

Graduate School for Social Research

2021-2022

Empirical Research in the Social Sciences (ERSS): Design, Implementation, and Write-up

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This course is funded by Narodowego Centrum Badań i Rozwoju (NCBiR) for the “Humanities and Social Sciences for Society and Enterprise” programme administered by the Graduate School for Social Research.

Course Description:

This course focuses on the logic of theory-driven and empirically-based social science research and the process underlying scientific production. We emphasize the practical steps that enable scholars to design their research project, formulate testable hypotheses, and select the data and analysis techniques most suitable for answering the project’s research question(s). Equally important, the course teaches you how to read published academic studies to critically assess their merits and limitations, and how to write up research projects to meet the requirements and expectations of major English-language social science publication outlets, especially those of peer-reviewed journals like the *American Sociological Review*, *European Sociological Review*, and *Qualitative Sociology*, among others.

To this end, the course comprises **two independent**, albeit complimentary, components, which follow one another during the 2021-2022 academic year. Part I of the course, to take place in Autumn 2021, teaches students the practicalities of moving from research design to research implementation. Part II, offered in Spring 2022, focuses on reading and writing social science publications.

The entire course is conducted from an interdisciplinary perspective. Below are the detailed descriptions for **Part I, *Research Design and Implementation in Social Sciences*** (30 hours, Semester I) and **Part II, *Reading and Writing in Social Sciences*** (30 Hours, Semester II), including timeline and requirements specific to each of the course’s components.

Part I. Research Design and Implementation in Social Sciences

(30 hours, Semester I)

Instructors: Irina Tomescu-Dubrow, Ilona Wyszumulek, Joshua K. Dubrow

Emails: dubrow.4@osu.edu, ilona.wyszumulek@ifispan.edu.pl, jdubrow2000@gmail.com

Place: Room 232, Staszic Palace, 72 Nowy Świat, 00-330 Warsaw, Poland (if possible) and online via Zoom

Time: Wednesday, 10:00 - 12:00

Office Hours: By appointment for office or online meetings. We are available via e-mail.

Course Website: <https://socialinquiry.wordpress.com/>

Description

Part I of the course *Empirical Research in the Social Sciences* deals with the multiple, often simultaneous and reiterative, steps of developing and carrying out theory-informed, empirical projects. Good research requires a well-formulated and testable problem, alternative explanations, and data that explicitly link concepts and hypotheses. Through a combination of lecture and discussion, we cover the role of theory for developing research questions and hypotheses, and for interpreting results; we discuss how to pose research questions that pass the “So what?” test, and how research questions and theory inform the formulation of research hypotheses; we assess different types of data (e.g. primary and secondary, survey and non-survey data) and research methods in terms of their usefulness for answering given research question(s) and addressing specified hypotheses. Part I also provides an overview of the main methodological problems that different types of data and analyses carry.

Objectives

Part I aims to provide students the key skills for developing both academic and non-academic research products that are empirically grounded and meaningful for the scientific community and/or for society in general (e.g. policy relevant). Understanding how to critically assess published empirical studies with respect to the clarity and consistency of their research design, measurement adequacy, soundness of causal statements, and the degree of correspondence between research problem – research questions/hypotheses – data – methods – conclusions, are important aspects of these skills.

At the end of Part I, you should be able to move from designing a study, whether article, dissertation proposal, or funding proposal, to implementing it. More specifically, you should know how to:

- Pose research questions relevant both to you and social science more broadly. Among others, these questions shall pass the “so what?” condition, and be methodologically feasible;
- Identify the theoretical framework(s) relevant to your research questions;
- Build theory-informed arguments and use them to generate empirically testable hypotheses;
- Identify the qualitative and/or quantitative data most suitable for evaluating the research hypotheses of your projects;
- Assess the overall strengths and weaknesses of different types of data and data collection approaches;
- Evaluate overall benefits and challenges of different social science research methods;
- Discuss possibilities and limitations of conclusions derived from different data and methods;
- Understand the ethical requirements of social science research.

In addition to imparting this specialized knowledge, Part I fosters critical thinking and communication skills. By the end of the semester, you should be able to present your research design and arguments to a scholarly audience or the lay public in clear, logical fashion.

Course Requirements

Classroom participation and attendance (15% of grade)

Everyone is expected to participate regularly and to come to class prepared to meaningfully discuss the readings. Punctual attendance is required. If you have a legitimate reason why you might be late on a regular basis, please notify us at the beginning of the course, or as soon as the condition appears. Excessive absences, tardiness, or leaving early will adversely affect your grade for classroom participation.

Class discussions centered on key issues of research design are an important element of this course. The discussion format mimics in miniature what professional sociologists do – actively engage in theoretical debates with colleagues. We expect discussion to be professional and polite – but engaged. Do not shy away from points. Do push arguments. Do not accept two logically inconsistent points as “equally valid perspectives.” Do seek to integrate alternative perspectives and understand the basic assumptions that drive different conclusions. We will push you on your arguments, and we trust you will do the same for each other. For this format to work, you must be active participants.

Reading Reactions (25% of grade)

To help focus class discussions and encourage you to think critically about social science research design and implementation, you will write six short reading reactions (ca. 300-500 words), based on either empirical articles or textbook chapters assigned in this course. Each reading reaction is due electronically at least one day prior to the class period whose readings you react to. For one of the reactions, the reading to comment on will be assigned in class, by us. For the remaining five reading reactions, you will decide the readings. We will circulate a sign-up sheet for the reading reactions at the beginning of the course.

Minimum three of your total six reading reactions should engage with an empirical article. When reacting to an empirical article, please discuss how well the author(s) link (a) research question(s) and hypotheses to (b) the chosen empirical data, and (c) the selected methods of analyses. When reacting to a book chapter, please provide a summary of the chapter’s key points.

Reading reactions to both empirical papers and book chapters should be **analytic** in nature and can include questions that you have about the readings (e.g. what you may not have understood with regards to the overall research design and its implementation, including analyses), questions about the nature of social science, or a short critique of an article’s methodology. These reactions are not about how you ‘feel’ about the readings (whether you liked them or not).

In preparing your reading reactions, you are encouraged to discuss the readings with your colleagues, and look up unclear concepts and terms. We will use your reactions as part of class discussion. Please come prepared to discuss what you wrote.

Group Assignment - Field Research (20% of grade)

To experience how the process of research design and implementation can feel, you will engage in a group exercise where you will use observation as your data collection method. Since the method is the “servant” (Firebaugh 2008), together with members of your group you will first need to formulate a research question that you can answer using data collected via field observation. Specific requirements of the Group Assignment, including for writing up the results of your exercise, will be handed out in class.

Research Proposal (40% of grade)

The final project for this course consists of a research proposal (around 2 500 words, 12-point font, double-spaced). We will discuss the appropriate components of the research proposal in class, and provide a detailed handout of the requirements. Each student must write up their own paper individually and turn in their own work.

Completing the Research Proposal involves three steps, each due at different time points during Semester I (see Time Outline in Syllabus):

Step 1: Prepare a 300-500 words **General Statement about your Research Proposal's Topic** that should include (a) Research problem; (b) Research question(s), and whether answering it presupposes exploration only, or explanation, too; if you plan causal research, hypotheses are encouraged, but not mandatory for Step 1; (c) The argument as to why your research question passes the 'so what' condition; (d) What data you consider most appropriate for addressing the research question(s); (e) If you intend to collect data, what sampling technique you regard as most appropriate for your study? Please indicate in your Statement whether your research proposal is, or potentially could be, linked to your PhD thesis.

Step 2: Taking into account instructor-provided feedback to your General statement (Step 1), prepare the **Outline of your Research Proposal** (about 800 words). The Outline should briefly discuss each of the following elements (a) Research question(s), and the general research problem it links to; (b) Main theoretical framework(s) that inform your research (enumeration, not detailed description of theory); (c) If your research involves causal analysis, provide the research hypotheses and briefly indicate how they link to the theoretical framework(s) you chose; (d) What data and methods you regard as necessary to examine the research hypotheses; (e) What limitations are these data and methods likely to have, given what you set out to investigate?

Both the General Statement and the Outline can take the form of bullet-points, followed by several phrases under each point (that is, they do not have to be written as a flowing narrative).

You are expected to present your Outline in small groups. You should treat this presentation like a "roundtable" at a conference. Usually this takes the form of an outline of the paper, but it can go beyond this. Outstanding presenters include as part of their handouts a) key lessons to be learned, and b) a list of resources (web links, key bibliographical references, key people working on that topic) to learn more. To facilitate discussion, you need to electronically share your Outline, and, if applicable, additional materials, with the class (instructors and colleagues) at least one day prior to your presentation.

Step 3: Write full **Research Proposal** (around 2500 words) according to the requirements distributed in class.

Grading

Grades will be based: 15% on Class participation, 25% on Reading reactions; 20% on Field Methods Assignment; and 40% on the Research Proposal. Total possible points = 100%.

Students receiving more than 90% of possible points are guaranteed at least a 5-, more than 80% at least a 4-, more than 70% at least a 3-, and more than 60% at least a 2.

Readings

Readings for Part I are available from the instructors, via a course-specific G-drive, and the GSSR library. Readings are shared for academic instruction only, and are not to be distributed further. Please consult the Timetable for reading materials assigned to each class period.

Resources:

Bryman, A., 2012. *Social Research Methods*. OUP Oxford.

Creswell, J. W. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, 3rd edition. Los Angeles: Sage.

Firebaugh, G. 2008. *Seven Rules for Social Research*, Princeton University Press.

Hargittai, E. (ed.) 2009. *Research Confidential: Solutions to Problems Most Social Scientists Pretend They Never Have*. University of Michigan Press.

Humphrey, C. and Lee, B. H. (eds.) 2004. *The Real-Life Guide to Accounting Research: A Behind-the-scenes View of Using Qualitative Research Methods*. Elsevier.

King, G. R., Keohane, O. and Verba, S. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*, Princeton University Press.

Minichiello, V., Aroni, R. and Hays, T. N. 2008. *In-depth Interviewing: Principles, Techniques, Analysis*, 3rd edition. Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Singleton, R. A. Jr. and Straits, B. C. 1999. *Approaches to Social Research*, 3rd edition. Oxford University Press, USA.

Cross-Cultural Survey Guidelines <https://ccsg.isr.umich.edu/chapters/>

Policies on Attendance, Late Materials, and Make-Up

We expect everyone to show up to class on time. During class, cell phones and other electronic devices with noise-capacity must be turned off. We will make exceptions to this rule if you explain why you need them turned on during class. Please inform us of this reason before class begins.

Please remember to be courteous and polite to one another during heated discussions. We will be with each other for several months and we all need a comfortable classroom environment to learn and discuss issues.

All assignments are to be turned in electronically, via email to the instructors by the specified deadlines. We will accept late materials *only if* notified 24 hours prior to the deadline. Except for documented reasons (e.g. doctor's note), late assignments will incur a 10% penalty per day. For emailed assignments: it is your responsibility to be sure that we received your work. We will take into consideration any COVID issues on personal health and the ability to turn in assignments.

Time Outline: ERSS Part 1 2021-2022	
1. Wednesday, Oct. 6 10:00 – 12:00	<p>Nature of Science. The <i>Science</i> in Social Sciences. Introduction to Research Design</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u> Creswell, John W. 2009. Ch. 1 “The Selection of a Research Design” <i>Hargittai</i> (Ed) Introduction (Ch1) by Hargittai “Doing Empirical Social Research”</p> <p><u>Additional readings (optional):</u> Becker, Gary. 1993. “How I Learned What a Crock Was” <i>Journal of Contemporary Ethnography</i> 22: 28-35. <i>This article illustrates how research topics are generated</i> Singleton Royce A. Jr. and Bruce C. Straits, Ch 2 “Nature of Science”</p>
2. Wednesday, Oct. 13 10:00 – 12:00	<p>Before the Data I: Social Inquiry, Theory, and Concepts</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u> Mills, C. Wright. “Chapter One: The Promise.” <i>The Sociological Imagination</i> pp. 3 - 24 Oxford University Press. Gerring, John. 1999. “What Makes a Concept Good? A Criterial Framework for Understanding Concept Formation in the Social Sciences.” <i>Polity</i> 31(3): 357-393.</p> <p><u>Additional readings (optional):</u> Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. “Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics.” <i>American Political Science Review</i> 64(4): 1033 – 1053.</p>
3. Wednesday, Oct. 20 10:00 – 12:00	<p>Before the Data, II: Causality, Hypotheses, and Research Questions</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u> Warner, Benjamin R. 2018. “Causality” in <i>The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods</i>, pp. 122 – 124. Hammersley, Martyn. 2015. “Causation and Qualitative Inquiry.” In <i>The Limits of Social Science: Causal Explanation and Value Relevance</i>, pp. 17 – 32. SAGE. McEwan, Bree. 2018. “Null Hypothesis.” In <i>The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods</i>, pp. 1104 – 1106. Churchill, Harriet and Teela Sanders. 2011. “Formulating a Research Question.” In <i>Getting Your PhD</i>, pp. 22 – 32. SAGE.</p>
4. Wednesday, Oct. 27 10:00 – 12:00	<p>Before the Data, III: Reading Empirical Articles</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u> Guetzkow, Joshua, Michèle Lamont and Grégoire Mallard. 2004. “What Is Originality in the Humanities and the Social Sciences?” <i>American Sociological Review</i> 69(2): 190-212. Savage, Mathieu, Alex Dumas, and Stephen A. Stuart. "Fatalism and short-termism as cultural barriers to cardiac rehabilitation among underprivileged men." <i>Sociology of health & illness</i> 35, no. 8 (2013): 1211-1226.</p>
5. Wednesday, Nov 3 10:00 – 12:00	<p>Units of observation. Sampling</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u> Singleton Royce A..Jr. and Bruce C. Straits, Ch. 5 “Sampling” Herring, C. 2019. Complaint-Oriented Policing: Regulating Homelessness in Public Space. <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 0003122419872671.</p>

	<p>Górska, Maria, Anna, Karolina Kulicka, Zuzanna Staniszevska, and Dorota Dobija. "Deepening inequalities. What did COVID-19 reveal about the gendered nature of academic work?" <i>Gender, Work & Organization</i>. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12696</p> <p><u>Additional readings (optional):</u></p> <p>Becker, Howard S. 1998. "Sampling." pp. 67-108 <i>Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.</p> <p>Pailhé, A., Solaz, A., & Souletie, A. 2019. How Do Women and Men Use Extra Time? Housework and Childcare after the French 35-Hour Workweek Regulation. <i>European Sociological Review</i>.</p> <p>Lieberson, S. 1991. "Small N's and Big Conclusions" <i>Social Forces</i>, 71:307-320</p> <p>King, Kohane and Verba. 1994. Ch. 6</p> <p>Step 1, Research Proposal: General Statement about Research Topic, due</p>
<p>6. Monday, Nov. 10 10:00 – 12:00</p>	<p>Measurement: Concepts, Indicators. Reliability & Validity of Measurement</p> <p><u>Mandatory</u></p> <p>Becker, Howard S. 1998. "Concepts" Pp. 109-145 in <i>Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.</p> <p>Frost, J. 2019. "Certainty, Uncertainty, or Indifference? Examining Variation in the Identity Narratives of Nonreligious Americans". <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 0003122419871957.</p> <p>Sweet, P. L. 2019. The Sociology of Gaslighting. <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 0003122419874843.</p> <p><u>Additional Readings (optional):</u></p> <p>Brush, L. 1990. "Violent Acts and Injurious Outcomes in Married Couples: Methodological Issues in the National Study of Families and Households." <i>Gender & Society</i> 4(1): 156-167.</p> <p>Singleton Royce A. Jr. and Bruce C. Straits, Ch. 5: "Measurement"</p>
<p>10. Wednesday, Nov 17 10:00-12:00</p>	<p>Independent Research: Fieldwork</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u></p> <p>Singleton Royce A. Jr. and Bruce C. Straits. 1999. Ch. 10</p> <p>Feagin, Joe. 1991. "The Continuing Significance of Race: Antiracist Discrimination in Public Places". <i>ASR</i> 56: 101-116</p> <p>Tian, X. 2018. "Escaping the Interpersonal Power Game: Online Shopping in China". <i>Qualitative Sociology</i>, 41(4), 545–568.</p>
<p>9. Wednesday, Nov 24 10:00 – 12:00</p>	<p>Experiments in the Social Sciences</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u></p> <p>Foschi, Martha. 2014. "Hypotheses, Operationalizations, and Manipulation Checks." In Webster, Murray Jr. and Jane Sell (Eds.) <i>Laboratory Experiments in the Social Sciences</i> (Second Edition). Amsterdam: Elsevier/Academic Press.</p> <p>González, M. J., Cortina, C., & Rodríguez, J. 2019. The Role of Gender Stereotypes in Hiring: A Field Experiment. <i>European Sociological Review</i>, 35(2), 187-204.</p> <p>Auspurg, Katrin, Thomas Hinz, and Carsten Sauer. 2017. "Why Should Women Get Less? Evidence on the Gender Pay Gap from Multifactorial Survey Experiments." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 82: 179-210.</p> <p>Group Assignment Field Methods, due</p>

<p>7. Wednesday, Dec. 1 10:00 – 12:00</p>	<p>Survey Research (I): Types of survey design</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u> Creswell, John W. 2009. Ch. 8 “Quantitative Methods” <i>Hargittai (Ed)</i>, Ch 12 Freese “Secondary Analysis of Large Social Surveys CCSG: Data Collection ccsg.isr.umich.edu/index.php/chapters/data-collection-chapter Kalter, F., Kogan, I., & Dollmann, J. 2019. Studying Integration from Adolescence to Early Adulthood: Design, Content, and Research Potential of the CILS4EU-DE Data. <i>European Sociological Review</i>, 35(2), 280-297</p> <p><u>Additional readings (optional):</u> <i>Hargittai</i>, Ch 11 Bandelj “Giving Mega Attention to Macro Research”</p>
<p>8. Wednesday, Dec 8 10:00 – 12:00</p>	<p>Survey Research (II): Questionnaire development</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u> Horton, Joanne, Richard Macve and Geert Struyven. 2004. Ch. 20. Qualitative Research: Experiences in Using Semi-Structured Interviews, 339- 358 (in Humphrey and Lee, Eds). Krosnick, Jon, Stanley Pressner, 2010. Question and questionnaire design. <i>Handbook of survey research</i>, 263-314. McIntosh, Michele J., and Janice M. Morse. 2015. "Situating and constructing diversity in semi-structured interviews." <i>Global Aualitative Nursing Research 2</i>: 2333393615597674. Schneider, D.; Harknett, K. 2019. “Consequences of Routine Work-Schedule Instability for Worker Health and Well-Being”. <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 84(1), 82–114.</p> <p>Step 2, Research Proposal: Outline of Research Proposal, due</p>
<p>11. Wednesday, Dec. 15 10:00 – 12:00</p>	<p>Big data in the social sciences</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u> Lazer, David, and Jason Radford. "Data ex machina: Introduction to Big Data." <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> 43 (2017): 19-39. Edelmann, Achim, Tom Wolff, Danielle Montagne, and Christopher A. Bail. "Computational Social Science and Sociology." <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> 46 (2020). Misra, A., Schmidt, J., & Harrison, L. (2020, April 14). Combating COVID-19 with data: What role for national statistical systems? Paris 21: Covid 19 Response Policy Brief</p>
<p>12. Wednesday, Dec. 22 10:00 – 12:00</p>	<p>Mixed Methods</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u> Creswell, John W. 2009. Ch. 10 “Mixed Methods Procedures” in <i>Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches, 3rd edition</i>. Los Angles: Sage. Olsen, Wendy. 2004 “Triangulation in social research” in <i>Developments in Sociology</i> M Holborn (Ed) Karell, D., & Freedman, M. 2019. “Rhetorics of Radicalism.” <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 84(4), 726-753.</p> <p><u>Additional readings (optional):</u> Singleton Royce A. Jr. and Bruce C. Straits, Ch. 13 “Multiple Methods”</p>

	<p>Baranowska-Rataj, A., Matysiak, A.; Mynarska, M. 2014. “Does Lone Motherhood Decrease Women’s Happiness? Evidence from Qualitative and Quantitative Research”. <i>Journal of Happiness Studies</i>, 15(6), 1457–1477.</p>
<p>13. Wednesday, Jan 5 10:00-12:00</p>	<p>Research ethics</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u></p> <p>Salganik, Matthew J. 2018. Ch.6 Ethics. In <i>Bit by Bit: Social Research in the Digital Age</i>, pp. 281 – 331</p> <p>Oh, J. H., Yeatman, S., & Trinitapoli, J. 2019. Data Collection as Disruption: Insights from a Longitudinal Study of Young Adulthood. <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 84(4), 634-663.</p> <p>Lewis, K., Kaufman, J., Gonzalez, M., Wimmer, A; Christakis, N. 2008. Tastes, ties, and time: A new social network dataset using Facebook.com. <i>Social Networks</i>, 30(4), 330–342.</p> <p><u>Additional readings (optional):</u></p> <p>Lallmark et al 2009_Ethical issues in the use of in-depth interviews.pdf</p> <p>Cross-Cultural Survey Guidelines, Ethics in Survey research: ccsg.isr.umich.edu/index.php/chapters/ethical-considerations-in-surveys-chapter</p>
<p>14. Wednesday, Jan 12 10:00 – 12:00</p>	<p>Data management and replicability</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u></p> <p>Lyons, Peter and Doueck, Howard J. <i>The Dissertation</i>. Ch. 6 Data management and analysis. p. 132-153</p> <p>Moore, R. 2017. “Sardonic Atheists and Silly Evangelicals: The Relationship between Self-Concept and Humor Style”. <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 40(4), 447–465.</p> <p>Roundtable Presentations of Research Proposal Outline</p>
<p>15. Wednesday, Jan 19 10:00 – 12:00</p>	<p>Summary</p> <p><u>Mandatory:</u></p> <p>Firebaugh, Glenn 2008. Ch 7: The seventh rule: Let method be the servant, not the master.</p> <p>King, Kohane and Verba. 1994. “Knowing what to avoid”</p> <p>Roundtable Presentations of Research Proposal Outline</p>

Step 3. Research Proposal: Full proposal due on February 4 by 6 PM