



SOCIAL RESEARCH METHODS

Course code	<i>FUN108</i>
Course title	<i>Social Research Methods</i>
Type of course	<i>Compulsory</i>
Year of study	<i>3rd</i>
Semester	<i>Spring</i>
ECTS	<i>6: 26 hours of lectures, 22 hours of seminars; 112 hours of individual work, 2 hours of consultation</i>
Coordinating lecturer	<i>Dr. Eglė Verseckaitė-Grzeskowiak</i>
Study form	<i>Full-time</i>
Course prerequisites	<i>None</i>
Language of instruction	<i>English</i>

Annotation

The ability to formulate the right questions and choose the most efficient tools for seeking answers, as well as to intelligently interpret the information gathered and presented by others, is among the main competencies university education should foster. This course will equip students with both the understanding of principles that guide quality research and the tools needed to implement those principles in formulating a research project, selecting appropriate methods, collecting and analyzing data, and presenting their findings. We will focus on the practical application of the concepts and methods discussed in the course by conducting students' own research projects within a larger framework.

Course Aims

The main goal of this course is to impart knowledge and skills necessary for conducting and evaluating social science research. The course will begin with the introduction to the basic concepts and fundamental principles that underlie approaches to research and the practical implications of these principles, including formulation of research questions, concepts of validity and reliability, and issues of research ethics. Students will learn to review literature and conduct secondary and primary research. We will especially focus on the main qualitative and quantitative methods of primary data collection used in social science research. Students will be required to conduct their own research projects within a provided larger framework, which will help develop students' practical research skills, and analysis of published research and other students' research projects will sharpen their ability to critically evaluate the information coming from research conducted by others. Presentation of their own research findings and discussion of others' research will also serve to refine the students' presentation and communication skills. Students who have successfully completed the course and all its assignments will be able to define the research question, formulate the research design, choose the appropriate methods for data collection and analysis, present and interpret their findings, and critically evaluate other researchers' output. Finally, the skills and knowledge gained in this course will also be employable during the preparation of BA theses.

Subject learning outcomes (SLO)	Study methods	Assessment methods
SLO1. To understand the purpose of research.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, participation scorecard
SLO2. To identify and understand potential ethical, empirical and analytical problems plaguing the research process and ways to address them.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, participation scorecard
SLO3. To formulate a research question and design an appropriate way to answer it.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, participation scorecard
SLO4. To formulate testable hypotheses, operationalize variables and choose the most appropriate tools for empirical testing.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, participation scorecard
SLO5. To identify and understand the main qualitative and quantitative methods of social science research, their advantages and disadvantages, and appropriate application areas.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, participation scorecard
SLO6. To conduct secondary research and write a literature review.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, participation scorecard
SLO7. To develop skills in choosing suitable cases, sampling, measurement, questionnaire design, designing and executing experiments, conducting interviews and surveys, leading focus groups.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, participation scorecard



SLO8. To develop skills of quantitative and qualitative data analysis and interpretation of its results.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, research project, participation scorecard
SLO9. To communicate research findings and their implications in a clear and well organized way, both in presentations and in writing.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Research project, participation scorecard
SLO10. To critically evaluate the quality of other people's research findings and the process used to obtain them.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Exam, participation scorecard, research project commentary

Quality assurance issues

The lecturer assures a variety of teaching methods and feedback to students. The feedback from students will always be highly valued and appreciated. The course is designed to maximize active engagement by students in their own learning process and the successful achievement of the learning outcomes is dependent upon the quality of such engagement. Depending on the particular situation in class, this syllabus may be adjusted, in that case the students will be informed during lectures and via the e-learning notification system.

Cheating prevention

The teaching and testing methods are chosen taking into account the purpose of the minimization of cheating opportunities. The course is based on and promotes the value of integrity. Lack of academic integrity (e.g. plagiarism, copying another person's work, misrepresentation of your research process and results, the use of unauthorized aids on examinations, cheating, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, etc.) will not be tolerated. Consequences for violations range from zero grade given for the assignments, to failing the course, to university-level disciplinary measures for severe cases.

Topics (NB! The schedule, the times and the readings can change during the course of the semester, so please pay attention to all announcements made during lectures and via the e-learning system.)

Date	Topic	Contact hours		Readings, notes
		Lecture	Seminar	
09 04	<p>Lectures 1.1. and 1.2. Introduction to the course. Overview of the requirements. Research problem and research design.</p> <p>Purpose of social science research. Fundamental approaches to research. Definition, scope, significance, ethics and limitations of social science research. Formulation of research problem, research question and hypotheses. Types of research design. Types of data collection methods.</p> <p>Homework: Familiarization with project requirements. Form teams of students and choose a topic within the larger framework.</p>	4		<p>Van Thiel, Chs.1, 2, pp.1-11, 12-23.</p> <p>McNabb, Chs.3, 4, pp.29-39, 40-56.</p> <p>Brians et al., Ch.1, pp.1-15.</p>
09 06	<p>Lectures 2.1 and 2.2. Introduction to the key ideas and issues of the overarching project.</p> <p>Homework: Look for relevant academic literature and prepare a literature review for your team's research project. Submit the literature review by a specified deadline.</p>	4		<p>Classes will be led by guest lecturers and may be held off campus.</p> <p>All students must read these articles in the provided order before the guest lectures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Czarniawska-Joerges, B. (1989). The Wonderland of Public Administration Reforms. <i>Organization Studies</i>, 10(4), 531-548. 2. Hood, C. (1991). A Public Management for all Seasons? <i>Public Administration</i>, 69(Spring), 3-19. 3. Brunsson, N. (2006). Administrative Reforms as Routines. <i>Scandinavian Journal of Management</i>, 22, 243-252.

				<p>4. Bouckaert, G. (2009). Public Sector Reform in Central and Eastern Europe. <i>Halduskultuur</i>, 10, 94-104.</p> <p>5. De Vries, M., & Nemec, J. (2013). Public sector reform: an overview of recent literature and research on NPM and alternative paths. <i>International Journal of Public Sector Management</i>, 26(1), 4-16.</p>
09 07	<p>Lecture 3.1 and Seminar 3.2. Secondary vs. primary data. Theoretical framework. Literature review. Writing.</p> <p>Types of data. Primary and secondary data, their advantages and limitations. Literature review. A few words about writing. Workshop on literature review.</p> <p>Homework: Look for relevant academic literature and prepare a literature review for your team's research project. Submit the literature review by a specified deadline.</p>	2	2	<p>"Writing a Literature Review" by the Language Center, Asian Institute of Technology, February 17th, 2005.</p> <p>Van Thiel, Ch.3, pp.24-42.</p>
10 02	<p>Seminar 4.1. Workshop on literature review based on feedback. Finalizing the conceptual model.</p>		2	
10 02	<p>Lecture 4.2. Sampling.</p> <p>The sampling design process. Probability sampling techniques and nonprobability sampling techniques. Sample size determination.</p> <p>Homework: Determine relevant respondents and data sources for your projects and get approval.</p>	2		Babbie, Ch.7, pp.178-217.
10 03	<p>Seminar 5.1. Workshop on sampling.</p> <p>Homework: Everyone must have prepared a detailed list of respondents and data sources and get approval.</p>		1	Van Thiel, Ch.4, pp.43-53. (covers topics 4 & 5, a concise overview of sampling + operationalization)
10 03	<p>Lecture 5.2. Operationalization. Data measurement.</p> <p>Quantitative and qualitative data and ways to measure them. Scale characteristics and levels of measurement, types of scales, constructing scales. Validity. Reliability.</p>	3		<p>Babbie, Chs.5, 6, pp.118-177.</p> <p>Van Thiel, Ch.5, pp.54-60.</p>
10 08	<p>Lecture 6.1. Data collection methods: Survey.</p> <p>Development of questionnaires. Choosing question structure, choosing question wording, determining the order of questions. Personal interview surveys. Telephone survey. Mail survey. Online survey. Advantages and disadvantages of different methods of survey. Errors in survey research. Particularities of fieldwork in survey research.</p>	2		Van Thiel, Ch.7, pp.74-85.
10 08	<p>Lecture 6.2. Data collection methods: Interviewing.</p> <p>In-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus groups. Particularities of fieldwork in qualitative research.</p>	2		<p>Brians et al., Chs.19, 20, 21, p.324-376.</p> <p>Babbie, Ch.9, pp.242-280.</p> <p>Van Thiel, Chs.6, 8, 9, pp.61-73, 86-101, 102-117.</p>
10 09	<p>Lecture 7.1. Data collection methods: Observation.</p> <p>Observation types. Advantages and disadvantages of observation. Personal observation, mechanical observation, audit, content analysis. Archival research. Experiment.</p>	2		
10 09	<p>Seminar 7.2. Workshop on data collection instruments.</p> <p>Homework: Everyone has to finish preparing their</p>		2	

	research proposals with all the necessary parts.			
10 11	Seminars 8.1 and 8.2. Workshop before data collection. Homework: Everyone has to bring finalized research proposals, sampling action plans and data collection instruments for checking.		4	
10 30	Lecture 9.1 and Seminar 9.2. Data preparation and analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics. Data coding, cleaning. Statistically adjusting data. Descriptive statistics: frequencies, percentages, means, cross-tabulation. Hypothesis testing (means and percentages). Selection of univariate statistical methods. Selection of bivariate and multivariate statistical methods. Independent and paired samples. Analysis of differences and associations. Regression analysis. Some remarks on qualitative data analysis. Workshop on preparing for project data analysis Homework: Everyone has to have completed their detailed plan for data analysis and present it for checking.	2	2	Carver & Nash, Section 1 & Appendix, pp.1-12, 309-314. Elliott & Woodward, Chs.1, 3, 4, pp.20, 47-75, 77-112. McNabb, Ch.21, pp.287-302. Van Thiel, Chs.10, 11, pp.118-137, 138-152.
11 08	Seminars 10.1 and 10.2. Workshop on data analysis. Homework: Everyone has to have completed their data analysis and present it for checking.		4	
11 26	Lecture 11.1 and Seminar 11.2. Writing research reports. Overview of the structure and the contents of each required part of the paper. Writing workshop. Homework: Everyone has to bring completed drafts of their research reports for checking and later submit them by a specified deadline.	2	2	Van Thiel, Ch.12, pp.153-168.
11 29	Seminar 12.1. Presentation of completed research projects. Homework: Submit fixed research reports by a specified deadline.		3	
11 29	Lecture 12.2. Review. Feedback. Exam preparation guidance.	1		
Total number of contact hours:		25	23	

Individual work and assessment

Type of assignment	Total hours	Evaluation, %
Participation	30	30
Research project	42	30
Presentation	15	15
Final exam	25	25
Total:	112	100%

Course requirements and evaluation:

1. Participation

This is the pivotal part of the course that affects all the other parts of evaluation. It is imperative for students to have done the readings and the assigned homework before each seminar and to actively participate in the seminars. Without completing all seminar participation tasks and homework assignments, the student cannot be allowed to take the exam. If the students miss a seminar, they must immediately make up for its assignments (if it is feasible within the structure of the project) and may get partial points. However, those points may not be sufficient to get a passing grade depending on the amount of missed seminars, as well as on the lateness and quality of the make-up submissions, therefore you are strongly encouraged to do everything in your power to not miss classes and to make up for whatever you missed within a day or two at most.

Participation scorecard will include points for presence and active participation in class, for timely completion of homework tasks and their quality, and will count towards 30% of the final grade. It is worth emphasizing that the seminar grade greatly depends on the students work on the research project in a timely manner and thus reflects the centrality of



the research project in the evaluation of this course. Each student's participation grade will be adjusted based on his/her teammates' peer review regarding his/her contribution to the research project during the course of the semester. The participation grade cannot be substituted with a retake.

2. Research project

This is the crucial part of the course that helps you master the craft of research. The research projects will be conducted in teams of 4-5 students (the size of teams will be determined by the total number of students in class). The students are all equally responsible for each part of the homework and for the whole research project. Labour division does not equal knowledge division, therefore each member of the team has to know everything about the research project, be able to explain and justify any choices of methods and information, and defend any part of the research project, such as the literature review, data measurement scales, interview guide and data analysis results, and be competent to answer any questions the lecturer may ask. Saying things like „I don't know what this means because my teammate did this part“ or „this part is not done because my teammate was supposed to do it“ is not a valid excuse and will merely give you penalty points. Working and learning as a team is an important part of the educational process. The relative quality of each team-member's contribution will be evaluated at the end of the semester and their individual participation grades will be adjusted accordingly, but the research project grade is shared between the team members except in extreme cases, therefore each member is fully responsible for all of it.

Each team has to choose a research question within the larger class research project, formulate the research design, analyze the relevant literature, choose the appropriate methodology, gather and analyze data, and present their findings. The steps of the preparation of the research project will be part of the seminar homework. Please make sure that any written assignment you submit is formatted according to ISM requirements, that the surnames of the team members are indicated on the first page and included in the file name, and that the paper is clearly identified in the running head. It is crucial to meet the deadlines in order for the students to get proper feedback and to not jeopardize both their seminar grade and the quality of the research project. Taking into account the number of students whose research is being supervised by the lecturers, any kind of delay or not fitting into the pre-arranged schedule causes a chain reaction of problems for others – please be considerate!

The lecturer will provide feedback during the process. Repeating the mistakes that have already been pointed out earlier would result in penalty points, so please pay close attention to all comments and apply them without delay, as each step of your research builds on the preceding ones.

At a specified time, the students will have to submit their research projects. The more detailed instructions for the research project will be provided during lectures. The grade for the midterm research project proposal will comprise 30% of the overall paper grade. Students will periodically present their research design elements and findings during seminars and comment on other students' research. At a specified time, they will have to submit the final research report in written form with adjustments based on the commentary they receive. The final version of the research report will comprise 70% of the overall paper grade. Your final paper should be approximately 30000 characters long (not counting spaces or the bibliography) and formatted according to the official ISM requirements. Papers that are shorter than 25000 or longer than 35000 may be downgraded. The point, however, is not to focus on the amount of characters mechanically, but rather to ensure that all necessary material is covered without excessive wordiness or repetitiveness.

Late submissions of research reports will not get feedback and will be given a grade of 0. Papers that have plagiarism issues or misrepresent the research process/data will also be given a 0 and reported to the administration for disciplinary measures. The evaluation of the research project will count towards 30% of the final grade and cannot be substituted with a retake. (Keep in mind that a large part of the seminar participation grade is also directly dependent on your ongoing work on the research project, thus its weight in the final grade is effectively larger.)

3. Presentation.

At the end of the class, students will prepare presentations on their research projects and comments on other students' papers and presentations. Detailed guidelines will be provided during the lectures. The presentation is graded based on the visual quality of the slides, the quality of the speech, the precision of terminology usage, the coverage of all relevant material, the quality and legibility of the figures and tables, fitting into the time limits, the smoothness of transitions, and the quality of the Q&A with the discussants and the audience. Some presentations may take place elsewhere than on campus.

The quality of each team's written and oral comments on others' research is also a part of this grade.

The presentation grade counts for 15% of the final grade and cannot be substituted with a retake. This part of the grade is closely related to your research project, thus again emphasizing its centrality in this course.

4. Final exam.

The final exam will be based on the whole course material and count towards 25% of the final grade. It will be a closed-book test and will include closed and open questions. It will last 2 hours and take place in the computer class. Students must have completed all seminar participation tasks and homework assignments and submitted the research report on time to be allowed to take the final exam. It is the students' responsibility to keep track of their deadlines, the teacher only calculates the results afterwards and informs the students who are not allowed to take the exam.

In case of a negative final grade, students are allowed a retake exam. It will last longer, as it will cover all course material, and will take place in the computer class. The weight of a retake is 25% (which clearly indicates the importance of getting a passing grade for other parts of the class, such as participation and especially your research project). The grades received for the research project, the presentation and the seminar participation do not get annulled and cannot be substituted by a retake.

Some notes on class rules:

- You are expected to know everything said during the lectures and everything that is in the readings, and may be periodically tested on that knowledge.
- This course is about learning a craft, which requires rigour and paying close attention to detail. You need to master the terminology and the methods, both the theory and the practical skills. This is a fundamental course for any person with university education and there are no unimportant parts here, you need to learn everything.
- The most important thing the students can do to succeed in this class is work during the semester and complete all assignments on time. Those who expect to only study before the exams can expect to fail, because a large part of your grade is determined by your ongoing work on the research project and participation in seminars.
- Keep in mind that it is a violation of academic ethics to pressure the teacher for a higher grade than you have earned throughout the semester. Students who try to skirt the rules and get away from doing all the work they are supposed to do make life harder for everyone by prompting a tightening of rules. You have plenty of opportunities to gather points throughout the semester, so do not start asking for additional opportunities at the end of the class, there will be none.
- Meeting deadlines is imperative. No excuses and no exceptions (part of the reason for doing the work in teams is to ensure that there is always someone else to pick up the slack if someone is failing in their duties, although, of course, the participation grades will differ among teammates). Lateness will be heavily penalized – from getting a 0 for the assignment to not being allowed to take the midterm/exam.
- The students must use their official ISM e-mail to contact the lecturer and clearly indicate the course name, group number if applicable, and the subject matter of the question in the subject line of the e-mail. First check whether there is no answer to your question in the readings or the lecture slides, and then write: “this is what the lecture says..., this is what the readings say..., this is what I don’t understand...”. It is important to maximize the efficiency of communication and time management, as well as to respect other people’s time and work.
- Whenever the students have to submit their work, their names must be clearly indicated on the document and the document must be properly formatted according to ISM requirements. The file names of documents, such as the research project, must start with the students’ last names/ team numbers. Due to the number of students it is very important that you follow these rules so your e-mails and submissions do not get lost.
- If there are any changes to the rules, you will be informed during the lectures and through the e-learning system. Lecture attendance is not mandatory, but is highly advisable, since that will be the main source of information and each student is expected to know everything that has been said during the lecture. Remember, *ignorantia legis non excusat*. Furthermore, due to the highly interactive nature of the course, during theoretical lectures there will be opportunities for further advancement of your research projects, so it is best to not abandon your team and to attend both lectures and seminars. The irregular schedule of the class is determined by the variation in the time needed to complete specific homework assignments and may change slightly depending on the demands of the fieldwork etc., thus you must sustain close attention to any communication related to this class.

Literature (Additional resources may be provided during the course of the class)

1. Babb, James. (2012). *Empirical Political Analysis*. Pearson.
2. Babbie, Earl. (2004). *The Practice of Social Research*. 10th ed. Thomson/ Wadsworth.
3. Brians, Leonard Craig, Lars Willnat, Jarol B. Manheim, and Richard C. Rich. (2011). *Empirical Political Analysis*. 8th ed. Longman.
4. Carver, Robert H., and Jane Gradwohl Nash. (2011). *Doing Data Analysis with SPSS: Version 18.0*. 5th ed. Boston, MA, USA: Duxbury Press.
5. Elliott, Alan C., and Wayne A. Woodward. (2007). *Statistical Analysis Quick Reference Guidebook: With SPSS Examples*. Sage Publications Pvt.Ltd.
6. Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava, and David Nachmias (1996). *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. 5th ed. London: Arnold.
7. Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. (2012). *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford University Press.
8. Johnson, Janet Buttolph, Richard A. Joslyn, and H.T. Reynolds. (2001). *Political Science Research Methods*. 4th ed. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.
9. McGivern, Yvonne. (2006). *The Practice of Market and Social Research: An Introduction*. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
10. McNabb, David E. (2010). *Research Methods for Political Science: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. 2nd ed. Armonk, New York, and London, England: M.E.Sharpe.
11. Morton, Rebecca B., and Kenneth C. Williams. (2010). *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality*. Cambridge University Press.
12. Van Thiel, Sandra. (2014). *Research Methods in Public Administration and Public Management: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.
13. Yin, Robert K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications.