UCLouvain	bcomu2212	Research Methods in Digital Communication
	2024	

5.00 credits	30.0 h	Q2

Teacher(s)	Jacobs Thomas ;
Language :	English
Place of the course	Bruxelles Saint-Louis
Learning outcomes	
Evaluation methods	Students are in the context of this course evaluated on the basis of a group work and an individual exercise. **Group work** Students will work in small groups around a research object that interests them, and they will realise a series of small exercises around this object. The data, analyses, and results produced this way constitute the portfolio. Each group will be asked to submit a document (about 20 pages) that comprises their portfolio, a general report on the transversal results, and a critical reflection on their research (bias, limits, perspectives for further research,...). **Individual work** Students will be asked to write a 3-5 page paper, structured like an excerpt of a scientific article, in which they propose a detailed methodology tackling a research question and or problematique of their choosing (e.g. the one they work on in their master thesis, the one they worked on in the group work).

Teaching methods	This course is based on the following teaching methods:
	- general *ex cathedra* classes
	- the reading, presentation, and discussion of methodological texts or case studies in an interactive and collaborative fashion
	- a group work on the conception and implementation of a methodological set-up related to a research question
	- individual work related to either one's own Master thesis or the group work.
Content	This course introduces students to the methodological aspects of communication-scientific research focusing on digital tecnologies, digital communication, and social media as well as their productions, their representation, their perception, and their social impact. The students will familiarize themselves with the techniques, the methods, the attitudes, the philosophies, and the research objects that inform the scientific analysis of digital communication. In doing so, it proposes a broad conception of what constitutes methodology: the course does not just focus on the methods and techniques necessary to conduct communication-scientific research, but also poses larger epistemological and ethical questions about knowledge production in the digital era. Among others, the following topics are covered in the course:
	1) a general overview of what is understood when we talk about methodology in communication science and in the social sciences at large: What is a methodology in social science? How can we evaluate them? How are they linked to and part of a larger communication- or social-scientific approach or demarche?
	2) a reflection about the position that methodology occupies in a broader research plan: how do we align research questions and methodologies? How can a methodology operationalise certain concepts covered in the state of the art? How can a methodology guarantee the coherence of a research project?
	3) an overview of and an introduction to the different research methods that exist in the study of digital communication: interviews, ethnography, experimentation, discourse analysis, content analysis, surveys, creative analyses, participatory methods,....
	4) the conception and execution (on a small scale) of a research method linked to a research question.
	5) a reflection on the stakes and the transversal debates involved in research on digital communication: the characteristics of the internet as an research object/environment and its methodological impact, *big data*, ethical questions (the status of the observer, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymisation,...), the opportunities and risks of online technologies as tools for data collection and tools for analysis.
	Throughout the course, guest lecturers may intervene to talk about their own experience in scientific research.
Bibliography	Ne sont repris dans la bibliographie que trois ouvrages généraux à titre indicatif. Les ouvrages spécifiques, traitant d'une technique spécifique ou d'un exemple seront vus en cours. La liste des références sera mise à jour au fur et à mesure sur moodle.
	- Mucchielli, A. (2004) Les sciences de l'information et de la communication (5e ed.), Paris, Hachette.
	- Olivier de Sardan, J.P. (2008) La rigueur du qualitatif. Les contraintes empiriques de l'interprétation socio-anthropologique, Louvain-La-Neuve, Academia.
	- Van Campenhoudt, L. & Quivy, R. (2011 [1988]) Manuel de recherches en sciences sociales (4e ed.), Paris, Dunod.
Other infos	This course is partially based on case studies and group exercises. Students who cannot attend classes in person are invited to contact the lecturer to discuss alternative pedagogical avenues.
	The powerpoints and reading materials used in this course will be available via Moodle.
Faculty or entity in charge	ESPB

Programmes containing this learning unit (UE)				
Program title	Acronym	Credits	Prerequisite	Learning outcomes
Master [120] in Communication Strategy and Digital Culture (shift schedule)	COMB2M	5		🔍
Attestation de réussite : accession au niveau A pour les fonctionnaires fédéraux	ACNA7FC	5		🔍