvantages of multiple subordinate-group identities.
		Monday Nov. 4	Week 6 Canvas Discussion Board opens
			PREPARATION: Complete “Schelling Games” survey PRIORITY READINGS:
		Tuesday Nov. 5	1. Ostrom (1990). Governing the commons. Chapters 1, 3, and 6 2. Schelling (1960). Strategy of conflict. Selections from Chapters 3 & 4 3. Schelling (1984). Choice and consequence. Chapter 4
6	Rational Choice		ADDITIONAL READINGS:
		Thursday Nov. 7	1. Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2008). Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness. Chapters 1, 3, 5 2. Tversky & Kahneman (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. 3. Yamagishi, Horita, Takagishi, Shinada, Tanida, & Cook (2009). The private rejection of unfair offers and emotional commitment. BONUS (optional) PODCAST: If Books Could Kill, Nudge Part 1 [71 min]
7		Tuesday Nov. 12	PREPARATION: Research problem

Week	Topic	Dates	Assignments/Readings
			WORKSHOP: Reverse engineering the proposal
	Proposal Workshops: Research Design	Thursday Nov. 14	WORKSHOP: Research design writing strategies for psychology
		Friday Nov. 15	PROPOSAL ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE: Draft of thesis proposal questions, hypotheses, methods
		Monday Nov. 18	Week 8 Canvas Discussion Board opens
		Tuesday Nov. 19	PRIORITY READINGS: 1. Vygotsky, L. (1986). Thought and language. Ch 1; 4-5
8	Cognitive Science	Thursday Nov. 21	ADDITIONAL READINGS: 2. Lakoff & Johnson (1980). Metaphors we live by. Chapters 1-7; 19-21 3. Levinson, S. C. (2019). Interactional Foundations of Language: The Interaction Engine Hypothesis.
		Friday Nov. 22	THEORY ASSIGNMENT DUE
	Thanksgiving	Nov. 25 – Nov. 29	<i>No class - get some rest!</i>
	Proposal Workshops: Proposal Draft	Tuesday Dec. 3	PREPARATION: Proposal draft WORKSHOP: Productive feedback
9		Wednesday Dec. 4	PEER FEEDBACK DUE
		Thursday Dec. 5	WORKSHOP: Revision practices
Finals week		Tuesday Dec. 10	FINAL THESIS PROPOSAL DUE

Policies

Accessibility and Accommodation

I am committed to making this course accessible to students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make aspects of this course difficult for you to access, please contact me so we can discuss accommodating your needs. This includes, but is not limited to, accommodations around the format of course materials, the use of Canvas and other digital resources, the classroom and other physical resources, and the structure of assignments.

I will work with you to create an accessible learning environment whether or not you disclose your disability or personal circumstances. If you choose to disclose personal information with me, I will keep those discussions confidential. For certain accommodations you may need to contact Student Disability Services at (773) 702-6000 or disabilities@uchicago.edu.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Community

We will commit as a class to creating a welcoming, respectful, and productive classroom. We will expect each other to be mutually respectful of our meaningful identities. When we engage with each other in discussion we will be considerate of the diversity of our classroom with regards to gender, sexuality, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, immigration status, and linguistic background. It is critical that we maintain respectful dialogue, which includes using correct names and pronouns. If a member of our classroom community – including myself – is creating an unwelcoming space for you, I hope you will bring this to my attention immediately. If you would prefer to discuss the situation with someone outside our class, I encourage you to take advantage of the [UChicago CARES reporting and conflict resolution processes](#).

Attendance and Active Engagement

Please email me to let me know if you will be absent from class meeting. No need to defend yourself or prove you've got a good reason – I just want a heads up! Please do not come to class if you are feeling ill. There is no direct penalty to your grade for absences, but frequently missing classes may negatively impact your overall participation grade.

Laptops, tablets, and other electronic devices may be used class, but your participation grade will suffer if your device is distracting you from engaging in discussion.

Late Work

If you need an extension for any reason, please ask! The more advance notice you give me, the better a strategy we can make for completing the assignment. I do not want to penalize you for being unwell, having four papers due the same day, coping with a family emergency, etc. Email me in advance of the due date/time and we will work something out. Without advance notice, late assignments will lose 10% of total assignment points per day.

Pass/Fail

Per MAPSS requirements, this class must be taken for a quality grade. If you are concerned about your grade as the end of quarter approaches, please book an office hours appointment with me. The earlier you bring concerns to my attention, the better a plan we can make together.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

Please read UChicago's (very brief) [Academic Honesty & Plagiarism policy here](#). In this class I am using [Oxford University's explanation of plagiarism](#) by which, fundamentally, "plagiarism is presenting work or ideas from another source as your own, with or without consent of the original author..."

AI Writing Tools

In this class, I allow and encourage using large language models like ChatGPT "appropriately" as tools that productively help you learn. Using these tools "inappropriately" to take shortcuts that undermine the learning objectives of the class are not permitted.

Examples of **appropriate uses** include things like brainstorming, finding sources, proofreading, and revising drafts for conciseness and tone.

Inappropriate uses of AI are those which claim the ideas and writing of another entity are your own. There is admittedly a fine line between using a phrase or wording suggestion produced by AI and using so much generated text as to constitute plagiarism.

If you are unsure whether your use of AI is appropriate, *please ask me!* This is a sticky topic and we are all figuring it out together. I will appreciate the thoughtfulness you demonstrate by checking in with me, even if I end up advising you that it is inappropriate use.

Written work must be submitted together with an AI statement describing if and/or how it was used to complete the assignment. **Plagiarized work, whether from human or AI creators, will receive a non-negotiable 0.**

You can find more information about the plagiarism policy in the MAPSS Toolkit Box folder, including practical suggestions for helpful and honest ways to take advantage of LLMs/AI.

Expectations for Assignments and Participation

Active Engagement

Actively engaging with the readings will help build a solid theoretical foundation to guide your development as a scholar in psychology. While some perspectives will directly support your immediate research interests more than others, developing a basic understanding of these perspectives will allow you to situate your work within the broader contexts of social science research.

Some participation requirements (e.g., online discussion posts, discussion leading) are designed to prepare you for graduate-level seminars at the University of Chicago. Many courses you take this year will follow a similar general structure: *students* – not instructors – guide discussion, using class time to cooperatively develop new ideas and apply concepts literature.

Components

- **General classroom engagement:** Our time in class is an opportunity to actively engage with the material we are exploring and to learn from one another. Full participation requires contributing high quality comments during class discussion. “High quality” does not mean comments must be earth-shattering or revolutionary. High quality comments are those that both demonstrate and promote engagement with classmates and the readings. A high quality comment might link different readings together (perhaps across weeks) to make a novel point, provide an insightful example, raise a topic that inspires the class to pursue an exciting direction, etc.
- **Readings:** Ideally, students should come to class on Tuesday having done a close-read of all readings for the week. Minimally, students should come to class on Tuesday having given their best, good-faith effort to each reading texted marked as high-priority and a preview of the additional readings (that should be read closely before Thursday).
- **Discussion leading:** During orientation week, students will sign up to lead class discussion during two weeks. Discussion leaders are responsible for 1) organizing the weekly Canvas discussion board, 2) creating at least one structured, interactive in-class activity per class meeting, and 3) guiding large group discussion as needed.
- **Canvas discussion boards:** Students who are not discussion leaders should check the week’s Canvas discussion board each Monday morning and make contributions during the week. In general, comments should be well-articulated, substantive, and grounded in course materials, but may be casual and conversational in tone. The purpose of these discussions is to promote friendly and respectful engagement with one another and the readings, not to assess your writing or make you regurgitate information.

Written Assignments

All written assignments are intended to promote the development of graduate-level academic writing. I do *not* expect you to begin graduate school with graduate-level writing; I *do* expect your writing to improve over the quarter.

The proposal assignments are designed to build on each other iteratively, scaffolding the development of your thesis proposal at the end of the quarter. Class meetings during Weeks 4, 7, and 9 will be writing workshops to help you complete these assignments.

All assignments should follow APA 7th edition guidelines for both formatting and citations. You can learn more about APA on the [Purdue Owl website](#) and in resources on Box. You will not lose points for occasional typos, spelling errors, or for going a little over the word limit. You *will* lose points when writing problems impact readability. For students whose native language is not English, there are many resources available on campus through [UChicago's English Language Institute](#) to help develop your skills and confidence in academic writing English, including workshops, extracurricular groups, and individual tutoring.

Discussion Leaders

During orientation week, students will sign up to lead class discussion during two weeks. Discussion leaders are responsible for organizing the weekly Canvas discussion board, creating at least one structured, interactive in-class activity per class meeting, and guiding discussion.

As a discussion leader, you should feel confident *leading discussion*. The goal is to help facilitate students speaking directly with one another rather than leading a Q&A session.

Discussion leaders **should**:

- Do a “deep read” of the week’s readings. You are not expected to become experts on week’s readings or topic, but you should dedicate extra time to close reading. Regardless of how a group chooses to distribute the week’s workload, all group members should do a deep read of all materials before class on Tuesday.
- Meet as a group virtually or in-person at least once to coordinate plans and ensure all group members are confident with the material.
- Organize the week’s Canvas discussion board in the structure of your choosing by Monday morning at the latest. You can use the boring but tried-and-true default method below, but you should feel free to get creative!
 - **Default structure:** The group creates comment threads for ~5 analytical, open-ended questions/topics. Throughout the week, all students in the class comment in these threads.
 - **Original structure:** Devise an alternative structure that allows your classmates to engage with one another asynchronously. Your structure should promote critical thinking and analysis grounded in the course materials. Please respect your classmates’ time and effort by allowing sufficient time and direction for them to participate. Send me new text for the main discussion post that explains the structure and expectations for your classmates by Sunday at 5pm so I can make sure the changes are in place when students check on Monday morning.
- Outline a plan to keep discussion going, for example by creating a list of “must-hit” questions or topics to raise when the conversation lags.
 - **Tuesday’s class should focus on the priority texts.** While it is ok to reference all assigned readings, the first class of the week should give everyone a shared foundation in understanding the most important themes of the perspective. Remember that while your classmates are familiar with all the week’s materials, they focused most of their energy on these texts.
 - Thursday’s class should continue discussing the priority texts, but should also include substantive discussion of other assigned texts.

- Organize at least one interactive class activity for each class meeting. This can range from quite simple, like a thought-provoking “think-pair-share” to creative, novel, and complex. Some examples from past classes:
 - Games that refresh memory to stimulate discussion (e.g., bingo, word search, crossword, kahoot, live polling, word clouds, etc.)
 - Bringing in relevant outside media to discuss (e.g., a news article about a current event that can be understood through the week’s perspective)
 - Small-group work to “divide and conquer” the most important and/or confusing themes from a reading
 - Collaborating on a shared Google Doc to strategically break down difficult texts
 - Visually diagramming concepts on the whiteboard

Discussion leaders **should not:**

- Spend time summarizing readings
- Rely on the “easy” texts (especially the modern psychology articles!)
- Give a presentation, with or without slides (if you want to use slides as part of your activity, you must get advance approval)
- Dominate discussion
 - Or let any individual (including the instructor!!) dominate discussion
- Ask “test questions” (we want open-ended, discussion-generating prompts, not a quiz with correct responses!) in-class or on Canvas
 - Exception: If used wisely these can occasionally be useful for very quickly refreshing memories at the beginning of class.

Discussion leaders **may choose to:**

- Meet with me in office hours to help with planning class time or getting a deep understanding of the readings
- Run ideas by me in advance to make sure plans for activities or discussion structures are on track
- Delegate responsibilities among group members (e.g., taking the lead on Tuesday or Thursday, guiding in-class or on-Canvas discussion)
 - If you do so, I recommend sending me your plan ahead of time so I don’t overlook any group members’ not-super-obvious contributions

Discussion leaders are working **with** the professor:

You are not expected to fully run the class while the professor sits idly by! I have lesson plans with topics to cover, activities, and discussion prompts. I will help manage awkward moments, steer us back on track when we go off the rails on a tangent, and clarify concepts. You can choose whether to include me as part of your planned activities. Un/fortunately I will say plenty in large group discussion whether you want me to or not!