



Research Design for the Social Sciences

Instructor: Levente Littvay, Central European University

Date & Time: 3 & 4 December 2020, half-day workshops

10-11-17-18 December 2020, full-day workshops

7 & 8 January 2021, final presentations

Exact times tba

Place: Live sessions via Zoom (details tba)

Registration: Please send an email to [courses.bagss\(at\)uni-bamberg.de](mailto:courses.bagss(at)uni-bamberg.de) by 15 November 2020 the latest.

Course Description

This course introduces the students to the fundamentals of empirical research in the social sciences, and gives an overview of the main approaches and epistemologies in social science research. The aims of the course are:

- (1) to make students aware of the methodological choices in conducting empirical research in social science and assist them in making informed decisions with regard to the methodological approaches most appropriate for conducting their own research,
- (2) to equip them with essential practical skills in research design,
- (3) to enhance their methodological "literacy", so as to enable a critical reading of research.

The course is structured in three parts. First, we establish a starting point, an understanding of what everyone came here to do, the research interest they have and a baseline for success in academia as a junior researcher. Second, the course offers scholars an overview of the essential features of empirical research and the underlying epistemologies. We discuss how to ask good research questions and elaborate good research puzzles. We introduce the main paradigms that have informed empirical research in the social sciences and the main strategies and methods for data collection and analysis often associated with them (such as case studies and comparatives

designs; surveys, interviews and archival research, statistical analysis, thematic analysis etc.). This part offers scholars the basic tools necessary for becoming both critical consumers and effective producers of scientific research on politics. This is also the part where students can start to embed their own research interests into the prevalent research paradigms of the discipline. Then we turn to practical concerns related to the process of designing and conducting empirical research in social science.

By the end of the course, the students should have acquired:

- (1) an understanding of the main methodological approaches employed by the empirical research in social sciences,
- (2) an understanding of how empirical research is conducted in social sciences,
- (3) practical skills in crafting their thesis proposals, including the formulation of a research question and making the ensuing decisions pertaining to the most appropriate methodological approach for conducting their studies.

What you need to do in this course **BEFORE** the first meeting.

Read: Hancké, B. (2009), *Intelligent Research Design. A Guide for Beginning Researchers in the Social Sciences*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

For the first meeting **you need to prepare** a formal presentation on your research interest. (Length to be discussed once we know our numbers. 10-20 minutes would be ideal.)

Complete Reading List TBA. Plan on reading and reflecting on (in writing) around 4-6 articles, book chapters or research proposals per session, and watching an hour or two of video content in addition to the in-person Zoom meetings.

Schedule:

First meeting (December 3 & 4, half-day): Presentation of individual research interest, general discussion on what all of you are doing and why, answers to life, the universe, and everything. (Hanke)

Second Meeting (Dec 10, full day) Philosophy of Science, Foundations of Research Design, Formal Models (Godfrey-Smith, KKV, TBA on formal models)

Third Meeting (Dec 11, full day) Conceptualization, Operationalization and Relationships. Association and Causation (Adcock and Collier 2001, Wonka 2007, Daly 2003, TBA on causality)

Fourth Meeting (Dec 17, full day) Qualitative Approaches. Case selection, Case Studies. (Process tracing, Comparative Case Studies and QCA.) Post-positivist and interpretivist approaches. (Gerring, Beach, TBA, Yom 2015, Shea-Schwartz, Yanov ??)

Fifth Meeting (Dec 18, full day) Quantitative Approaches: from correlation to structural approaches. Replication Crisis. (Wuttke 2019?, TBA)

Sixth and Seventh Meetings (January 7-8) Final presentations

The instructor

Levente (Levi) Littvay is Professor of Political Science at Central European University where he teaches grad courses in research design, applied statistics, electoral politics, voting behavior, political psychology, American politics. He is the recipient of CEU's Distinguished Teaching Award. In 2019-2020 he was European University Institute's Fernand Braudel Senior Research Fellow. He is one of the Academic Convenors of the European Consortium for Political Research Methods Schools, head of Team Survey in Team Populism where he helped spawn the New Populism series with The Guardian, and member of the European Social Survey's Round 10 (2020-21). Secured close to a million EUR in grants to conduct research on survey and quantitative methodology, twin and family studies, and the psychology of radicalism and populism. Has publications in Social Justice Research, for which he received the Morton Deutsch Award for best article in 2017, Political Analysis, The Journal of Politics, Political Research Quarterly, Political Psychology, BMC Medical Research Methodology, Twin Research and Human Genetics where he is Associate Editor for Social Sciences. His books include Contemporary US Populism in Comparative Perspective with Kirk Hawkins in Cambridge University Press, Elements in American Politics Series and Multilevel Structural Equation Modeling with Bruno Castanho Silva and Constantin Manuel Bosancianu in SAGE Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences (little green book) series.