Multidisciplinary research design in social sciences

Academic Year: (2020 / 2021) **Review date: 06-03-2020**

Department assigned to the subject: Social Sciences Department

Coordinating teacher: SANDELL , FRANK RICKARD

Type: Compulsory ECTS Credits : 6.0

Year : 2 Semester : 2

REQUIREMENTS (SUBJECTS THAT ARE ASSUMED TO BE KNOWN)

N.A

OBJECTIVES

General:

* Ability to work in groups
* Ability to communicate ideas in oral and written form
* Capacity to organize and plan research and inquiry both individually and/or in groups
* Capacity to organize and analyse complex information.
* 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 Abilities:
* Formulate a research problems/question
* Develop concepts and typologies to help analysing a specific research topic.
* Theorize: Construct theory and provide explanations addressing a research problem/question on an individual basis.
* Extract hypotheses from a theory
* Find data and define measures that address a specific research problem
* Identify, organize, and analyze information in a critical and systematic way
* Identify methods for analysing data and measurement.
* Knowledge of quantitative and qualitative techniques and ability to choose which is most adequate to apply in different fields of social sciences.
* Hypothesis testing
* 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 social science research and inquiry with a special emphasis on questions in the area of international studies. Particular emphasis is put on the technique of theory construction with an aim to explain social 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 social phenomena. The course will show how research questions can be turned into theory. Theories motivate hypotheses which in turn can be contrasted by means of collection of empirical evidence and data. We aim to show how new or better evidence shape theories, and how theories also discipline the inquiry into the social world by affecting measurement instruments, or by focussing the attention on specific types of evidence. We will discuss what concepts and 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 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.

The course contains three main parts 1; Research Building Blocks, 2) Research and Causality, and 3) the Research Process and Presentation. Each Part contain 4-5 subsections, each of which will be subject to a weekly lecture and applied workshops with practical exercises.

A total of 14 different sessions are scheduled as follows

SESSION 1. PART I: RESEARCH BUILDING BLOCKS: Introduction to Social Science Research, a Unified Framework.

SESSION 2 PART I: RESEARCH BUILDING BLOCKS: Arguments: Descriptive, Causal, and Others

SESSION 3 PART I: RESEARCH BUILDING BLOCKS: Concepts and Measures

SESSION 4 PART I: RESEARCH BUILDING BLOCKS: Analyses

SESSION 5 PART II CAUSALITY: Causal Frameworks

SESSION 6 PART II CAUSALITY: Causal Hypotheses and Analyses

SESSION 7 PART II CAUSALITY: Experimental Design

SESSION 8 PART II CAUSALITY: Large N Observational Design

SESSION 9 PART II CAUSALITY: Case Study Design

SESSION 10 PART III PROCESS AND PRESENTATION: Reading, reviewing, and Brainstorming

SESSION 11 PART III PROCESS AND PRESENTATION: Data gathering

SESSION 12 PART III PROCESS AND PRESENTATION: Writing

SESSION 13 PART III PROCESS AND PRESENTATION: Speaking

SESSION 14 PART III PROCESS AND PRESENTATION: Ethics

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 for this course. Students should be prepared to take notes on the readings and to engage in discussions on the readings.

The practical classes consist of two blocks. Both blocks are concerned with research design. Each student will carry out one group assignment and series of individual tests of comprehension.

There are four main tasks for the students to carry out to get a final grade.
1) Participating actively in the group assignments and discussions in the theoretical and practical sessions
2) Carry out the group assignments in a favorable fashion.
3) Pass a series of individual tests in the practical sessions.
4) Pass the final exam.

ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

ORDINARY CALL

Final Exam 50 % of the grade
Continuous assessment 50%;
1) A group project (30%).
2) A set of tests and assistance (20%)

EXTRA-ORDINARY CALL
Examination of the course literature 50%
Individual Research Paper 50%

% end-of-term-examination:	50
% of continuous assessment (assigments, laboratory, practicals…):	50

BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andrew Gelman and Jeronimo Cortina A Quantitative Tour of the Social Sciences, California University Press, 2009

- Gerring J and Christenson D Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide, Cambridge University Press, 2017

ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

- D Brancati Social Scientific Research, Sage, 2018

- J Creswell and D Creswell Research Design, Sage Edge, 2018