In this era, many datasets and other information resources useful to academic scholarship are readily available in digital formats. Still, conducting empirical studies often requires field research – going out into the world with the purpose of acquiring relevant knowledge. This course offers a primer, which aims to help students address several fundamental questions:

- **Should I undertake field research?** Understanding why and when field research is worthwhile provides a foundation for making appropriate, smart decisions.

- **What sort of field research should I undertake?** Choices must balance the essential needs of a study against existing assets to maximize productivity.

- **How do I implement field research?** We will consider general logistics and specific methods – with an emphasis on individual-level primary data collection.

- **What must I overcome to conduct field research successfully?** Engaging in this sort of work often poses various challenges to navigate.

- **What happens when I complete field research?** Transitioning constructively to next steps is vital to ensure that the hard work can be put to good use.

The main assignment is a plan for field research designed to contribute to a student’s thesis project. Class sessions will include hands-on activities that focus on important incremental tasks in developing the plan, complemented by presentations of both an initial pitch and subsequent work in progress. Students from all disciplines and at any stage of graduate programs are welcome.

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**Syllabus**
Readings

Required readings are drawn from the following book:

Kapiszewski, MacLean and Read (2015), *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles*

Additional readings are suggested for those with particular interests.

Assignments

This course has two assignments.

1. **Elevator Pitch (10% of total grade)**

   The goal of this assignment is for each student to craft a clear, concise, compelling message about field research they wish to undertake appropriate to conducting an empirical study.

   The design should reflect a student’s interests and expertise, as well as the needs of the study. Each student is permitted to pick a topic and the location(s), substance and approach of the field research.

   For the envisioned study, the student must intend to collect data, which can be quantitative, qualitative, or a hybrid. Ideally, the plan includes the original collection of primary data.

   Any discipline or combination of disciplines can be featured in the research, especially via topic and approach.

   The pitch should cover the following dimensions:

   - **Motivations:** Why do you want to undertake field research?
   - **Subjects:** Who/what are you undertaking field research about?
   - **Location:** Where are you undertaking field research?
   - **Needs:** What information do you require that entails field research?
   - **Access:** Do you have a means to obtain the information?
   - **Timing:** When are you undertaking the field research?
   - **Feasibility:** Is the field research practically viable?

   The pitch must be produced as a single page. The format is open – can be written, visual or some combination. Aim for the content to be communicable verbally within 60-90 seconds.

   Hands-on activities occurring during class sessions will facilitate the development of the pitch. All students will submit their pitches as well as present them during a class session. Feedback will be provided on each submission.

   **Submission Deadline:** March 4, 2020 by 09h00
   **Presentations:** March 4, 2020
(2) Field Research Prospectus (90% of total grade)

The goal is to outline plans to conduct field research essential to an empirical study. Think in terms of a formal proposal for approval to proceed with your Master’s or PhD thesis project, building in the assumption you must also seek out funding support.

The prospectus must be a written product that covers the following:

a. Framing
   i. Context
   ii. Motivation [CHOOSE AS APPLICABLE]
      • A theoretical gap
      • An empirical puzzle
      • A matter of knowledge and understanding
      • An issue for policy/practice
   iii. Significance
   iv. Existing literature

b. Central topic
   i. Research question(s)
   ii. Hypotheses
   iii. Logic
   iv. Key variables

c. Data landscape
   i. What data are available?
   ii. What data are needed?

d. Design of field research
   i. Location(s)
   ii. Type of data to be collected
   iii. Respondents or sources
   iv. Methodology of data collection
   v. Scale/scope of data collection
   vi. Summary of instrument or protocol
   vii. Logistics
      • Partners
      • Personnel
      • Approvals (Graduate Institute, research board, ethical review)
      • Security
      • Contingencies
      • Timeline of activities
   viii. Budget
      • Cost items, rates, units and total expense
      • Narrative explanation and justification of costs

e. Data collection protocol or instrument

Hands-on activities occurring during class sessions will facilitate the development of the prospectus. All students will submit their work in progress as well as present these drafts during a class session. Feedback will be provided on each submission.

Work in Progress (30% of grade)
Draft (≤ 5 pages) of at least sections a-d due on March 11, 2020 by 17h00
Presentation (≤ 4 minutes): March 12, 2020
Final Submission Deadline: May 1, 2020 (60% of grade)
Sections a-d ≤ 5,000 words (approximately 10 pages) in total
Section e ≤ 10 pages
Schedule of Class Sessions

February 28   **Why Do Field Research?**
16h15 – 18h15 – S1

Agenda for Course
Introduction to Assignments
Discussion
Hands-on Activity for Assignment (1) – Motivating

**Required Reading**

*Field Research in Political Science*, Chapters 1, 2 and 11

**Suggested Readings**


Wood (2007), “Field Research,” in Boix and Stokes (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*

March 2   **How Do I Prepare for Field Research?**
10h15 – 12h15 – S1

Discussion
Hands-on Activities for Assignment (1) – Assets and Data Scoping

**Required Reading**

*Field Research in Political Science*, Chapter 3

**Suggested Readings**

Barret and Cason (1997), *Overseas Research: A Practical Guide*

Hertel et al. (2009), “Field Research in Developing Countries: Hitting the Ground Running,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*


March 4

How Do I Design Field Research (Part I)?

08h15 – 10h15 – S1

Discussion
Elevator Pitches
Hands-on Activity for Assignment (2) – Data Collection Plan

Required Reading

Field Research in Political Science, Chapters 5, 6 and 7

Suggested Readings


Geertz (1973), “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*

March 5

How Do I Design Field Research (Part II)?

10h15 – 12h15 – P1-701

Discussion
Hands-on Activity for Assignment (2) – Writing Questions

Required Reading

Field Research in Political Science, Chapters 8 and 9

Suggested Readings

Whyte (1982), “Interviewing in Field Research,” in Burgess, *Field research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*


Bradburn, Sudman and Wansink (2004), *Asking Questions: The Definitive Guide to Questionnaire Design*


March 9  How Do I Implement Field Research Properly and Effectively?
12h15 – 14h15 – S1

Discussion
Hands-on Activity for Assignment (2) – Logistics & Budgeting

Required Reading

Field Research in Political Science, Chapters 4

Suggested Readings


Thomson (2009), “‘That is not what we authorized you to do...’: Access and government interference in highly politicized research environments,” in Sriram et al. (eds.), Surviving Field Research: Working in Violent and Difficult Situations


March 11  What Comes Next After I Complete Field Research?
10h15 – 12h15 – P1-701

Discussion
Hands-on Activity – Coding

Required Reading

Field Research in Political Science, Chapter 10
March 12  
*Selling Your Plan*  
10h15 – 12h15 – P1-701

Student presentations of work in progress on Field Research Prospectus

**Required Reading**

Elevator pitches