

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS FOR POLITICAL SCIENCE STUDIES

McDaniel College, Budapest

Spring 2019 (Jan – May)

Instructor: Petra Kiss (petramader@gmail.com)

Course Section/Time:

TBD

Availability: After course sessions or on request.

COURSE Description

The course aims to introduce to the major quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Beginning with an introduction how and why political scientists should carry out research projects, the course focuses on offering practical and accessible guidance how to design, plan and carry out successful quantitative and qualitative research projects.

Students can expect to be able to produce a research proposal and based on their scientific interest being able to decide which research method would be suitable for their case.

Two guest lecturers will help the course to get practical outlook into today's quantitative research approaches, and as an extra to practice-oriented approaches, the course will give an introduction into Design Thinking.

Teaching method: The course is a combination of lecturing, problem solving, tutorial and discussion sections.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the elements of methods, theory and practice of quantitative and qualitative research;
- Design a research project including research questions, hypotheses, literature overview, appropriate research methods;
 - Formulate researchable question (for both quantitative and qualitative researches) and testable hypotheses;
 - Conduct a review of relevant literature of the topic
 - Identify the method of research suited best to answer research questions
 - Find and/or collect data appropriate for the topic
 - Present research project to the audience in the class

REQUIRED READING (selected parts, printed for class)

Babbie, Earl (2014). *The Practice of Social Research (14th Edition)*.

Gibbs, Graham R. (2016). *Analyzing Qualitative Data (2nd Edition)*.

Freedman, D., Pisani, R., Purves, R. (2008). *Statistics (4th Edition)*.

Handouts during semester

RECOMMENDED READING

Hansen, Anders – Machin, David (2013). *Media and Communication Research Methods: An Introduction*

Aronson, Elliot (2012). *The Social Animal (11th Edition)*.

TOPICS

Week 1. **Introduction to the course Research Design and Methods**

- Overview of the course and the requirements
- Students' expectations, lecturer's expectations
- Political science and research. Who is doing research and why? Why do political scientists research? And what topics?
- What topics interest you and how are you making a good researchable question of them?

Week 2. **Guest lecture with Péter Darvas – Insights from digital media analytics**

Peter Darvas is sociologist and data scientist, head of Consumer Insights & Analytics at Viacom International Media Networks in Hungary. He will talk about how to measure the performance of digital broadcasting in ECC (Eastern European Countries) market.

Preparing for research by reviewing literature

- Once we already know the topic, let's look at what previous research could be on the subject. Where to find them? What sources to use?
- What scientific theories can be defined that gives answers to the questions?

Week 3. **Quantitative Research Methods**

- Research starts with questions: Research Questions and Hypotheses.
- The hypothesis is a verbatim, verifiable assumption for the subject of the study. The purpose of the research is to verify the hypothesis. How to formulate a good hypothesis?
- From Hypothesis to Questionnaire: what is conceptualization and how can we go through the process that specifies precisely what we will mean when we use particular terms in the research?
- Talk about operationalization; how to develop specific research procedures (operations) that will result in empirical observations representing those concepts in the real world.

Week 4.

Probability

- Social science works on a likelihood/probabilistic casual model and answers questions like: How likely would it be, by chance, to observe what we did?
- Probability of events and calculating them
- Testing hypothesis; the null hypothesis
- Estimates and p-values

Week 5.

Guest lecture with Bence Ságvári, Phd – Key findings of European Social Survey research

Bence Ságvári is a sociologist and data scientist, department leader at the Hungarian Academy of Science. He will talk about ESS (European Social Survey), an overarching continentwide political attitude research project.

Sampling Techniques (random and nonrandom sampling).

- The essence of sampling: to explore things by examining a few hundred or a few thousand people, which will then be valid for the missing millions as well.
- How can cases be selected? Which sampling methods should we choose – factors that influence our choice.
- How can we avoid bias in selection?

Week 6.

What makes a good questionnaire? What makes a good question?

- Format of a questionnaire
- Questionnaires are mostly associated with survey research, but also widely used in experiments, field research, and other data collection activities. Issues of questionnaire format.
- Guidelines for asking questions
- Unbiased questions – how to avoid influencing the responses.
- Questioning techniques.

Week 7.

Midterm

- A review of the course so far that is followed by the Midterm exam.

Week 8. **Understanding Qualitative Research Methods**

- Overview of qualitative research methods
- What does “Challenge your assumptions and understand people and context” mean in case of qualitative researches?

Week 9. **Qualitative Interviewing - Theory and Practice**

- Interviews can help researchers learn more about particular expectations, experiences, products, services, goods, operations, processes, and concerns, and also about a person’s attitude, problems, needs, ideas, or environment.
- Interviews can be conducted in a structured, semi-structured, or unstructured manner
- Leading question or a set of questions representing what you want to find out why we are doing research (exploratory vs. confirmatory research)
- What we want to do with the research findings
- Identify interviewees – target groups, target persons

Week 10. **Focus Groups in Qualitative Research – Theory and Practice**

A classic qualitative interview research method in which a researcher invites a group of people and asks them questions on specific, concepts, problems, products, services.

- The origins of focus group research. How and why we use it? What are the benefits of asking more people at the same time.
- Dos and don’ts on a focus group.
- Guidelines for developing a focus group guide.

Week 11. **Experiencing Focus Group situation.**

Week 12. **Designing a Qualitative Study – Methods for analyzing research data**

- Synthesizing and analyzing research data through a visual arrangement of research data on a wall – a practical approach.

Week 13. **Design Thinking: An introduction into the practical use of qualitative research methods**

- A creative mindset can be a powerful force for looking beyond the status quo. People who use the creative techniques are better able to apply their imagination to painting a picture of the future. They believe they have the ability to improve on existing ideas and positively impact the world around them.

Week 14. **Summary of research methods and their application**

Week 15. **Final Exam, presentations**

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Assignments: All Home Assignments help students to reach the course's primary goal, to develop skills in gathering, organizing, interpreting and presenting research information. Therefore, Home Assignments are part of the course's grading.

Participation:

The class will involve constant student participation. Students are asked for questions and comments, group activities and exercises.

Grades:

Each homework counts for 10 points (5 Homework assignments = 10×5) = 50 pts

Midterm Exam = 50 pts

Final Exam (research proposal following the structure and guidelines learned during the course) = 80 pts

Participation = 20 pts

Total possible points = 200 pts

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1. Attend class. More than three unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your final grade by one letter. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed before you return to class.
2. Read mandatory readings before class; reflect on readings.
3. Submit the assignment before the class starts.
4. Actively participate in class discussion.
5. Complete work on time.
6. Follow the *McDaniel College Honor Code*