

Theory Construction

Academic Year: (2019 / 2020)

Review date: 05-04-2017

Department assigned to the subject: Social Sciences Department

Coordinating teacher: SANDELL , FRANK RICKARD

Type: Compulsory ECTS Credits : 6.0

Year : 5 Semester : 1

REQUIREMENTS (SUBJECTS THAT ARE ASSUMED TO BE KNOWN)

Courses in statistics, and Sociological Research Methods (both qualitative and quantitative)

OBJECTIVES

General:

1. Ability to work in groups
2. Ability to communicate ideas in oral and written form
3. Capacity to organize and plan research and inquiry both individually and/or in groups
4. Capacity to organize and analyse complex information.
5. Understand existing theory and to understand the main views in academic debates and identifying the relevant pieces of empirical evidence used to sustain positions.

Specific:

Ability to:

1. Formulate a research problems/question
2. Develop concepts and typologies to help analysing a specific research topic.
3. ¿Theorize¿: Construct theory and provide explanations addressing a research problem/question on an individual basis.
4. Extract hypotheses from a theory
5. Find data and define measures that address a specific research problem
6. Identify, organize, and analyse information in a critical and systematic way
7. Identify methods for analysing data and measurement.
8. Knowledge of quantitative and qualitative techniques and ability to choose which is most adequate to apply in different fields of social sciences.
9. Hypothesis testing
10. Explore the relationship between theory, methods, and the broader goals of research.

DESCRIPTION OF CONTENTS: PROGRAMME

The main goal is to prepare the students, and provide them with basic skills, to undertake rudimentary research and inquiry in the field of social sciences. The course focuses on teaching the students the meaning and relevance of theory for inquiry and research in the social sciences. All aspects of the research process are covered such as:

1. Questions
2. Theories
3. Hypotheses
4. Research design and hypothesis-testing
5. Evidence
6. Implications

Particular emphasis is put on the art of theorizing ¿ the technique of theory construction ¿ with an aim to explain social and societal phenomena. The course will provide the students a first contact with how to use theory data and methods in a coherent way to enable a systematic study of a social or societal phenomenon. The course will show how questions through theorising can be turned into theory. Theories motivate hypotheses which in turn can be contrasted by means of collection of empirical evidence and data. We will assess the feedbacks between empirical evidence and theories. We aim to show how new or better evidence shape theories, and how theories also discipline the enquiry into the social world by affecting measurement instruments, or by focusing the attention on specific types of evidence. We will discuss what measurement means, what guides measurement, and the problems of various sorts of evidence and the alternative research designs involved (experimental, comparative historical, statistical), We will then elaborate on how evidence informs the generation development of

theory and hypotheses with a view to make causal claims that can aid policy making and policy strategies at all levels of society.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND METHODOLOGY

The course is divided in theoretical and practical sessions. The theoretical sessions are a mixture of lecturing and discussion of readings given in advance of each theoretical session. For each class students should take notes on the reading and be prepared to engage in discussion on the reading for that week based on his/her notes. Students should prepare half to one page of written notes based on the readings organized in dictionary like entries which seem relevant to the student. These notes should be handed in but are not graded.

The practical classes consist of three exercises in how to theorize and research. Each student will carry out three small empirical research tasks in theorizing and document these. Each exercise span three practical sessions.

Session 1) Find a topic and provide some data on it.

Session 2) develop a name, some concepts, a typology and the like that help to analyse the chosen phenomenon.

Session 3) come up with an explanation of the chosen phenomenon.

For each class, students should prepare half to one pages of writing on what they have come up with in relation to # 1, # 2 or # 3. These notes should be handed in.

There are four tasks for the students to carry out to get a grade.

- 1) Participating in the discussion. Doing the reading(s) for each class and notes while doing so;
- 2) Carry out the theorizing exercises
- 3) Producing a research paper for the class. (Individual or Group ¿ maximum 3 students per group)
- 4) Short final exam

The paper consists of turning one exercise in to a small research report of no more than 2000 word. In the case the students choose to do a group exercise the grading is uniform across group members.

ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

1. Class participation Mandatory (Grades Exam and Research paper will not be graded if students fail to hand in 75% of the hand-ins mentioned above)
2. Exam 50 % of the grade
3. Project 50 % of the grade

% end-of-term-examination: 50

% of continuous assessment (assignments, laboratory, practicals...): 50

BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, Andrew Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences, Norton, 2004
- Charles Lave and James G. March An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences , University Press of America, 1975
- Goffman, Erving The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Doubleday, 1959
- Merton, Robert K On Theoretical Sociology, The Free Press, 1967
- Mills, C. Wright The Sociological Imagination, Oxford University Press, 1959
- Schelling, Thomas C Micromotives and Macrobehavior , Norton, 1978
- Stinchcombe A.L. La construcción de teorías sociales, Nueva Visión, 1970
- Stinchcombe A.L. Constructing Social Theories, University Chicago Press, 1987
- Swedberg, R. Theorizing in Social Science, Stanford: Stanford University, 2014
- Swedberg, R. The art of Social Theory, Princeton University press, 2014