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Hauptseminar Politikwissenschaftliche Methoden II

Qualitative Methods

Summer term 2022

Language: English
Credits: 8 ECTS
Date: Wednesday, 4 - 6 p.m.
Room: F21/03.03

Outline:

This seminar offers a broad but thorough introduction to the field of qualitative methods. The seminar is divided into four parts: Part I introduces important fundamentals including developing a research question and grappling with conceptualization and operationalization. Part II introduces key data gathering techniques, namely collecting documents, preparing interviews and conducting field observations. Part III is devoted to the issue of data analysis and comprises sessions on case studies, process tracing, content analysis and discourse analysis. Part IV consists of four sessions in which students present the research design of the paper they will write and receive feedback. Even though most assigned reading material is method focused, the sessions will not only be used to distil key insights from the reading material but also to apply them through practical exercises. This is an introductory course, and hence it is primarily addressed to students with limited prior knowledge of qualitative methods.

Language of instruction: English; discussions and presentations will be held in English unless all participants agree to change to German. Written work may be submitted in either English or German language.

Requirements:

Participants are expected to read the required reading and attend the meetings regularly and participate in seminar discussions.

Course literature: Articles and book chapters will be available online on the Virtual Campus. An appendix with further reading is attached this syllabus.

To obtain a certificate, participants have to write three short essays that combined have a length of about 18 pages (12 point font size, 1.5 space, 2cm margin) excluding title page, abstract, literature, and possible annexes. The essays will be graded jointly and should be submitted in one document. The purpose of the essays is to demonstrate to the instructor that you have understood the main concepts, procedures and techniques as discussed in this course. The essays report your research project. It is important to address the following themes:

Essay 1:

- Research question: Why this question? How is it linked to existing research? What is it trying to explain and how? How is it linked to ontology and epistemology?
- Conceptualization: Which concepts do you need and how are they defined? From which theories are the concepts derived or in which theories are the concepts embedded? How are the concepts operationalized?

Essay 2:

- Data collection: Which method do you apply for which you collect the data? What kind of data have you selected? Why this type of data? How have you collected the data? What were the challenges, limitations, learning curves and surprises you have faced?

Essay 3:

- Data analysis: Why this technique? How did you carry it out? What were the limitations, problems, main challenges? What would you have done differently, knowing what you know now?
- Results: Don't forget to report your results.

As you can gather from the description here: The essays are as much about the research process as they are about the actual results. The various steps, your motivation for each step, as well as reflection on how it worked out for you, all form the center piece of the essays and carry a great weight towards the final grade. The essays are due on 17 October 2022 and are to be submitted via the VC. It is highly recommended to start working on the essays early on in the seminar.

I also highly encourage you to give a short presentation in part IV of the seminar. The presentation gives an overview of your project, a short handout would be helpful but is not needed. There is no need of a powerpoint presentation. The presentation is voluntary and gives you an opportunity to elicit feedback from me and fellow students.