

SOP77101 — Research Methods

Module Information	
Module Code	SOP77101
Module Title	Research Methods
Department	Sociology
Year Group	MSc Comparative Social Change
Module Personnel	Joonghyun Kwak, Marco Seegers, David Ralph
Academic Year	2026–27
Credit Weighting	10 credits
Semester	Both
Contact Hours	1 two-hour lecture per week

Module Content	
Module Description	This module provides an overview of research methods in the social sciences. Students will learn how to conduct an independent piece of research (dissertation) within the social sciences. Adopting an applied approach, the module will teach how to formulate research questions and how to tackle them competently by drawing on principles of social research methodology and practically employing methods of investigation like sampling, data collection and analysis. Highlighting the centrality of research design, the module will cover both qualitative and quantitative research strategies and related methods. Furthermore, the module will discuss crucial aspects of research ethics and practical aspects of planning, organising, and crafting a professional research report. Qualitative and quantitative research – while sharing important communalities in terms of research design – can differ in how theory and data are related, how data is being collected, how data is analysed, and how empirical evidence is constructed. While qualitative methods usually deal with exploring and summarizing rich textual data retrieved, for instance, from in-depth and semistructured interviews, quantitative research is usually characterized by measuring concepts and testing theories through statistical analysis of

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	numerical data obtained, for instance, from standardised interviewing in surveys. A good command of both qualitative and quantitative approaches is key to conducting research effectively and understanding the work of others. The module will also refer to mixed-method strategies to discuss how qualitative and quantitative research strategies can form a powerful alliance in social research. The module spans both Michaelmas and Hilary Term each of them comprising 11 weeks. One half of each term will be devoted to qualitative or quantitative research. In Michaelmas Term, students will get an introduction to the principal methodologies of each approach. Based on that, Hilary Term will provide a more advanced, lab-based and hands-on treatment of methods of data collection and data analysis (like conducting interviews or analysing statistical data using statistical software) to equip students with the necessary skills to pursue their own dissertation research. In Hilary Term students will also work continuously on a dissertation proposal which elaborates a full research plan including research questions, literature review, theory, research design, data collection and analysis plan, and a timetable.
Module Learning Aims	
Learning Outcomes	Upon completion of this module, students should be able to: • Explain the key theoretical and conceptual issues in methodology in the social sciences; • Deploy the main qualitative and quantitative methodological techniques used in sociology; • Link methodological techniques to a research design; • Discuss and critically evaluate their own and other people's research projects; • Write a proposal for their own research projects.
Indicative Reading / Resources	Becker, H.S. (2020) Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (3rd edition). Booth, W.C., G.G. Colomb, J.M. Williams, J. Bizup, and W.T. Fitzgerald. (2016) The Craft of Research. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (4th edition). Bryman, A. (2016) Social Research Methods. Oxford: Oxford University Press (5th edition).

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	Collier, D. and H.E. Brady (2010) Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards. University of California: eScholarship. Goertz, G. and J. Mahoney (2012) A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences. Princeton: University Press. Gunaratnam, Y. (2003) Researching 'Race' and Ethnicity: Methods, Knowledge and Power. London: Sage. Kumar, R. (2014) Research Methodology. A step-by-step guide for beginners. London: Sage. O'Leary, Z. (2004) The essential guide to doing research. London: Sage. Seale, C. (2012) Researching Society and Culture. London: Sage. Smith, L.T. (2012) Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. ZED Press (2nd edition). Yin, R.K. (2014) Case Study Research: Design and Methods. Thousand Oaks: Sage (5th edition).
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Assessment

Assessment Components	Michaelmas Term: Coursework 40% Hilary Term: Dissertation proposal 60%
Assessment Details	The MT coursework consists of a preliminary outline of your proposed research focus, including a discussion of its personal significance and a literature review. The expected length is 1,500 words. For the full dissertation proposal in HT, the suggested length is 3,000 words.

Additional Information

Prerequisites	None
Co-requisites	None
Any other information	