

## International Relations & Political Science

Academic year 2019- 2020

### RI-SP098

#### *Designing & Conducting Field Research*

#### SPRING - 3 ECTS

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.

#### > Instructor

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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

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### February 28      *Why Do Field Research?*

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**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**

Collier (1999), "Data, Field Work, and Extracting New Ideas at Close Range," *APSA-CP Newsletter*

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

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### March 2      *How Do I Prepare for Field Research?*

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**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*

Collier and Mahoney (1996), "Insights and Pitfalls—Selection Bias in Qualitative Research," *World Politics* 49.

Gerring (2004), "What is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" *American Political Science Review* 98, 2.

Gisselquist (2014), "Paired Comparison and Theory Development: Considerations for Case Selection," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47, 2: 477-484.

Keeter (2005), "Survey Research," in Druckman, *Doing Research: Methods of Inquiry for Conflict Analysis*

Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007), "A Typology of Mixed Methods Sampling Designs in Social Science Research," *The Qualitative Report* 12.

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**March 4**                      **How Do I Design Field Research (Part I)?**

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**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**

Bayart de Volo and Schatz (2004), "From the Inside Out: Ethnographic Methods in Political Research," *PS: Political Science and Politics*

Adler and Adler (2000), "Observational Techniques," in Denzin and Lincoln, eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 377-392

Falleti (2006), "Theory-Guided Process-Tracing: Something Old, Something New," *APSA-CP Newsletter*

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

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**March 5**                      **How Do I Design Field Research (Part II)?**

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**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*

Aberbach and Rockman (2002), "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35

Leech et al. (2002), "Symposium: Interview Methods in Political Science," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 35, 4: 663-688

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

Hyde (2015), "Experiments in International Relations: Lab, Survey, and Field," *Annual Review of Political Science*

Humphries and Weinstein (2009), "Field Experiments and the Political Economy of Development," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12

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**March 9**

***How Do I Implement Field Research Properly and Effectively?***

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**12h15 – 14h15 – S1**

Discussion

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

**Required Reading**

*Field Research in Political Science*, Chapters 4

**Suggested Readings**

Brown (2009), “Dilemmas of self-representation and conduct in the field,” in Sriram et al. (eds.), *Surviving Field Research: Working in Violent and Difficult Situations*

Cohen and Arieli (2011), “Field Research in Conflict Environments: Methodological Challenges and Snowball Sampling,” *Journal of Peace Research* 48, 4: 423-435

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*

Agarwala and Teitelbaum (2010), “Trends in Funding for Dissertation Field Research: Why Do Political Science and Sociology Students Win So Few Awards?” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 43(2): 283-293

Baumrind (1985), “Research using intentional deception: Ethical issues revisited,” *American Psychologist* 40

Carapico (2006), “No Easy Answers: The Ethics of Field Research in the Arab World,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39, 3

Seligson (2008), “Human Subjects Protection and Large-N Research,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41: 477-482

Miguel et al. (2014), “Promoting Transparency in Social Science Research,” *Science* 343, 6166: 30-31

University of Maryland. 2014. “Institutional Review Board Investigator Handbook.”

<http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/RCO/New/Investigator%20Handbook%20FINAL%20112114.pdf>

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**March 11**

***What Comes Next After I Complete Field Research?***

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**10h15 – 12h15 – P1-701**

Discussion

Hands-on Activity – Coding

**Required Reading**

*Field Research in Political Science*, Chapter 10

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March 12

*Selling Your Plan*

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10h15 – 12h15 – P1-701

Student presentations of work in progress on Field Research Prospectus

**Required Reading**

Elevator pitches