Introduction

In this course we will discuss the logic of social science research and provide a brief overview of the various methods that are commonly in use. Because of severe time constraints, the focus will be on the overall logic of social science research and the overview of particular methods will not be exhaustive, nor very extensive. An immediate goal of the course will be to write the research proposal for your MA thesis.

Many of the topics discussed in this course are controversial - practitioners of social science research disagree on fundamental issues of research methods, design, interpretation, inferences, etc. The course will stimulate a critical view towards methods and you are encouraged to be critical in your writings for the course.

The course makes use of articles and occasional book chapters rather than a textbook. If you would prefer to have a textbook handy for future reference, two books are well worth considering. An excellent, albeit expensive, introduction to research design in the social sciences is Babbie (2006). In recent years, the 'bible' of research design has become King, Keohane and Verba (1994). This book attempts to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches in a unified methodology, with limited success. A useful, constructive critique on their book is Brady and Collier (2004). A nice, short introduction to social science research methods is Shively (2004).
## Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>25 January</td>
<td>Development Studies</td>
<td>Andy Storey</td>
<td>L504</td>
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<td>European Studies</td>
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<td>all other students</td>
<td>Jos Elkink</td>
<td>G317</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 January</td>
<td><strong>Essay 1 due</strong></td>
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<td>Development Studies</td>
<td>Andy Storey</td>
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<td>4 February</td>
<td><strong>Research statement due</strong></td>
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<td>8 February</td>
<td>all groups</td>
<td>Sebastian Dellepiane</td>
<td>Theatre N (Newman)</td>
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<td>15 February</td>
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<td>all groups</td>
<td>Andy Storey</td>
<td>Theatre N (Newman)</td>
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<td>29 February</td>
<td>all groups</td>
<td>Jos Elkink</td>
<td>Theatre N (Newman)</td>
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<td>7 March</td>
<td>Development Studies</td>
<td>Andy Storey</td>
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<td>all other students</td>
<td>Jos Elkink</td>
<td>G317</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 March</td>
<td><strong>Research proposal due</strong></td>
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## Grading

Because the course is about controversial subjects rather than about facts, the focus of the grading will be on written essays rather than an exam. During the course you will be expected to write three essays, which together will count for 45 percent of the final grade (15 percent each), and one research proposal, which will count for the other 55 percent.

The essays should be argumentative in nature - you take a particular stance in a debate on research design and argue your case - whereby the arguments should be well embedded in the assigned (or additional) literature. As a topic for the essay you can either use one of the suggested propositions and argue either for or against, or you can come up with your own proposition. The essays should be between 600 and 700 words in length, excluding references. Points will be deducted for essays that are too long. The essays are due 48 hours before class in weeks 2, 4, and 6. Late submissions are not graded. You should bring a printed copy of your own assignment to class.

The main assignment of this course is the research proposal for your MA thesis. The course will help you develop your proposal. The final proposal should be at least 2000 words, in which you outline the research questions underlying your thesis, the argument that you will defend, and the methodological approach that you will use. You can freely choose a topic for your MA thesis, but it should be closely connected to one of the courses you took in this MA program.

Deadlines for the research design:
4 February 2008, 10 AM: A research question with a 300-word statement defending your choice and suggesting the general approach you intend to take to study the question. Although this will not count for a grade, you will get feedback, and it will be used to find you a supervisor for your thesis. Meeting this deadline is thus very important!

31 March 2008, 10 AM: The complete research proposal.

All assignments should be sent by email to the seminar lecturer of your respective group as well as submitted in hardcopy to the School office, including a signed Declaration of Authorship form.

Plagiarism

Although this should be obvious, plagiarism - copying someone else’s text without acknowledgement or beyond “fair use” quantities - is not allowed. UCD policies concerning plagiarism can be found at http://www.ucd.ie/regist/documents/plagiarism_policy_and_procedures.pdf. A more extensive description of what is plagiarism and what is not can be found at http://www.ucd.ie/library/students/information_skills/plagiar.html.

Readings


Seminar

Logical fallacies; persuasion and argumentation; replicability; scientific method; elements of a research design.

Literature reviews; methods of citation.

A very brief introduction to positivist and post-positivist approaches to research; divisions in political science.

Required reading: Chicago-style citation quick guide (N.d.); Shively (2004: ch 1); King, Keohane and Verba (1994: ch 1).


1 February - Concepts, Theories, and Hypotheses

Seminar
Reliability and validity; construct / measurement validity; conceptualisation; operationalisation and measurement; formal models; models as abstraction; Occam’s Razor / parsimony; necessary and sufficient conditions; causation

Required reading: Sartori (1970); Collier and Adcock (2001); Shively (2004: ch 2-5); Fiorina (1975)


Possible essay topics

Note: this essay is due 30 January, 9 AM.

- “Objectivity in the social sciences is a misleading illusion.”
- “Social science should avoid using terms in common usage outside academia, to avoid the many connotations such terms have.”
- “Issues of measurement are as relevant for the qualitative approaches as they are for quantitative ones.”
- “Only parsimonious, abstract models can help social science forward.”
- “Due to the complexity of human behavior, the falsification requirement of theories is overly ambitious.”

8 February - Case Studies and Comparative Methods

Lecture by Sebastian Dellepiane


Further reading: Landman (2003: ch 1,3); Lijphart (1971, 1975); Eckstein (1975); Campbell (1975); Freidreis (1983); George (1989); Lieberson (1991); Collier and Mahoney (1996); Ragin (1997); Dion (1998); McKeown (1999); Geddes (1990); Sartori (1991); Gerring (2007a); Rueschemeyer (2003).

22 February - Interpretative Methods, Fieldwork and Interviews

Lecture by Andy Storey

Required reading: Michael (2005); Beazley and Ennew (2006).

Possible essay topics

Note: this essay is due 20 February, 9 AM.

- “Human behavior cannot be quantified - without deep understanding and thick description, one cannot get any leverage on understanding social mechanisms.”
- “Fieldwork distracts from objective analysis of a culture.”
- “Since participants are too involved themselves, they cannot critically and objectively analyse their environment, and thus interviews are only of limited use to social science.”
- “Case studies cannot be used to test general theories.”

29 February - Sampling, Surveys, Quantitative Research Methods, and Interviews

Lecture by Jos Elkink

Required reading: browse through Shively (1997: ch 7-9); more important readings are King (1991); Dillman (1991). Focus on the concept rather than the details.

Further reading: Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 9); King (1998); Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2000: ch 8,10-11,14-19); Sprinz and Wolinsky-Nahmias (2004: ch 6-9).


7 March - Elements of a Research Design

Seminar

Research question; literature review; relevance; ethics; methods; what makes it academically responsible?

Required reading: Shively (2004: ch 6); George and Bennett (2005: ch 4); King (2006).


Possible essay topics

Note: this essay is due 5 March, 9 AM.
• “The first requirement of good social science research is its relevance for society in general.”
• “The logic of statistics should apply equally to qualitative methods.”
• “Quantitative methods are just as subjective and socially constructed as any other method in social science.”

Optional readings in specific methodological fields

When you apply a method to your MA thesis or possibly future research, you might want to dive a little deeper into that particular method than is possible in this short course. This section provides you with a list of possible material you could read, mostly collected from the syllabi of existing courses in research design.

General research methods

Brady and Collier (2004); Geddes (2000); Desai and Potter (2006); Denscombe (2007); Kane and Brún (2001); May (2001); Robson (2002); Munck (1998); Munck and Verkuilen (2005).

Case studies

Many textbooks have a section on case studies, including: George and Bennett (2005); Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 7); Gerring (2007a: ch 5); King, Keohane and Verba (1994: ch 4,6); Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2000: ch 9,12); Przeworski and Teune (1970); Geddes (2003: ch 3); Sprinz and Wolinsky-Nahmias (2004: ch 2-5); van Evera (1997: ch 2).


For useful articles and monographs, check: Eckstein (1975); Ragin and Becker (1992); Achen and Snidal (1989); Gerring (2007b); Dion (1998); Mahoney and Goertz (2004); Campbell (1975); Collier and Mahoney (1996); Fearon (1991); Yin (2003); Ebbinghaus (2005); Bennett and Elman (2006); Alston (2005).

An interesting example is: Lijphart (1968).

Comparative method

For textbook reading, check: King, Keohane and Verba (1994: ch 4,6).

Further useful references: Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003); Lijphart (1971, 1975); Coppedge (1999); Ebbinghaus (2005); Dogan and Kazancigil (1994).
Survey research

For textbook chapters, check: Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 10).

Elite interviewing

For textbook chapters, check: Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 10).

Field research

For textbook chapters, check: Desai and Potter (2006: ch 2, 5).

Interpretative methods

Examples: Geertz (2005).

Content analysis

For textbook chapters, check: Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 8).
See also: Laver, Benoit and Garry (2003).

Statistics

There are many books available on this subjects, generally with titles like “introduction to (multivariate) statistics”, or “introduction to econometrics”. From beginner to advanced, you could consider: Shively (2004: ch 8-10); Verzani (2005); Gujarati (2003); Greene (2003); Amemiya (1985).

Formal models


References


Collier, David and James Mahoney. 1996. “Insights and pitfalls - Selection bias in qualitative research.” World Politics 49(1): 56–...


Denscombe, Martyn. 2007. The good research guide for small-scale social research projects. McGraw-Hill.


A research design is a broad plan that states objectives of research project and provides the guidelines what is to be done to realize those objectives. It is, in other words, a master plan for executing a research project. Introduction: The word “design” has various meanings. But, in relation to the subject concern, it is a pattern or an outline of research project’s workings. It is the statement of essential elements of a study that provides basic guidelines of conducting the project. It is same as the blueprint of architect’s work. Quasi-experimental design research: This experiment is designed just like the true experimental design, except that it does not use randomized sample groups. Also, it is used when a typical research design is not practicable. What is Qualitative Research Design? Qualitative research design, on the other hand, is exploratory in nature as it tries to explore not to predict the outcome. It seeks to answer the questions of what and how. A research design is a step-by-step approach used by a researcher to conduct a scientific study. There are 12 Types of Research Designs. A research design is a step-by-step approach used by a researcher to conduct a scientific study. It includes various methods and techniques to conduct research so that a research problem can be handled efficiently. A researcher has a series of questions that he needs to find answers by conducting research. We are a research and design consultancy based in Cape Town, South Africa. Our research services include: problem definition, desktop research, fieldwork, and data analysis. Our design services are multi-disciplinary, and incorporate, for example: iterative ideation, technical implementation, project reporting, and ongoing client support. Our clients include blue-chip corporations, local governments, university departments, entrepreneurial start-ups, non-profit companies, and technology companies.