

Research Methods and Techniques

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Course Description

The course of Research Methods Research Techniques seeks to equip students with both the theoretical and practical skills for the understanding and the study of social phenomena. Departing from a brief introduction to the problematic(s) of scientific knowledge, the program is designed for students to be introduced in a procedural way to the practice of scientific work, i.e., from being introduced to the stages that define the research process in social sciences and learning the different methods of data collection and analysis to the final task of designing their own individual research project. In particular, the curricular unit aims to introduce students to the fundamental stages of selecting a research topic, formulating a research question and hypotheses, selecting cases, but also promoting contact with and reflection criticism about different methods of collecting and processing data.

Thus, it is intended that students acquire the theoretical and practical skills about what should constitute a scientific work that is both ethically and methodologically rigorous. Students are expected to be able to recognize the fundamental elements that constitute a research project (e.g., the appropriate research questions, methodology, ethical issues, researcher's own reflexivity and positionality), as well as to compare different research design alternatives, identify their strengths and/or weaknesses and discern their impact on the final research product. Moreover, students are also expected to be able to design an original research project in accordance with good scientific practices, as well as to summarize, evaluate and identify the valences and/or weaknesses of the scientific literature.

Course Objectives

At the end of the course, students are expected to:

1. Reflect on what defines and constitutes work and scientific knowledge, recognizing the importance and place that theorisation, conceptualisation, operationalisation, and measurement occupy in it.
2. Read and critically reflect on a scientific text, identifying its argument, hypotheses under study, methodological design, theoretical and/or methodological contribution, as well as its strengths and weaknesses.
3. Reflect on different research designs, methods of data collection, case selection and sampling.
4. Identify the strengths and/or weaknesses of different research designs and data collection methods depending on their appropriateness in relation to the research objective(s), their validity and reliability.
5. Design an original research project.

Assessment

1. **Research Project** [40%]
The research project shall be developed collectively, i.e., in groups composed of four (4) to five (5) elements.
 - a. Research Project Proposal [5%]. Themes:
 - i. Foreign Policy
 - ii. Political Parties and/or Political Systems
 - iii. Political Theory
 - iv. Social Movements
 - b. Research Project [25%].
 - c. Article/Book Review [10%] of a bibliographic reference to be found in the Research Project's bibliographic references.
2. **Exam** [60%]

Office Hours

Wednesday, 11:00h – 12:00h

To secure their meeting, students shall send an email with the following subject line: “**OFFICE HOURS [Student number] – MTI**”.

Sessions

Module 1: The Problematic of Scientific Knowledge

Course Introduction

Theoretical and Epistemological Problems in the Social Sciences I

- a. *What is Science? What are the Social Sciences? What is Political Science? What are International Relations?*
- b. The scientific field and scientific work

References

Toshkov, D. (2016). Introduction. In *Research Design in Political Science* (pp. 1–22). Palgrave Macmillan.

Theoretical and Epistemological Problems in the Social Sciences II

- a. From the Sociology of Science to the Ontology and Epistemology of Social Sciences
- b. Scientific Knowledge in the Social Sciences and the Ontology of the *Social* and of *Society*: from the ‘social construction of reality’ to the ‘post-truth’

References

della Porta, D., & Keating, M. (2008). How many approaches in the social sciences? An epistemological introduction. In D. della Porta & M. Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences* (pp. 19–39). Cambridge University Press.

Moses, J. W., & Knutsen, T. L. (2012). Introduction. In J. W. Moses & T. L. Knutsen, *Ways of knowing: Competing methodologies and methods in social and political research* (2nd ed., pp. 1–14). Palgrave Macmillan.

Garfinkel, H. (1967). Studies of the routine grounds of everyday activities. In *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (pp. 35–75). Prentice-Hall.

Theoretical and Epistemological Problems in the Social Sciences III

- a. The imperative of axiological neutrality: reading and discussion of Max Weber’s *Vocation lectures*
- b. Researcher’s Reflexivity and Positionality

References

Weber, M. (2004). Science as a Vocation. In M. Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*. Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company.

Weber, M. (2004). Politics as a Vocation. In M. Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*. Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company.

Resources

”LSE Sociology: Are there any right-wing sociologists?” (04:13)

Module 2: Scientific Research

The Scientific Work I

- a. Types of scientific work, style, style and structure

The Scientific Work II

- a. Ethics in Research (e.g., plagiarism, self-plagiarism)
- b. Sources
- c. Citation norms
- d. Good practices and controversies in Science

References

Sokal, A. (1998). What the Social Text affair does and does not prove. *Critical Quarterly*, 40(2), 3–18.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.) (pp. 39 - 42). Oxford University Press.

Andersson, K. (2022). I am not alone – we are all alone: Using masturbation as an ethnographic method in research on *shota* subculture in Japan. *Qualitative Research*.

Research Theme Lab I

Research Theme Lab II

Research Theme Lab III

Module 3: The Research Process

The Research Process I

- a. Stages and types of research.
- b. Elements of the research process:
 - Research question(s)
 - Literature Review
 - Concepts and Theories
 - Case selection
 - Data collection and Analysis
 - ... Writing

The Research Process II: Theory, Concepts and Operationalisation

References

- Toshkov, D. (2016). Theory in the Research Process. In D. Toshkov, *Research Design in Political Science* (pp. 56–82). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Toshkov, D. (2016). Concepts and Operationalization. In D. Toshkov, *Research Design in Political Science* (pp. 83–105). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mair, P. (2008). Concepts and Concept Formation. In D. della Porta & M. Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences* (pp. 177–197). Cambridge University Press.

Additional

- Dias, A. (2017). Patterns of Late colonialism and Democratization in Africa: Using V-Dem to measure the long heritage of the colonial state. *V-Dem Working Papers*.
- Cruz, B. P., & Curto, D. R. (2017). The Good and the Bad Concentration: Regedorias in Angola. *Portuguese Studies Review*, 25(1).

Module 4: The Research Project

The Research Project I: Research Strategies

- a. Qualitative Research
- b. Quantitative Research
- c. Mixed-Methods

References

- Beck, N. (2020). Methodology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. In D. Berg-Schlosser, B. Badie, & L. Morlino (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Political Science* (pp. 423–436). Sage Publications.
- Bergman, M. M. (2020). Mixed Method and Multimethod Research and Design. In D. Berg-Schlosser, B. Badie, & L. Morlino (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Political Science* (pp. 437–446). Sage Publications.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.) (pp.35-38). Oxford University Press.

The Research Project II: Research Design

- a. Criteria
- b. Research Designs:
 - Comparative
 - Case-oriented
 - Variable-oriented
 - Cross-Sectional
 - Case Study
 - Experimental
 - Longitudinal

References

- Schmitter, P. (2008). The design of social and political research. In D. della Porta & M. Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences* (pp. 263–295). Cambridge University Press.
- della Porta, D. (2008). Comparative analysis: Case-oriented versus variable-oriented research. In D. della Porta & M. Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences* (pp. 198–222). Cambridge University Press.

Working material

- Bourdieu, P. (2010). Algumas reflexões acerca do método. In Bourdieu, P. *A Distinção – Uma Crítica Social da Faculdade do Juízo*. Edições 70.

The Research Project III: Research Question(s), Problematic and Goals

- a. Research Questions
- b. Defining the Research Problematic
- c. Definition of Research Goals

References

Geddes, B. (2006). Big Questions, Little Answers: How the Questions You Choose Affect the Answers You Get. In B. Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles. Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (4th ed., pp. 27–88). The University of Michigan Press.

The Research Project IV: Literature Review

References

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Review of the Literature. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed., pp. 62–89). Sage Publications.

Research Project Lab I

- a. The Review: Elements and Characteristics
- b. Literature Review and Systematic Literature Review (SLR)
- c. Collection and Management of Bibliographic References with Mendeley and Zotero

Resources

<https://www.connectedpapers.com/>

Research Project V: Quantitative Research

- a. Surveys (and Elite Surveys)
- b. Databases

Research Project VI: Quantitative Research II

- a. Social Network Analysis
- b. Quantitative Text Analysis

References

Osei, A. (2018). Elite theory and political transitions: Networks of power in Ghana and Togo. *Comparative Politics*, 51(1), 21–42.

Valentin, V., & Widmann, T. (2021). Does radical-right success make the political debate more negative? Evidence from emotional rhetoric in German state parliaments. *Political Behavior*, 1–22.

Additional

Bro, N. (2022). The structure of political conflict. The oligarchs and the bourgeoisie in the Chilean Congress, 1834–1894. *Theory and Society*, 1–34.

Cancela, J., Dias, A. L., & Lisi, M. (2017). The impact of endorsements in intra-party elections: Evidence from open primaries in a new Portuguese party. *Politics*, 37(2), 167–183.

Resources

Mapping the Republic of Letters

The Grand Tour Project

Cultures of Knowledge

Circulation of Knowledge and Learned Practices in the 17th-century Dutch Republic

Research Project V: Quantitative Research - Lab

- a. Design and Discussion of Survey Models
- b. Dataset Building

Research Project VI: Qualitative Research I

- a. The Interview
 - Structured
 - Semi-Structured
 - Non-Structured
- b. Focus Groups

References

- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Qualitative Methods. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed., pp. 254-292). Sage Publications.
- Bratton, M., & Liatto-Katundu, B. (1994). A focus group assessment of political attitudes in Zambia. *African Affairs*, 93(373), 535–563.

Research Project VI: Qualitative Research II

- a. Ethnography and Fieldwork
 - *From Malinowski to Visual Anthropology and Visual Politics*
- b. Archival Research

References

- Wedeen, L. (2010). Reflections on ethnographic work in political science. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13(1), 255–272.
- Auyero, J. (2012). Poor people’s lives and politics: The things a political ethnographer knows (and doesn’t know) after 15 years of fieldwork. *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 46, 95–127.
- Nair, D. (2021). “Hanging Out” while Studying “Up”: Doing Ethnographic Fieldwork in International Relations. *International Studies Review*, 23(4), 1300–1327.
- Stoler, A. L. (2002). Colonial archives and the arts of governance: On the content in the form. *Refiguring the Archive*, 83–102.

Additional

- Carey, S. (2021). The rise and fall of Brick Lane’s ‘Curry Capital’. *Anthropology Today*, 37(5), 3–9.

Research Project VI: Qualitative Research - Lab

- a. Design and Discussion of Interview Scripts
- b. Simulation of Focus Groups Dynamics
- c. Presentation of Field Notes or Photographic/Filmic Materials
- d. Research and Identification of Archival Sources from online Archival Platforms

Exam Preparation**Exam****Preparation for Lab Session****Research Project VII: Writing the Project - Lab I**

- a. Writing the Research Proposal in accordance with the model proposed by the Portuguese *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia*

Research Project VII: Writing the Project - Lab II

- a. Writing the Research Proposal in accordance with the model proposed by the Portuguese *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia*

Course Assessment

References

Berg-Schlosser, D., Badie, B., & Morlino, L. (Eds.). (2020). *The SAGE Handbook of Political Science*. Sage Publications.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Geddes, B. (2006). *Paradigms and Sand Castles. Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (4th ed.). The University of Michigan Press.

Halperin, S., & Heath, O. (2020). *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford University Press.

Quivy, R., & Van Campenhoudt, L. (1995). *Manual de Investigação em Ciências Sociais*. Gradiva.

Toshkov, D. (2016). *Research Design in Political Science*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Working References

Bourdieu, P. (2010). *A Distinção – Uma Crítica Social da Faculdade do Juízo*. Edições 70.

Carvalho, T. (2022). *Contesting Austerity: Social Movements and the Left in Portugal and Spain (2008-2015)*. Amsterdam University Press.

Costa, A. F. da. (2008). *Sociedade de Bairro. Dinâmicas Sociais da Identidade Cultural* (2nd ed.). Celta Editora.

Friedman, S., & Laurison, D. (2019). *The Class Ceiling: Why it Pays to be Privileged* (1st ed.). Policy Press.

Lequesne, C. (2017). *Ethnographie du quai d’Orsay*. CNRS Éditions.

Sanches, E. R. (2018). *Party Systems in Young Democracies: Varieties of institutionalization in Sub-Saharan Africa* (1st edition). Routledge.

Additional Resources

- **Overleaf (\LaTeX)** [Text Processing]
"An Introduction to Overleaf" (YouTube)
- **Introduction to Data Science**
Data Science Bootcamp by David Kane
R for Data Science (On-line Ebook)
- **R and RStudio** [Data Analysis and Data Science]
Introduction to R and RStudio:
An Introduction to R (On-line Ebook)
Introduction to R [Datacamp]:
Introduction to R (Free)
- **Python** [Data Analysis and Data Science]
Introduction to Python (Free)
- **Mendeley** [Management of Bibliographic References]
Website
- **Zotero** [Management of Bibliographic References]
Website