

Social Science Research Methods

Course code: POS 240

Semester and year: Fall 2017

Day and time: Wednesday 11:30-14:15

Instructor: Steven Gawthorpe MPP

Instructor contact: steven.gawthorpe@aauni.edu

Consultation hours: 14:15 – 14:45 Faculty Lounge

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Choose an item.
Length	15 weeks	Pre-requisite	COM 102, POS 102, IRS 200
Contact hours	42 hours	Course type	BA Required

1. Course Description

In this course, students will learn to design research while using a variety of research methods, theories and concepts. Students will familiarize themselves with all phases of a research project, including philosophy of the research, its design and conduct, the collection, categorization, operationalization and analysis of research data and their evaluation.

You will be asked to work individually and in teams in order to demonstrate your facility with theories and their appropriate use, as well as to hone your research, public presentation and writing skills. Papers and presentations are treated as pedagogical exercises to augment your learning in the course.

Emphasis will be placed on an understanding of a research and the researcher's role. The course is a combination of a lecture and a seminar. The presentation of the material will be followed by discussions of the relevant empirical and theoretical studies.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Comprehend and have a clear understanding of different epistemological positions in conducting research
- Grasp and apply the uses of theory in qualitative research
- Understand and demonstrate the link between a research question, research methods and sources
- Write methodologically sound qualitative research designs and criticize the methods used in other social science research projects
- Develop the ability to conduct basic academic research and analytical writing with the usage of proper citations, appropriate to the undergraduate level and experience for introductory level of data collection on social phenomena

3. Reading Material

Required Materials (Available in Library or via NEO LMS)

- Auerbach, C., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis* (1 edition). New York: NYU Press.

- Barakso, M., Sabet, D. M., & Schaffner, B. (2013). *Understanding Political Science Research Methods: The Challenge of Inference* (1 edition). New York: Routledge.
- Babbie, Earl. 2013. *The Practice of Social Research*. 13th ed. California: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Bardach, E. (2012). *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*. New York: Seven Bridges Press.
- Bryman, Alan. 2004. *Social Science Research*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). Choosing a Mixed Methods Design. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th Edition (4th edition, pp. 58–89). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Dolowitz, David P. and Steve Buckler, Fionnghuala Sweeney. 2008. *Researching Online*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- George, Alexander and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in Social Sciences*. MIT Press.
- Grix, Jonathan. 2010. *The foundations of research*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nachmias, David and Chava Nachmias. 1987. *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. 3rd Edition. St Martin's Press.
- Shwartz-Shea Peregrine and Dvora Yanow. 2012. *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*. London: Routledge.

Recommended Materials

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel

4. Teaching methodology

The course will be taught both in the form of a seminar and a lecture. It encourages students to actively participate in discussions. The reading list is selective. If the objective is to improve the clarity of our thinking, it is better to cover a few things well than many things poorly. While the reading list for each week is vigorous enough to give us plenty to discuss, it is clear enough that each work must be read and carefully considered.

Two Response Papers: You will write two short response papers about the questions you will be asked throughout the course. This paper will be double-spaced and two/three pages long. The due times for the papers are provided below. The questions will be provided to you four days before the due time. There are no extensions. Submit the paper to me via NEO LMS. Your answers to the questions should be (a) clear, (b) complete, and (c) convincing. Please use your responses to clarify your thinking, rather than to express your general impressions.

Data Collection:

Students will form groups to conduct real-world data collection and measure some form of social phenomenon. The group will have a choice between conducting a small-scale survey or a small-scale social experiment.

Workshops: In the last two classes, we will hold workshops on writing techniques and analysis. Based on the research questions you formulated for your research designs, we will work in groups on how to connect these questions with specific data collection methods, discuss which method is the most appropriate one (among interviews, field research, document & internet analysis, etc) to find an answer to the specific question.

5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
September 6, 2017	<p>Topic: Course Introduction</p> <p>Description: Review of course assignments, learning outcomes, methodological resources, and citation management. We will address the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is knowledge? • What is the aim of research? • What is methodology? • What is method? • What is a research design? <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1, Creswell, J. W. (2013). Choosing a Mixed Methods Design. In <i>Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches</i>, 4th Edition (4th edition, pp. 58–89). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. <p>Assignments/deadlines: Prepare essential application for Academy of Science login for academic literature with the AAU Library</p>
September 13, 2017	<p>Topic: The Research Question</p> <p>Description: What makes a good research question? How to avoid “reinventing the wheel” in academic research.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 2, “The Research Question” in Barakso, M., Sabet, D. M., & Schaffner, B. (2013). <i>Understanding Political Science Research Methods: The Challenge of Inference</i> (1 edition). New York: Routledge. <p>Assignments/deadlines: NA</p>
September 20, 2017	<p>Topic: Linking Theory and Inference</p> <p>Description: Examples of using theory in generating a research design, in generating data. Basics of constructing a literature review.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3, “Linking Theory and Inference” in Barakso, M., Sabet, D. M., & Schaffner, B. (2013). <i>Understanding Political Science Research Methods: The Challenge of Inference</i> (1 edition). New York: Routledge. <p>Assignments/deadlines: First Response Paper Issued</p>
September 27, 2016	<p>Topic: Assembling Evidence and Data Collection</p> <p>Description: Learning effective data collection techniques and information resource management. In-class experimentation.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bardach Part II pages: 74-106 • Babbie Chapter 8 & 9 <p>Assignments/deadlines: First Response Paper Deadline</p>
October 4, 2016	<p>Topic: Case Study Research for Qualitative Research</p> <p>Description: Learning the methodological differences in case study research and how this can lead for new variable discovery. Learn theoretical saturation and hypothesis testing for qualitative research. In-class exercise for</p>

	<p>theoretical coding.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Section I & II from Auerbach, C., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). <i>Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis</i> (1 edition). New York: NYU Press. <p>Assignments/deadlines: Student feedback on first response paper.</p>
October 11, 2016	<p>Topic: Research Design and Conceptualization</p> <p>Description: Operationalizing key terms and developing a conceptual framework supported by visual flow diagrams.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 2, Creswell, J. W. (2013). Choosing a Mixed Methods Design. In <i>Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches</i>, 4th Edition (4th edition, pp. 58–89). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. • Handout on effective uses of Research Design <p>Assignments/deadlines: NA</p>
October 18, 2016	<p>Topic: Basics of Statistical Inference Part I</p> <p>Description: Basic overview for the usage of statistical measures of central tendency in quantitative data.</p> <p>Reading: Handout summary for statistical inference part I.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: In-class exercise for statistical tests. Handout for second response paper.</p>
October 25, 2017	<p>Topic: MID-TERM BREAK</p> <p>Description: NA</p> <p>Reading: NA</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: NA</p>
November 1, 2017	<p>Topic: Introduction to Lab Experimentation</p> <p>Description: Understanding the importance of lab experimentation for social science research.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5, Barakso, M., Sabet, D. M., & Schaffner, B. (2013). <i>Understanding Political Science Research Methods: The Challenge of Inference</i> (1 edition). New York: Routledge. <p>Assignments/deadlines: Mid-Term Assignment Issued</p>
November 8, 2017	<p>Topic: Basics of Statistical Inference Part II</p> <p>Description: Conceptual overview for interpreting basic statistical tests and avoiding the pitfalls of false numerical reports.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 4, Barakso, M., Sabet, D. M., & Schaffner, B. (2013). <i>Understanding Political Science Research Methods: The Challenge of Inference</i> (1 edition). New York: Routledge. <p>Assignments/deadlines: Second Response Paper deadline.</p>
November 15, 2017	<p>Topic: Introduction to Mixed-Methods Research</p> <p>Description: Techniques for researchers to combine quantitative and qualitative research methods and ontological pitfalls.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3, Creswell, J. W. (2013). Choosing a Mixed Methods Design. In <i>Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches</i>, 4th Edition (4th edition, pp. 58–89). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. <p>Assignments/deadlines: Mid-term Assignment Due Beginning of Class</p>
November	<p>Topic: Writing the Proposal and Constructing the Research Project</p>

22, 2017	<p>Description: Techniques for research proposal writing, general ethical considerations, and adopting effective communication to accommodate differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 4, Creswell, J. W. (2013). Choosing a Mixed Methods Design. In Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 4th Edition (4th edition, pp. 58–89). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. <p>Assignments/deadlines: NA</p>
November 29, 2017	<p>Topic: In-Class Presentations and Writing Workshop Part I</p> <p>Description: Group presentation on research findings and general overview.</p> <p>Reading: Handout for effective writing techniques.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: In-class PowerPoint presentation</p>
December 6, 2017	<p>Topic: In-Class Presentations and Writing Workshop Part II</p> <p>Description: Group presentation on research findings and general overview.</p> <p>Reading: Handout for effective writing techniques.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: In-class PowerPoint presentation</p>
December 13, 2017	<p>Topic: Final Course Project</p> <p>Description: Final Course Project</p> <p>Reading: NA</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Final Course Project Due by 11:30</p>

6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (average)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Attendance and Class Participation	42	25%	Ability to show the mastery of readings through class discussion, ability to explain, and discuss the studied topic to peers, ability to methodologically criticize others' papers.	
First Response Paper	17	15%	Ability to be clear, convincing and analytical in response to research question.	1,2
Second Response Paper	16	10%	How to properly apply statistical inference to real-world data	1,3
Mid-Term Assignment	35	20%	Ability to create sound research question, link it with theory and concepts, justify logic of inquiry, select empirical case(s)	1,2,3
Final Course Research Project	40	35%	Ability to define and demonstrate knowledge of the methods of social sciences, create sound research question, link it with theory and concepts, select empirical cases, justify selection of methods, specify data requirements, generalize or contextualize the research goals.	1,2,3

TOTAL	150	100%	
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*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

7. Detailed description of the assignments

[Class Participation]: Students are expected to actively participate in class discussion with questions and comments that stimulate interaction. In order to take part in discussions, students must come to class having studied the assigned readings for that week.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Analyzing the readings, asking questions, responding to questions and criticizing classmates' opinions, engagement with class activities and workshops	70%
Presentation skills (ability to express thoughts and communicate with the audience)	30%

[First Response Paper]:

You will write two response papers. This paper will be double-spaced and length of 2-3 pages. The questions will be provided to you four days before the due date. **There are no extensions.** Submit the paper to me via email. Your answers to the question should be (a) clear, (b) complete, and (c) convincing. Please use your responses to clarify your thinking, rather than to express your general impressions.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Ability to respond to the question	20%
Ability to be reasoned and convincing	40%
Ability to demonstrate a concise analysis of the readings	40%

[Second Response Paper]:

Your second response paper will incorporate a research question, hypothesis test, and basic statistical analysis of data which will be provided for in class. This paper will be double-spaced and length of 2-3 pages. The questions will be provided to you four days before the due date. **There are no extensions.** Submit the paper to me via email. Your answers to the question should be (a) clear, (b) complete, and (c) convincing. Please use your responses to clarify your thinking, rather than to express your general impressions.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Proper form of survey or experimental design	30%
Effective application of statistical inference	25%
Visualization of results and interpretation	25%
Timeliness, organization, and appropriate submission	20%

[Mid-Term]:

You will write a complete literature of your chosen course research topic. This paper will be double-spaced and a length of no less than 5 pages. The questions will be provided to you four days before the due date. **There are no extensions.** Submit the paper to me via email.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Ability to conduct academic research (literature review)	25%
Ability to write in a clear, organized way, using academic language and	15%

proper citation styles	
Ability to create sound research question, link it with theory and concepts	30%
Ability to justify logic of inquiry, select empirical case(s)	30%

[Final Research Design]:

The final research design will combine all the elements covered throughout the course. The approximate length will be roughly 3,000 words depending on the selected research. Prior to submitting the final paper, you will present a summary of the initial findings.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Ability to conduct academic research (literature review)	25%
Ability to write in a clear, organized way, using academic language and proper citation styles	15%
Ability to create sound research question, link it with theory and concepts, select empirical case(s)	30%
Justify selection of methods, specify data requirements, generalize or contextualize the research goals.	30%

8. General Requirements and School Policies

General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU’s academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules available in the Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

Electronic communication and submission

The university and instructors shall only use students’ university email address for communication. It is strongly recommended that any email communication between students and instructors take place in NEO LMS.

Each e-mail sent to an instructor that is about a new topic (meaning not a reply to an original email) shall have a new and clearly stated subject and shall have the course code in the subject, for example: “COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question”.

All electronic submissions are carried out through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

Attendance

Attendance is required. The university recommends, as a minimal policy, that students who are absent 35 percent of the course should be failed (or administratively withdrawn from the course if the absences are excused).

Absence excuse and make-up options

Should the student be absent from a class for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he needs to submit an Absence Excuse Form supplemented with documents proving the reasons for absence to the Assistant Dean. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if they submit an Absence Excuse Form along with the finalized add/drop form. The form and documents must be submitted within one week of absence. If possible, it is recommended to inform the instructor about the absence in advance.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean are entitled to make up exams they missed provided that the nature of the exam allows for a make-up. The students are

responsible for contacting their instructor within one week from the date the absence was excused, and for making arrangements with the instructor about make-up options as necessary.

Unexcused absences

Students are allowed two unexcused absences. Absences above this number may result in failure of the course.

Late work: No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

Electronic devices

Any electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops...) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information...). Any other use will result in being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during the tests.

Eating is not allowed during classes.

Cheating and disruptive behavior

If a student engages in disruptive or other conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment of an institution of learning, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the activity or for the day and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating (e.g. whispering or passing notes) will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misbehavior the student will be expelled from the exam and the exam will be marked as failed.

Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center

Plagiarism is “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin’s White Paper ‘The Plagiarism Spectrum’ (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND-REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one’s own previous work without citation; To self plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The “Aggregator” includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text’s original wording and/or structure.

As the minimum policy the types of plagiarism from 1 through 8 results in the failing grade from the assignment and must be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult their papers with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: <http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities are asked to contact their instructor as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodation.

9. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95 – 100	Excellent performance. The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90 – 94	
B+	87 – 89	Good performance. The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83 – 86	
B-	80 – 82	
C+	77 – 79	Fair performance. The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73 – 76	
C-	70 – 72	
D+	65 – 69	Poor. The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student’s work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60 – 64	
F	0 – 59	Fail. The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by and when:

Approved by and when: