

Research Methods

Aims and objectives

Following a brief introduction to the philosophy of social science investigation the first part of the course will identify and briefly examine a range of methodological approaches employed in research investigation and analysis. The course will then move on to explore various practical elements and processes in research production and presentation. Topics in both parts of the course will be studied through an informal approach in which student participation will be encouraged, particularly in respect of focus upon their own doctoral research area and field. Upon completion of the course the students will be equipped with a range of methodological approaches and tools, as well as practical information and advice on research production and presentation, with which to pursue their own particular Ph.D. research project.

Teaching programme

Session 1

Lecture 1. The Philosophy of Social Science Investigation

Lecture 2. Research and Research Strategies

Session 2

Lecture 3. Research Methodologies and Conceptual Frameworks

Lecture 4. Writing a Research Proposal and conducting the Literature Review

Session 3.

Lecture 5. Interactive Multi-disciplinary Methodology

Session 4

1.
 - a) Interviewing
 - b) Conducting surveys and designing questionnaires
 - c) Sampling
 - d) Data Analysis
2. Critically Reviewing Research
3. Students' Ph.D. Research – students will be required to give a brief (maximum 10 minutes) presentation outlining the subject and focus of their Ph.D. research area/topic, and (in the context of the subject of lecture 3 above) the anticipated paradigm, ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods they expect to employ.
4. Writing up the thesis

Assessment: 'Critical Essay'

In a maximum of 2000 words (or 6 pages of A4) write a critical review of a published piece of research (this can be related to your own Ph.D. research area or another research area)

Your review paper should be fully and properly referenced, and include a full bibliography.

It should be submitted by email to John Wilton by 23 January 2012

Guidelines:

The assignment essentially tests your understanding of how to critically apply your knowledge of research methods by testing your ability to critique existing research.

- In your introduction summarise what the research report says. This should be brief – watch your word count. You should be able to make some comment as to the contextualising literature that the researcher provides and explores: has he/she used key documents in the field?
- Next identify the key methodological approach taken (i.e. the design used by the researcher), consider the researcher's explanation of why the approach was taken: state what you think the strengths and weaknesses of this approach are.
- Now discuss how the research was conducted with a critical eye to
 - Sample selection
 - Methods used to gather data
 - Ethical issues
 - Methods of analysis
- Review the findings. What do they tell us and why? What are the strengths and weaknesses? How do they arise from the methods chosen?
- Assess the conclusions drawn from the findings. Are they clear? Are they valid? Are they related to findings in the paper? Are they useful?
- Assess implications of the research. Discuss possible uses of research.

Reading List/Suggested Texts

Henn, M. Weinstein, M Foard, N. *A Critical Introduction to Social Research* (second edition), Sage, London, 2006.

Sarantakos, S. *Social Research*, Palgrave, London, 2005.

Teddlie, C. Tashakkori, A. *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research*, Sage, London, 2009.

Thomas, G. *How to do Your Research Project*, Sage, London, 2009.

John Wilton

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