UCLouvain

ldemo2150

2025

Seminar on causal research in social sciences

The version you're consulting is not final. This course description may change. The final version will be published on 1st June.

5.00 credits	30.0 h	Q1

Teacher(s)	Bocquier Philippe ;Rizzi Ester Lucia ;
Language :	French
Place of the course	Louvain-la-Neuve
Main themes	The seminar starts with an in-depth and detailed discussion on the research methods in social sciences: • method of synthesis of the literature • definition of complex concepts, • causality • formulating hypotheses • building of indicators Each stage is considered according to three big approach data analysis: the statistical approach for the quantitative data stemming from big inquiries; the qualitative approach for the narrative data stemming from detailed conversations, from focuses group or from the participating observation; the mixed approach.
Learning outcomes	**At the end of this learning unit, the student is able to :** 1. acquire a critical approach to scientific literature ; 2. define research questions based on the scientific literature ; 3. build conceptual frameworks ; 4. study thoroughly a population issue ;

Evaluation methods	Individual assignments (total of 32 out of 100) must be delivered to professors via Moodle at the specified deadlines (ie the Monday preceding midnight), each day of delay reducing by one point the note:
	- prepare for a round table a presentation of 3 minutes: question, hypotheses, mention data and methods (not noted)
	- write a page presenting the research question, hypotheses, data and methods of the dissertation taking into account the remarks and the discussion of the previous session (4 pts)
	- summarize your data research strategy, your metadata, and asses the quality of your data. (4 pts)
	- write a data management plan. (4 pts)
	- present your dependent variable in relation to the research question (4 pts)
	- present your independent variables considered in relation to the hypotheses of the research (4 pts)
	- present as an empirical schema the relationships between variables of a good reference article (4 pts)
	- present the possible interactions and the strategies to control them (4 pts)
	- by taking two articles for examples, present the method chosen to analyze your data (4 pts)
	Oral presentations (total of 13 out of 100) will take place in the presence of students and professors. Evaluation criteria :
	- Reminder of the research question and hypotheses (2 pts)
	- Brief review of the methodological literature (2 pts)
	- Empirical causal diagram (2 pts)
	- Data Sources Considered (2 pts)
	- Data analysis methods envisaged (2 pts)
	- Exploratory analyses (2 pts)
	- Answers to the questions and criticisms of the audience (1 pt)
	The final written report (total of 55 out of 100): methodological chapter of your dissertation according to the same structure as the oral presentation. Evaluation criteria :
	- Compliance with the approach taught (10 pts)
	- Critical approach to the methodology (15 pts)
	- Originality and relevance of arguments (15 pts)
	- Clarity (written expression and sequence of ideas) (10 pts)
	- General presentation (titles, bibliography, graphics ...) (5 pts)
	PLEASE NOTE:
	- Continuous assessment cannot be made up in the 2nd session; the 2nd session final report mark replaces the 1st session final report mark; continuous assessment marks are retained for the 2nd session.
	- The use of artificial intelligence is not prohibited, but must comply with the rules set out in the ESPO faculty note on the subject, which is available on its intranet site for students (http://uclouvain.be/consignes-chatgpt)
Teaching methods	- Introductory presentations provide general methodological principles for developing a demographic research project, illustrated with examples.
	- Using introductory presentations and appropriate references, students prepare written work for the next time (i.e. 9 intermediate works + oral presentation).
	- At each lecture, professors return to the work presented at the previous lecture by discussing their strengths and weaknesses.
	- The final oral presentation sets a deadline for the individual research work and help prepare the methodological chapter that will be the subject of the Master's dissertation.
Content	General objective: to relate research questions and hypotheses to data and method.
	Around the research themes chosen by the students for their research dissertation, and based on the review of the scientific literature, the seminar allows us to reflect on:
	- data: metadata, datasets, search for existing data, data quality assesment, Data Management Plan.
	- methods: adequacy with respect to hypotheses, assumptions and limits (selection effects, endogeneity of variables ...)
	- empirical model (causal diagram): choice of dependent and independent variables, hypotheses on the relationship between these variables.
	The aim of the seminar is indirectly to perfect the students' written and oral scientific communication.
	The seminar will focus on the stages of construction of the research methodology:
	- Identification of the research question and hypotheses (see LSPED2040 and LDEMO2130)
	- Identification of data sources
	- Identification of data analysis methods
	- Construction of an empirical causal schema
Inline resources	Presentations and other resources are available on MoodleUCL.
Bibliography	Guillaume Wunsch (1988) Causal Theory and Causal Modeling
	Chaire Quételet (1987) L'explication en sciences sociales - La recherche des causes en démographie.
	Federica Russo (2009) Causality and Causal Modelling in the Social Sciences
	Creswell J.W. (2003), Research Design : qualitative, quantitative et mixed methods.
	Quivy et Van Campenhoudt (2006), Manuel de Recherche en Sciences Sociales.

Other infos	Seminar reserved for 2nd year Masters students in the social sciences preparing a dissertation with a quantitative component.
Faculty or entity in charge	PSAD

Programmes containing this learning unit (UE)				
Program title	Acronym	Credits	Prerequisite	Learning outcomes
Advanced Master in Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences	LMQS2MC	5		🔍
Master [120] in Population and Development Studies	SPED2M	5		🔍