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| Module title: | INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL RESEARCH (SOU22011) |
| Duration: | Michaelmas Term 2024 |
| ECTS allocation: | 5 credits |
| Assessment: | Group presentation (30%), Interview Project (70%) |
| Teaching staff: | Professor Daniel Faas, daniel.faas@tcd.ie |
| Office hours: | E-mail only |

The second-year methodology modules Introduction to Social Research 1 and 2 are designed to introduce students to the world of social research. They are mandatory for all students who intend to carry out their capstone project in Sociology. Introduction to Social Research 1 (SOU22011) introduces students to the fundamentals of qualitative social research methodology. This module begins with an introduction into the nature of qualitative research and revisits the paradigm divide with a view of discussing mixed-method approaches. We shall then focus in more detail on case study designs and methods including different kinds of case studies. This will be compared and contrasted with ethnographic approaches and implementations. We then examine different research methods such as observations, documentary sources, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, and also discuss the idea of triangulation. Subsequently, we turn our attention to data analysis techniques including discourse, content and conversation analysis. In this context, we shall clarify issues of transcribing and reflexivity and briefly discuss ethical issues. This module is interactive and gives you some hands-on experience in designing and conducting an interview as part of the assessment.

1. Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, you will have acquired the ability to:

- Familiarise you with the methodological and epistemological debates concerning qualitative research;
- Understand the nature of the paradigm divide between quantitative and qualitative social research;
- Compare and contrast different qualitative research methods including focus groups, semi-structured interviews, documentary sources and observations;
- Design and conduct a semi-structured interview and reflect on the research experience;
- Read and critically discuss work by qualitative researchers, especially focusing on the lessons they learned and the challenges they faced.

Your TAs are Hannah Bowman (hbowman@tcd.ie) and Srimoyee Biswas (biswassr@tcd.ie).

2. Recommended texts/key readings

The main textbook for this module is:

Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (5th edition).

The following are useful, more specialist guide to qualitative research:

Angrosino, M. (2007) *Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research*, London: Sage.

Sapsford, R. and Jupp, V. (eds.) (2006) *Data Collection and Analysis*, London: Sage.

Kvale, S. (2007) *Doing Interviews*, London: Sage.

Silverman, D. (2004) *Doing Qualitative Research*, London: Sage.

Yin, R.K. (2009) Case Study Research, London: Sage.

At various points during term, I will also assign journal articles and/or book chapters for you to read in advance of the class. They will be placed on Blackboard Learn in the module folder. Under 'course contents', you will find the PowerPoints for this class.

3. Module structure and teaching methods

This module will be organised around **two lectures and one tutorial per week**. Tutorials start in week 2 of term. Hannah Bowman and Srimoyee Biswas (your TAs) will again take an attendance register. **Attendance at tutorials is compulsory. Failure to attend at least half of the tutorials will automatically result in a 10% deduction (one full grade) from the overall module grade.**

The lectures take place Mondays at 14:00 in Room 2043 (Davis Theatre, Arts Building) and Fridays at 13:00 in Room 2039 (JM Synge Theatre, Arts Building). The goal of the tutorial is to (a) revise some of the contents covered in the lectures, (b) present in groups a reading relevant to the topic of the week and engage in designing and conducting an interview, and (c) answer queries which may arise.

4. Assessment

30% Tutorial group presentation (see separate guidelines on Blackboard)

70% Semi-structured interview project (2,000 word report due by Friday 29th November, 5pm)

5. Marking range

We use the range 0-100. Marks below 20 are for 'non-serious' attempts. Where work has not been submitted, or where a question on an exam paper is not answered, that piece of work, exam question and so forth receives 0. This is how the essay and exam grades should be read:

First - I (70-100)

A coherent argument from start to finish, making reference to the alternative viewpoints and indicating why they are dismissed. Some original ideas are expected at this level, and a worthwhile conclusion

Upper Second - II.1 (60+)

Coherent and interesting argument, making somewhat less than adequate reference to alternative viewpoints.

Lower Second - II.2 (50+)

Argument not fully connected from beginning to end, but showing clear understanding of some of the main arguments.

Third - III (40+)

Incoherent argument which while showing awareness of the important considerations, reveals an inadequate knowledge of the literature.

Fail - F (39-)

Answer which is a less than adequate attempt to come to grips with the issues involved in discussing the topic. An answer that does not discuss the main literature relevant to the question, not even to disagree with it will be failed.

Note that copying of work by published authors, from the internet or other students through unattributed direct quotation is **unacceptable** and will be penalised by the Department and may also lead to University penalties. All direct quotation **must** be attributed to the author in question and referenced as explained above. Where you wish to quote from a secondary source, you must include **both** references in your text, i.e. *both* the source in which you found the quotation, *and* the source cited there, from which the quoted words had been taken.

The assessment folder on Blackboard Learn contains (a) further information on plagiarism, and (b) the Sociology marking scale.

6. Weekly schedule

Week 1 (September 9 & 13): Introducing Qualitative Research

This week's lectures draw out the main distinctions between the qualitative and quantitative research traditions. They show why a qualitative approach might be taken to a sociological problem. We then move on to look at how to formulate open-ended (qualitative) research questions.

Bryman, A. (2008) *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 1 on "The nature and process of social research" and Chapter 17 on "The nature of qualitative research".

Guba, E.G., Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) 'Competing paradigms in qualitative research', in Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) *A Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, pp.105-17.

Green, N. (2008) 'Formulating and Refining a Research Question', in N. Gilbert (ed) *Researching Social Life*. London: Sage, pp. 41-62.

Week 2 (September 20 only): Ethical issues and research designs

This week's lecture considers ethical procedures that must be followed during the research process. We also overview the main research designs (cross-sectional, longitudinal, comparative, case study and ethnography) before moving on to focus on the main qualitative designs.

Clark, M.C. and Sharf, B.F. (2007) 'The dark side of truth(s): Ethical dilemmas in researching the personal', *Qualitative Inquiry* 13: 399-416.

Kelly, M. and Ali, S. (2004) 'Ethics in Social Research', in C. Seale (ed) *Researching Society and Culture*. London: Sage pp. 115-128.

Check also: Sociological Association of Ireland Ethical Guidelines (<http://www.sociology.ie/>)

Week 3 (September 23 & 26): Case Study: Design and Implementation

This week's lectures introduce different types of cases studies: explanatory, exploratory and descriptive. The case study design is rather versatile combining quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. We will also discuss comparative case-study designs, including problems of equivalence conducting cross-national cross-cultural comparative case studies.

Yin, R. (2009) *Case Study Research*, London: Sage; multiple copies of the third edition of this book are available in the Lecky Library Call No. 301.072.

Verschuren, P. (2003) 'Case study as a research strategy: some ambiguities and opportunities', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 6(2): 121-139.

Carmel, E. (1999) 'Concepts, context and discourse in a comparative case study', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 2(2): 141-150.

Tutorial group 1: Faas, D., Darmody, M. and Foley, H. (2019) 'Post-School Transitions in Ireland: A Case Study of Russian Speaking Students', *Comparative Education* 55(3): 326-346.

Tutorial group 2: Kyereko, D.O. and Faas, D. (2023) 'Integrating Marginalised Students in Ghanaian Schools: Insights from Teachers and Principals', *Compare* 53(3): 417-434.

Week 4 (September 30 & October 4): Ethnography: Design and Implementation

As a method of observing social behaviour and interaction, the ethnographic approach to qualitative research will be the focus of this week's lectures. Different levels of involvement of the ethnographic researcher will be considered, and the benefits and drawbacks of each approach will be considered.

Bryman, A. (2008) *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 17 on Ethnography and participant observation.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007) *Ethnography: principles in practice*; multiple copies of the third edition of this book are available in the Lecky Library

Jeffrey, B. and Troman, G. (2004) 'Time for ethnography', *British Educational Research Journal* 30(4): 535-548.

Tutorial group 1: Swain, J. (2006) 'An Ethnographic Approach to Researching Children in Junior School', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 9(3): 199-213.

Tutorial group 2: Nayak, A. (1999) 'White English ethnicities: racism, anti-racism and student perspectives', *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 2(2): 177-202.

Week 5 (October 7 & 11): Documentary Sources and Observations

The first lecture focuses on documents such as textbooks and school curricula as primary documents in the research process. The second lecture will focus on different forms of observations that can be used in qualitative social scientific research.

Bryman, A. (2008) *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 18 on Interviewing in qualitative research and Chapter 21 on Documents as sources of data

Sapsford, R. and Jupp, V. (eds.) (2006) *Data Collection and Analysis*, London: Sage, Chapter 6 on Using Documents; multiple copies of the latest edition of this book are available in the Lecky Library Call No. 301.072.

Tutorial group 1: Faas, D. and Ross, W. (2012) 'Identity, Diversity and Citizenship: A critical analysis of textbooks and curricula in Irish schools', *International Sociology* 27(4): 574-591.

Tutorial group 2: Wang, Y. and Faas, D. (2021) 'The Economic and Family Experiences of Hong Kong Chinese in Ireland', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44(10): 115-133.

Week 6 (October 14 & 18): Focus Groups and Individual Interviews

This week's lectures will consider various qualitative interview techniques including focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews (see assignment). We discuss the degree of structure of an individual interview (structured, semi-structure, unstructured) and the strengths and weaknesses.

Bryman, A. (2008) *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 19 on Focus groups

Wilson, V. (1997) 'Focus groups: a useful qualitative method for educational research?', *British Educational Research Journal* 23(2) 209-224.

Watts, M. and Ebbutt, D. (1987) 'More than the sum of the parts: research methods in group interviewing', *British Educational Research Journal* 13(1): 25-34.

Sapsford, R. and Jupp, V. (eds.) (2006) *Data Collection and Analysis*, London: Sage, Chapter 3 on Observational research; multiple copies of the latest edition of this book are available in the Lecky Library Call No. 301.072.

Tutorial group 1: Faas, D. (2007) 'Turkish Youth in the European Knowledge Economy: An exploration of their responses to Europe and the role of social class and school dynamics for their identities', *European Societies* 9(4): 573-599.

Tutorial group 2: Morgan, D.L. (1996) 'Focus groups', *Annual Review of Sociology* 22: 129-152.

Week 7 (October 21-28): Reading Week and October 30 Bank Holiday

Week 8 (November 1 only): Qualitative Data Analysis

This week's lectures focus on an important part of the qualitative research process: the analysis of collected qualitative data. Narrative analysis, thematic analysis and discourse analysis are all explored.

Bryman, A. (2008) *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 22 on Qualitative data analysis.

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis*, London: Sage.

Bryman, A. (2008) *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 20 on Language in qualitative research.

MacLure, M. (2003) *Discourse in Educational and Social Research*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Tutorial group 1: Youdell, D. (2003) 'Identity traps or how black students fail: the interactions between biographical, sub-cultural and learner identities', *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 24(1): 3-20.

Tutorial group 2: Faas, D. (2011) 'Between Ethnocentrism and Europeanism? An exploration of the effects of migration and European integration on curricula and policies in Greece', *Ethnicities* 11(2): 163-183.

Week 9 (November 4 & 8): Real-world research experiences

This week's lectures will involve two guest lecturers speaking about their own experiences conducting qualitative research as part of their PhD projects. Both researchers will discuss their research journey, reflecting on what went right, what went wrong, what ethical challenges they faced throughout the research. The guest lecturers have both worked in challenging environments. Students will have an opportunity to ask questions of the researchers at the end of each seminar.

Topic 1: Claudia Peroni on "Inherently Mean? A Comparative Analysis of the Irish and Italian Asylum Systems"

Topic 2: Aron Foley on "Multi-Ethnic Communities and Religion: How Accommodating are Irish Primary Schools"

Week 10 (November 11 & 15): Mixing Methods: Breaking Down the Paradigm Divide

This session looks at ways of overcoming the crude differentiation between quantitative and qualitative methods by drawing on theoretical and empirical readings on mixed methods.

Bryman, A. (2008) *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 24 on Breaking down the quantitative/qualitative divide and Chapter 25 on Mixed methods research.

Brannen, J. (2005) 'Mixing methods: the entry of qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research process', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 8(3): 173-184.

Tutorial:

Singleton, A. (1999) 'Combining quantitative and qualitative research methods in the study of international migration', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 2(2): 151-157.

Hantrais, L. (2005) 'Combining methods: a key to understanding complexity in European societies?', *European Societies* 7(3): 399-421.

Week 11 (November 18 & 22): Writing Up Qualitative Research

This week focuses on an especially important step in the research process. Now that you have collected your data, now that you have analysed it – what do you do now? Most research results in published outputs – presentations, reports, research papers. Here we look at best practice in writing up.

Hays, D.G. and Singh, A. (2012) 'Writing and presenting qualitative research', in *Qualitative Inquiry in Clinical and Educational Settings*. New York: Guilford, pp.379-414.

Tutorial: The teaching assistant will go through the semi-structured interview project in detail outlining expectations and assessment criteria and how to structure the reflective 2,000 word report. You will also discuss general report writing skills useful for your assignment.

Week 12 (November 25 only): Module Review and Assessment Discussion

This week provides an overview of the entire module and offers students an opportunity to discuss the essay assessment in detail.

Tutorial: Interview report clinic – the teaching assistant will be available to discuss individual issues you may have with completing your report. Tutorials this week are an opportunity to avail of the tutor for individual guidance.
