

Global 224: RESEARCH METHODS & DESIGN, Fall 2017
Class: Thursday, 3:30-6:20, 2011 SSMS (unless other locations are indicated)
OH: Thursday, 12-2 pm, 2111 SSMS

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course introduces Global MA and PhD students to the elements of research methodology and design. Design is the art of asking questions in ways that elicit answers that: (a) could be surprising; and (b) are likely to be convincing to others. Methodologies are systematic ways of gathering and processing the evidence the design calls for to answer those questions.¹

Meeting criteria (a) and (b) requires all terms and concepts used to pose your question, and to explicate possible answers to it, be defined clearly, so that other people can challenge or extend your findings (using other research designs or different evidence) and/or utilize them in some way.

To ensure the possibility of surprise, your question must admit more than one plausible answer; and you must do everything you can to avoid putting your finger on the scales as you weigh these possible answers. You will not be successful. Nobody is. The important thing is that you try, and that you proceed with awareness of the myriad ways in which you can inadvertently tip the scales. If you do not, your conclusions are likely to be challenged successfully, and you are less likely to convince others of your answers.

To convince others you must also meet their standards of evidence (or, in the case of theory, consistency). These standards vary across disciplines and fields of study, and also within them. This variation is related to epistemic differences, which can be sharp, and also influence the types of questions that are favored. It follows that the evidentiary standards one chooses to follow are a function of the types of questions one wishes to ask, and of the audience one wishes to convince. Global Studies is explicitly intended to synthesize questions and evidence from diverse disciplinary and epistemic traditions. It is also intended to convince audiences to consider answers emanating from traditions other than their own. To do good work in Global Studies, you must therefore understand the standards of evidence applied in the various research traditions upon which Global Studies draws and which it hopes to influence.

These, then, are our targeted learning outcomes. By the end of the quarter, you should be able to:

1. Better understand which types of evidence are useful for answering which types of questions.
2. Process any well-written journal article or book from any humanities or empirical social science discipline (excluding those using advanced quantitative techniques or advanced theory).
3. Sit through a research presentation and do the same.
4. Spot common errors in research design (fingers on scales).
5. Perform some basic research tasks that have proven useful to previous Global graduate students. These include: rapidly assessing the state of knowledge on a research question; conducting and annotating an interview; making and recording an ethnographic field visit; descriptive quantitative analysis (summary statistics/charts/decompositions/cross-tabs).
6. Distinguish correlation from causation; distinguish internal from external validity; understand necessary conditions, sufficient conditions, and how to test a theory; understand sampling.

¹ For example: comparative case study is a type of design; a researcher can populate those case studies using many methods, including ethnography, analysis of secondary quantitative data, synthesis, or archival research.

Operating principles:

Social research is an art, honed through decades of practice in a messy, unpredictable field, not a science, developed in a laboratory. We need different tools for different tasks. Few, if any, academics have command of the complete set of tools. The strength of Global Studies lies in its intellectual diversity. And the secret sauce for a good research design is detailed prior knowledge of the context in which the study is to be conducted. Therefore...

- I will bring in experts to teach you about different approaches, which we will study by reading about the approach, reading examples of their work and discussing it.
- We will not critique epistemologies, designs or methods from the outside. Rather, we will focus on how they work, and what their own practitioners feel they are and are not useful for.
- I can offer most of you only limited, generic advice on the design of your research projects. Always take the advice of your (prospective) thesis committee over mine.
- There will be homework and lots of research papers to read. Keep up.
- You will attend multiple research talks, including the weekly Global Studies colloquium.

Grading and assignments:

All work must be typed, printed (double-sided) and stapled. Write in complete sentences, with perfect spelling and grammar. Please submit your work in class or place it in my mailbox before class on the date it is due. You may turn in no more than one assignment up to one week late - no excuse necessary.

- (30%) Preparation for class sessions: Have you done your assigned reading and thinking, and how well? To be graded out of 10 after each class meeting based on your contributions. I will drop the lowest score. I will not share these assessments with you.
- (46%) Homework assignments, @ variable percentages.
- (24%) Attend **at least 3** research talks and write up summaries of their research design, methodology and conclusions². I emphasize that these must be research talks (i.e. they involve a scholar asking a question in a way that meets criteria (a) and (b) above). Short talks (less than one hour spent on presentations and questions) and advocacy talks (talks by activists or scholars wearing their activist hat) are not suitable for this assignment.³ Space your talks out over the quarter, and write each one up within 24 hours of the talk. One of these talks must involve quantitative evidence, one must be a talk in the humanities, and (so long as you can find one) at least one talk should be a talk at the intersection of the humanities and social sciences.

² State the research question the researcher poses, defining all relevant terms; explain why the researcher thinks this question is interesting/important; enumerate the possible answers considered; explain what types of evidence were used to select the best answer(s) and how the evidence was collected; state the answer(s) the researcher deems most likely; evaluate/critique the work methodologically applying the evidentiary standards the researcher claims to adhere to. Roughly one page.

³ Activism is not necessarily inimical to research or scholarship. Indeed, most engaging research is motivated by and informs activist impulses and activities. However, this assignment is intended to help you learn how to design research in ways that leave open the possibility of surprise. "Advocacy" research, per my definition, begins with a relatively firm notion of the answer to a question and tries to convince the audience to incorporate that answer into their own worldview, and often to take up a cause that this answer promotes.

	Topic	Readings	Assignment due
Session I, 28 September: Introductions			
Part I	Introductions: What are research design and methodology? Types of questions; epistemology; key terms.	Trochim (pp. 1-7;11-18, Table of Contents)	
Part II	Epistemology	Firebaugh, Ch. 1 (briefly), Watts (P&C 176-7, 187-194); Hammersley (1992)	
Session 2, 5 October: Types of Questions; Types of Designs			
Part I	Types of questions & elements of research design	Leff (1964); Khan (1996); Svensson (2005); Olken (2005); Ferraz & Finan (2008); Bussell (2010); Witsoe (2012); Mehta & Jha (2014); Foltz & Opoku (2015)	1. Process two studies to identify types of questions & elements of research design.
Interlude 1	Cranking out a rapid annotated bibliography	Course Notes; Note on VPNs	
Interlude 2	How to read tables of summary statistics / regression results	Bellamare (2012)	
Part II	Sampling; internal vs. external validity	Trochim, Ch. 2	
Session 3: 12 October: (Post)Positivism			
Part I	Elements of (post)positivist epistemology: Propositional Logic; Falsification	VanEvera, Ch. 1 (Optional: King Keohane Verba, Ch. 1)	2. Annotated Bibliography A
Part II	Causal inference; experiments	Shadish, Cook Campbell, pp. 1-26.	
Methods interlude	Correlation vs. Causality (part 1), The Experimental approach	Bertrand & Mullainathan	
Part III	The limits of positivism	Shadish, Cook Campbell, pp. 26-32	
Session 4, 19 October: Causal Inference without experiments / Humanities Part 1			
Part I	Causal inference without experiments	Pritchett & Summers	
Part II	Research design in the humanities – Part 1: (Prof. Esther Lezra)	Lezra (2014, Ch. 3), Haehn (2011)	
Session 5, 26 October: Case Studies in principle / Sampling			
Part I	Case studies in principle (singular & comparative)	Schrank (P&C, Ch.2, Ch. 9)	
Quick interlude	Sampling	Trochim Ch. 2 (revisited)	
Part II	Process tracing	Collier (2011), Doyle (1892)	

	Topic	Readings	Assignment due
Session 6A, 30 October (Monday! 3:30-5:30) Ethnography			
3:30 – 5:30	Ethnography (Guest Speakers – Dr. Tristan Partridge and Prof. Casey Walsh)	Geertz (2000); Partridge (2016); Walsh (2011); Roseberry (1982); Hammersley & Atkinson (2007 – optional online)	
Session 6, 2 November Interviewing			
3:30-4:20	Interviewing technique (Principles)	Leech et al. (2002)	3. Annotated Bibliography B
Session 7: 9 November: Case Studies in Practice; From small- to big-n / Descriptive Quant. Methods A			
Part I	Comparative case studies in practice (Prof. Alison Brysk)	Brysk - Global Good Samaritans	4. Bus Ethnography Field Notes
Interlude	From comparative to quantitative	Brysk/Mehta (2014)	
Part II	Descriptive quantitative Methods A		
Session 8: 16 November: Theory, Synthesis and Writing / Descriptive Quant. Methods B			
Part I	Theory, Synthesis and Writing (Prof. Jan Nederveen Pieterse)	Pieterse (2017. Ch. 9)	5. Bus Ethnography write-up
Interlude	Surveys	Park (P&C, Ch. 6)	
Part II	Descriptive quantitative Methods B		
Session 9, 30 November: Lining up interviews /Historiography			
Part I	Lining up interviews. Guest appearance – Michael Cianos.		
Part II	Historiography (Guest Speaker – Prof. Sherene Seikaly)	Truillot (1995), Seikaly (2016, Intro)	
Session 10: 7 December: Humanities Methods 2 / Wrap-up			
Part I	Humanities Methods 2 (Prof. Giles Gunn)	Gunn (2017)	
Part II	Presenting written research (references, tables, charts)		
Before departing on Break: Submit Online			6. Quantitative description.

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