

**Leiden University – Campus Den Haag  
Political Science**

## **Theories and Methods**

**Tuesday, November 2 – December 21, 2010**

**18:00 – 19:45**

**MA, Semester 1, Block 2**

**5 ECTS, Level 600**

**Course Code: 6444VMTM5**

**Room 13.43 (building Stichthage)\***

**\*Except: Room 13.44 on Nov. 2 &**

**Room 13.26 on Nov. 16**

**Instructor: Michael F. Meffert**

**Office Hours: by appointment**

**071-527-3862**

**m.f.meffert@fsw.leidenuniv.nl**

### **Course Description**

The goal of this course is to help students develop the skills necessary to evaluate existing research and to design and carry out their own empirical research projects and MA thesis. The course assumes basic familiarity with research methods and statistics. It will help students to develop broad analytical skills and provide them with the tools to test falsifiable hypotheses with empirical evidence. The course will focus on the following aspects: Identifying research questions that can be answered using standard methods of research; Finding theoretical literature on the topic of research; Establishing the relevance of research questions for theory and society; Thinking in terms of causal relationships between variables; Developing hypotheses concerning the relationship between variables that are based on the theoretical literature; Understanding the principles that relate to the support or rejection of hypotheses and theories; Being able to present hypotheses and findings in a coherent and comprehensible manner; Presenting written work that satisfies the criteria required in scientific publications, including proper citation and bibliographical forms. Finally, the course will review some basic descriptive and inferential statistics. Students are expected to be prepared to discuss the assigned literature and to actively participate in class discussions.

### **Method of Instruction**

Lecture 60%, Class discussion 40%

### **Requirements**

Students in this course must already have completed introductory courses in both research methods and statistics.

### **Readings**

Punch, Keith F. 2005. *Introduction to Social Research. Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Sage: London.

Additional texts listed or linked via Blackboard.

**Recommended Further Readings (optional):**

Introductory:

- Babbie, Earl. 2010. *The Practice of Social Research*. 12<sup>th</sup> ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Advanced:

- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Brady, Henry E., and David Collier (eds.). 2004. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

**Assignments, Research Proposal, Course Grade**

Your final grade is based on two homework assignments, a final research proposal, and class participation:

Assignments: 50% (2 x 25%)

Research Proposal: 40%

Participation: 10%

Class attendance is mandatory. Students who miss more than one class will automatically fail the course. Properly documented emergencies and in advance requested and permitted absences are exempt from this rule.

**Participation**

You are expected to read the assigned chapters and articles before each class meeting and be prepared to discuss them in class. The participation grade will reflect the frequency and quality of your contributions to class discussions.

**Assignments**

The two homework assignments are the first steps toward the final research proposal. Each homework assignment contributes 25% to your course grade. The assignments are due *before* class (via Ephorus and as hard copy in class). Late submissions are *not* accepted.

Assignment 1: **Review Essay** (ca. 1000 words, due **November 23, 2010, 18:00**)

The first assignment is a topical literature review that summarizes key studies (10 academic research studies/articles) related to the chosen research topic and research question. The review should point out the contributions and shortcomings of these studies, define the key concepts, and, if possible, end with a clear hypothesis.

Assignment 2: **Methods Essay** (ca. 1000 words, due **December 14, 2010, 18:00**)

The second assignment proposes a research design that allows you to answer your research question and test your research hypothesis. The essay describes the unit of analysis, case selection (and/or sampling), the operationalization of the key concepts and variables, data collection, and the planned data analyses.

**Research Proposal**

At the end of the course, you will write a research proposal (ca. 3500 words, due **Sunday, January 9, 2011**) in which you develop a theoretical argument, conceptualize and operationalize variables, and propose a research design to test your hypotheses.

The homework assignments and the research proposal have strict and final deadlines. Late submissions are not accepted and scored with 0 points. The actual length of the assignments and proposal must be within +/-10% of the assigned word count.

<b>Course Schedule</b>
------------------------

<b>November 2, 2010 Course Introduction &amp; Research Proposals</b>
--

**Readings**

- Punch, Ch. 1, "Introduction", pp. 1-13.
- Punch, Ch. 12, "Research Writing", pp. 259-280.

<b>November 9, 2010 Scientific Research &amp; Research Questions</b>
--

**Readings**

- Punch, Ch. 2, "Some Central Issues", pp. 14-31.
- Punch, Ch. 3, "Research Questions", pp. 32-43.
- Punch, Ch. 4, "From Research Questions to Data", pp. 44-61.
- Knopf, Jeffrey W. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(1): 127-132.

**Recommended Further Readings (optional)**

- Wonka, Arndt. 2007. "Concept Specification in Political Science Research." In *Research Design in Political Science: How to Practice What They Preach*, ed. Thomas Gschwend and Frank Schimmelfennig. Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 41-61.

<b>November 16, 2010 Causality, Causal Inference, &amp; Experiments</b>
---

**Readings**

- Punch, Ch. 5, "Quantitative Research Design", pp. 62-84.
- McDermott, Rose. 2002. "Experimental Methodology in Political Science" *Political Analysis* 10 (4): 325-342.

<b>November 23, 2010 Measurement</b>
--------------------------------------

**>> Assignment 1 due: Review Essay****Readings**

- Punch, Ch. 6, "Collecting Quantitative Data", pp. 85-107.
- Miller, Bernhard. 2007. "Making Measures Capture Concepts: Tools for Securing Correspondence between Theoretical Ideas and Observations." In *Research Design in Political Science: How to Practice What They Preach*, ed. Thomas Gschwend and Frank Schimmelfennig. Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 83-102.

<b>November 30, 2010 Case Selection, Sampling, &amp; Surveys</b>
--

**Readings**

- Ebbinghaus, Bernhard. 2005. "When Less is More: Selection Problems in Large-N and Small-N Cross-National Comparisons." *International Sociology* 20 (2): 133-205.
- Collier, David; James Mahoney, and Jason Seawright. 2004. "Claiming Too Much: Warnings about Selection Bias." In *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, ed. Henry E. Brady and David Collier. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 85-102.

<b>December 7, 2010 Qualitative Research</b>
--

**Readings**

- Punch, Ch. 8, "Design in Qualitative Research," pp. 133-167.
- Punch, Ch. 9, "Collecting Qualitative Data," pp. 168-192.
- George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2004. "Process-Tracing and Historical Explanation." In *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 205-232.

**Recommended Further Reading (optional)**

- Gerring, John. 2004. "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" *American Political Science Review* 98 (2): 341-354.

<b>December 14, 2010 Internal &amp; External Validity &amp; Data Analysis</b>
---

**>> Assignment 2 due: Methods Essay****Readings**

- Brewer, Marilynn B. 2000. "Research Design and Issues of Validity." In *Handbook of Research Methods in Social and Personality Psychology*, ed. Harry T. Reis and Charles Judd. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3-16.
- Punch, Ch. 7, "The Analysis of Quantitative Data", pp.108-132.
- Punch, Ch. 10, "The Analysis of Qualitative Data," pp. 193-233.

<b>December 21, 2010 Research Ethics, Mixed Methods, &amp; Research Proposal</b>
--

**Readings**

- Punch, Ch. 11, "Mixed Methods and Evaluative Criteria", pp. 234-258.
- Crano, William D., and Marilynn B. Brewer. 2002. "Social Responsibility and Ethics in Social Research." In *Principles and Methods of Social Research*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 344-357.

---

**>> Research Proposal due on January 9, 2011**