RESEARCH METHODS

Master in Political Science
Course 2023-24
10 ECTS

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 to 13:30

Module coordinator

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Faculty

Míriam Acebillo-Baqué, Lara Maestripieri, Danislava Marinova (Coordinator and Convenor for quantitative part), Eva Østergaard-Nielsen (Convenor for qualitative part), Roberto Pannico.

Aims of course

The aim of this course is for the students to become familiar with and learn to apply a series research techniques for the collection and analysis of data. Both quantitative and qualitative research techniques are covered. While we cannot cover all the research techniques of the social sciences, we focus on the main techniques applied in the discipline. We prioritize practical training and interpretation of results over technical issues.

The sessions on quantitative and qualitative research techniques will be taught in parallel over the 9 weeks of the course. The classes combine theory with practice sessions.

Acquired skills

Specific skills

- Work with a complex and diverse set of data and sources of information
- Design a research project that satisfies criteria of excellence and rigorous analysis
- Apply appropriate qualitative and quantitative research techniques for a systematic and rigorous analysis of political reality

Transversal skills

- Evaluate applied or academic research using adequate criteria.
- Design academic and applied research projects autonomously using the relevant terminology, argumentation and analytical framework.
- Demonstrate the ability to read and understand specialized texts in English.

Course policies

Absences: Please notify us at least 48 hours in advance if you have a conflict that prevents you from attending class. Notify us at least 72 hours in advance if you have a conflict that prevents you from completing a graded assignment, in or out of class. We will make arrangements to complete the graded assignment at an agreed upon time.

<u>Lesson preparation</u>: Participation is an essential component of this class. Lessons will not recapitulate the readings but build off on the readings to investigate research agendas, design and methods. You are expected to complete assigned reading prior to attending class and be prepared to discuss their contents. Required readings will usually include a chapter from our textbook; occasionally, you will be assigned a journal article as an example of a specific type of research design.

<u>Plagiarism</u>: Plagiarism on any one assignment will result in a failing grade for the course.

<u>E-mail policy</u>: If you have a quick question, email is the best way to reach us. We will typically respond to emails within 48 hours. If you do not receive a response within 48 hours, follow up with a reminder. It is important that you look at the assignments early to ensure we can answer any questions you may have in a timeframe that is useful to you. Therefore, if you email us the night before a deadline with a last-minute request, please do not expect a response. Longer questions -- for example, those dealing with your performance in the course or substantive questions about the course material -- are better asked in person.

Content

QUALITATIVE METHODS (Lara Maestripieri, Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, Míriam Acebillo-Baqué)

<u>Introduction:</u>

Session 1. Introduction to qualitative research techniques (EØN)
This class introduces you to qualitative research techniques, focusing on its different ontological, epistemological and axiological status in relation with quantitative techniques. We will discuss what it means to do qualitative research, what is its reliability and validity and what are the ideal research questions for this type of research. We will close the session with a short session on mixing methods and triangulation.

Required Readings:
- Weber, M. (1997). *Science as a Vocation* (pp. 382-394). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Saunders et al (2019) *Research Methods for Business Students. Eight Edition*. Cap. 4 "Understanding research philosophy and approaches to theory development"

Recommended readings:
- Hesse-Biber, S. And Leavy, P. (2011) The practice of qualitative research. Sage publications. Chapter 1 and 2.
- Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. 1994. Competing paradigms in qualitative research, in N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

<u>Data collection:</u>

Session 2. Field research (EØN)

This class will examine methodological and practical issues of ethnographic research. It will cover: typologies of field research, the fieldwork entry, the (participant) observation, the collection of information, and the analyses of qualitative evidence.

Required readings:
- Wood, Elisabeth J. 2007. "Field Research," in Carles Boix and Susan Stokes. *The Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fenno, Richard. 1978. Appendix - Notes on Method: Participant Observation. From: *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Little, Brown, and Company, 249-295.

Recommended readings:
- Collier, David. 1999. "Data, Field Work and Extracting New Ideas at Close Range." *APSA-CP Newsletter,* 10(1): 1-2, 4-6.
- Kapiszewski, Diana, MacLean, Lauren M., Read, Benjamin L. 2015. "Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles," Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

Session 3. Further issues in Qualitative Research. Ethics (EØN)

We will cover ethical issues, sensitive topics, and transparency in qualitative research.

Required readings:
- Lichtman, M (2010) Ethical Issues in Social Research, Qualitative Research in Education, London: Sage, pp. 51-67.
- Blomraad, Irene and Cecilia Mejivar (2021), Precarious Times, Professional Tensions: The Ethics of Migration Research and the Drive for Scientific Accountability, International Migration Review, 56(1),

Recommended readings:
- Molina, José Luis and Stephen P. Borgatti (2019) Moral Bureaucracies and social network research, Social Networks, 67, pp. 13-19.
- Moravcsik, Andrew. 2010. "Active Citation: A Precondition for Replicable Qualitative Research," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 43(1): 29-35.

Session 4. Interviews I – Semi-structured interviews (LM)

This class will present the practice of interviews, by guiding students directly into the field. We will try to answer to the following questions: what are the characteristics and differences between structured, semi-structured and open-ended/narrative interviews? What is a guide of interview and how is it related to my research design and objectives? The class will also foresee a practical session of work in groups for the development of a semi-structured interview guide.

Required readings:
- *Blumer H. (1954). What is wrong with social theory? American Sociological Review, 19(1): pp. 3-10.*
- *Brinkmann S. (2018) 'The Interview' in Denzin N.K. and Lincoln Y.S. (eds) The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research. Sage Publications.*

- *Leech, B.L, 'Asking Questions: Techniques for Semi-structured Interviews', in PS: Political Science and Politics, vo. 35, no. 4, pp. 665 Available through JStor*

Recommended readings:
- *Hesse-Biber, S. And Leavy, P. (2011) The practice of qualitative research. Sage publications. Chapters 5*
- *FQS 7(1), Art. 11, Wolff-Michael Roth (2006) Textbooks on Qualitative Research and Method/Methodology. Towards a Praxis of Method. http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/79. Only Section 1 (pag. 2-5)*

Session 5. Interviews II – Semi-structured interviews (LM)

Conducting interviews is not an easy task and you only know how to do it after you have done it. Preparing the material before the field and after the field is a crucial step for obtaining empirical material of good quality to be used in the following analysis step. In this class, we will focus on the selection of interviewees, on the practice of interviews conduction and the subsequent treatment of the audio recording. The class will also foresee a practical session of work in groups for the development of the plan of interviews.

Required readings:
- Maestripieri L., Radin. A. and Spina E. (2018) 'Methods of Sampling in Qualitative Health Research', in Saks, M. & Allsop, J. (eds) Researching Health: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods, 3rd edition, London: Sage.
- Hermanowicz J. (2002) The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed, *Qualitative Sociology*, 25(4): 479-499.
- Arendell T. (1997) 'Reflections on the Researcher-Researched Relationship: a Woman Interviewing Men. *Qualitative Sociology*, 20(3): 341-368.

Recommended readings:
- Hesse-Biber, S. And Leavy, P. (2011) The practice of qualitative research. Sage publications. Chapters 4
- How many qualitative interviews is enough? Read the following text: http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/2273/4/how_many_interviews.pdf

Session 6. Interviews III - Focus Groups (LM)

In this class, there will be an introduction to group interviews with a special attention to focus group, covering conceptual considerations, best practices and how to design it. The class will also partially devoted to an interactive discussion on your fieldwork experience with semi-structured interviews, the problems and constraints you have experienced, the emotions that conveyed, and how did you feel in the role of interviewer.

Required readings:
- Kitzinger, J. (1994) The methodology of focus groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. Sociology of Health and Ilness, 16 (1): 104-121.
- Cyr, J. (2016) The Pitfalls and Promise of Focus Groups as a Data Collection Method. Sociological Methods & Research, 45(2): 231-259.

Recommended readings:
- Hesse-Biber, S. And Leavy, P. (2011) The practice of qualitative research. Sage publications. Chapter 7
- Morgan, D. (1997) Focus groups as qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Data analysis:

Session 7. Introduction to Qualitative Analysis – Grounded Theory (MAB)
The main questions that guide this session are: what is qualitative data analysis, how do we do it while being transparent about it? During this session we will discuss the challenges of undertaking qualitative data analysis and we will introduce some of the main methods that are used for this endeavour. We will place a special emphasis to the Grounded Theory methods to qualitative data analysis.

Required readings:
- Birks, M. & Mills, J. (2011) *Grounded Theory: a practical guide*, Los Angeles, London: SAGE. Chapter 1 (a second edition was published in 2015)

Recommended readings:
- Aslipour, H., & Zargar, M. R. (2022). Developing Grounded Theory Systematic Approach for Public Policy Researches. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *21*. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221090357 (open access)
- Bowen, G. A. (2006). Grounded Theory and Sensitizing Concepts. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *5*(3), 12–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500304
- Charmaz, Kathy (2001) "Qualitative interviewing and Grounded Theory analysis"*,* in Gubrium, Jaber F.; Holstein, James A. (eds*) Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method,* SAGE Publications (UAB Library has it)
- Miles, M.B.; Huberman, A.M.; Saldaña, J. (2018) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. SAGE. This the fourth edition of a highly cited work published first in 2005 by Miles and Huberman.

Sessions 8. Further issues in Qualitative Analysis: Discourse Analysis (LM)
There are two main approaches to analysis qualitative data: the "what" and the "how". The first focuses on the content that people decide to transmit during the interview, the second focuses on the way in which people decide to frame linguistically this content. This session will introduce you to the technique of the discourse analysis, one of the most important ones to analysis the "how".

Required readings:
- Chalaby, J. K. (1996). Beyond the Prison-House of Language: Discourse as a Sociological Concept. The British Journal of Sociology, 47(4), 684–698.
- Mottier, V. (2002). Discourse analysis and the politics of identity/difference. *European Political Science*, *2*(1), 57–60.

Recommended readings
- Jorgesen M. and Phillips L. (2002) *Discourse analysis as Theory and Method.* Sage Publication.

Session 9 – Introduction to ATLAS.ti (MAB)

The main aim of this session is to reflect upon the process of qualitative (inductive or deductive) coding and its link to the research design. We will achieve the stated goal by analysing four interviews provided by the teacher. Moreover, we will introduce ATLAS.ti as a software to support qualitative analysis "at the text level" and data management. This session can also be complemented with an optional session (see below) where we will further introduce advanced features to support the analysis with (ATLAS.ti).

Required readings:
- Saldaña, Johnny (2013) "Chapter 1: An introduction to Codes and Coding", in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, pp.1-40, SAGE, 2nd edition. A third edition was published in 2015

Recommended readings
- Friese, S. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS. ti*. SAGE (3rd edition)
- Miles, M.B.; Huberman, A.M.; Saldaña, J. (2018) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. SAGE (this is the fourth edition of a highly cited work published first in 2005 by Miles and Huberman)

Complementary session: This session can be extended with a session joint with the PPIR PhD programme - Advanced features in ATLAS.ti

This session will allow you to learn advanced features to support the analysis such as grouping, retrieval of data, links and the graphical presentation of your results through conceptual maps.

Recommended readings
- Friese, S. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS. ti*. SAGE (3rd edition)
- Brower, R. L., Jones, T. B., Osborne-Lampkin, L., Hu, S., & Park-Gaghan, T. J. (2019). Big Qual: Defining and Debating Qualitative Inquiry for Large Data Sets. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *18*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919880692

10. Students' presentations (EØN)

During the session, the groups of students will present their research, with an emphasis put on the encountered methodological challenges and on researchers' reflexivity.

QUANTITATIVE METHODS (Marinova, Pannico)

Pre-course Session A: Introduction to data analysis. Descriptive analysis.

Pre-course Session B: Descriptive statistics.

Session 1: Basic bivariate analysis.

Session 2: Basic bivariate analysis: inference.

Session 3: Hypothesis testing I.

Session 4: Hypothesis testing II. Correlation & Bivariate regression.

Session 5: Multiple regression (I).

Session 6: Multiple regression (II).

Session 7: Practice session.

Session 8: Multiple regression (II): Categorical IVs.

Session 9: Multiple regression (III): Interactions.

Session 10 : Practice session.

Session 11: Logistic regression (I).

Session 12: Logistic regression (II): Postestimation & predicted probabilities.

Session 13: Practice session.

Session 14: Limits and alternatives to regression.

Session 15: Summary/tutorial sessions.

Core readings

Qualitative

Bryman, A. 2012. *Social Research Methods.* Oxford, Oxford University Press

Della Porta, D. & M. Keating, M. 2008. *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kapiszewski, Diana, MacLean, Lauren M., Read, Benjamin L. 2015. *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

Hesse-Biber, S. And Leavy, P. 2010. *The practice of qualitative research*. Sage.

Quantitative

Kellstedt, P. M. & G. D. Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pollock, P. H. 2016. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, 5th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Pollock, P. H. 2015. *A Stata Companion to Political Analysis*, 3rd ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Evaluation

To receive a passing grade in the module, students need a passing grade in each of its two parts (qualitative part and quantitative part). A 10% grade penalty grade applies to each day that the student is late with a submission.

Qualitative part (40% of final grade in the module)

Students will be evaluated based on **four assignments** in qualitative research methods. The weight of each assignment is as follows:
- Exercise 1 (30% of the qualitative part), Fieldwork/observational techniques
- Exercise 2 (30% of the qualitative part), Interview exercise
- Exercise 3 (30% of the qualitative part), Data analysis (using Atlas.ti as software to support the analysis is optional)
- Exercise 4 (10% of the qualitative part), Group presentation on the research process

Late Submissions: A 10% grade penalty will be applied for each day that a student is late with a graded submission.

In order to receive a passing grade, students must **meet all four of the following requirements**:
1. attend at least 80% of class sessions;
2. turn in/present all four assignment;
3. receive a passing grade (of 5 or above) on at least three of the four assignments;
4. have an average grade of above 5 in the four assignments.

Plagiarism: copying on an assignment will result in a zero for that assignment, and the student will have to take the recovery exam.

Recovery exam: students who have an average grade below 5 can opt to take the recovery exam if they meet the following two requirements:
1. have attended 80% of class sessions AND
2. have turned in/presented all four assignments.

The recovery exam is graded on a pass or fail basis. If students pass the recovery exam, they can receive, at best, a final grade of 5 for the qualitative module.

QUANTITATIVE PART (60% of the final grade of the module)
Students will be evaluated based on five take-home assignments in applied statistics. Each task will have the same weight for the final grade.

To receive a passing grade, students must meet the following four requirements:
1. attend at least 80% of class sessions;
2. hand in the five assignments;
3. receive a passing grade (5 or higher) on at least three of the five papers;
4. have an average grade higher than 5 in the five tasks.

Plagiarism: Cheating on any assignment will result in a zero for that assignment and the student will have to take the remedial exam.

Remedial exam: Students who have an average grade below 5 on all five assignments or have cheated on any of the five assignments can take the make-up exam if they meet the following two requirements:
1. have attended 80% of the class sessions AND
2. have submitted the five assignments.

The remedial exam is graded on a pass or fail basis. If students pass the remedial exam, they can receive, at best, a final grade of 5 for the quantitative module.