RESEARCH METHODS

GRADO EN COMUNICACIÓN Y MEDIOS DIGITALES

Professor: LAURA ZIMMERMANN
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Academic year: 18-19
Degree course: THIRD
Semester: 2º
Category: COMPULSORY
Number of credits: 6.0
Language: English

PREREQUISITES
No prerequisites required

SUBJECT DESCRIPTION
This course is for students in Communication and Digital Media with little or no past training in quantitative or qualitative research methods. The course is an introduction to some of the principles and methods of data collection and analysis in social science research. The course is split into two parts. The first part is focusing on quantitative research methods, while the second part focuses on qualitative research methods. Topics covered in the first part include questionnaire design, descriptive statistics, basic ideas of inference and estimation, an introduction to correlation and linear regression models as well as designing and analyzing experiments for causal inference. The second part introduces students to qualitative research methods such as interviews, focus groups and participant observation, and further equips students with the skills to analyze and interpret such data.

This course is intended to help students learn how to use the relevant quantitative or qualitative data to come up with useful answers to research questions. The first part of the course will address the descriptive and inferential analysis of data, introducing the statistical techniques that help in understanding and predicting the behaviour of people and organizations, while the second part focuses on qualitative methods. Through an in-depth examination of different methods and approaches within the qualitative and quantitative research tradition, students will gain a detailed understanding of the different methods available to them for collecting, selecting and analyzing data. In addition, there will be opportunities for practical application.

What is that big picture? Quantitative and qualitative research methods are more than a handful of tools; it is a way of thinking. In the context of this course, this means that students will learn to identify strengths and limitations of specific research designs and propose ways to address the limitations. Students will also learn to analyse data, interpret the basic results of these analyses and make recommendations based upon them. Further, students will be equipped with the knowledge to present their analyses and provide recommendations based on the findings. Although the course stresses applications rather than the technical aspects underlying the methods, students should strive to understand what they are doing and why they are doing it.

OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS
After completing this course, students will:

1. have an understanding of the variety and the key issues of quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis
2. have the practical and reasoning skills needed to **conduct** and **critically read** academic and non-academic research
3. be able to formulate a suitable research design with appropriate methodological choices for their final year research project

**METHODOLOGY**

Students are expected to have closely read compulsory readings in preparation for discussions and in-class work. Additional supplementary readings may be suggested based on interest and need.

The sessions will be interactive. Students have to be prepared to participate. This means contributing thoughtful comments that are likely to enhance other students’ understanding, as well as listening respectfully to what other students have to say. Students participation in the session will be part of their assessment.

In addition to interactive lecture and discussions, students can expect to complete a number of practical exercises and to analyse data using different software. Students will be told in advance for which sessions to bring their laptops and, if needed, to download data analysis software.

(Please note that specific elements of the course might be subject to change).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching methodology</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>26.67 %</td>
<td>40 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>13.33 %</td>
<td>20 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>26.67 %</td>
<td>40 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>13.33 %</td>
<td>20 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other individual studying</td>
<td>20.0 %</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>150 hours</strong></td>
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PROGRAM

SESSIONS 1 - 2
Introduction to Research Methods
Overview of the course and assessment.
Why do we need research methods? What different types of methods exist? Aligning research objectives with methods: How to decide which method to use.
In the second session we will start with an introduction to quantitative methods: what are the techniques and key principles, and what sort of data do you get?
B.C.: Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches. Chapter 1: The Selection of a Research Approach

SESSIONS 3 - 4
Sampling and measurement
How to select a sample that is representative. Objectivity, reliability and validity in research. Different types of variables and their measurement level.

SESSIONS 5 - 6
How to design survey
In this session we will cover how to develop high-quality, unbiased surveys for correlational and experimental research.
In-class exercise on questionnaire design
B.C.: Handbook of research methods in social and personality psychology. Chapter 16: Survey Research
R.A.: Self-reports: How the questions shape the answers (OPTIONAL)
R.A.: Importance of question sequence in MR questionnaire design (OPTIONAL)

SESSIONS 7 - 8
How to use your data for describing phenomena
In this session students will learn how to describe quantitative data for categorical and continuous variables with tables and graphs. This will include frequency distributions, histograms, basic knowledge about descriptive indicators like the mean, median, mode and measures of variability.
In-class practice session using a statistical software.

SESSIONS 9 - 10
How to make predictions and test hypotheses (Statistical Inference & Correlational Analysis)
How to come up with and test a research hypothesis; the principles of significance testing. How to measure linear associations between two variables (correlation).
In-class practice session using a statistical software.

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SESSIONS 11 - 12

**How to investigate relationships between two or more variables** (Linear regression analysis)
In-class practice session using statistical software.

**Optional advanced reading**

SESSIONS 13 - 14

**How to design experiments**
How to design and conduct experiments for causal inference.
Analysis of experimental research: comparing two groups and the basic principles of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)
In-class practice session using statistical software.

**Optional reading**

SESSIONS 15 - 16

Recap of quantitative research methods (Q&A), Midterm Exam
No reading required

SESSIONS 17 - 18

**Introduction to the qualitative methods toolkit & interviews**
In the first session, we review the foundations, main characteristics and rationale for conducting qualitative research.
In the second session, we focus on interviews as a key technique to collect data in qualitative research. Students will be introduced to key practical, theoretical and ethical issues in the process of interviewing. Strength and weaknesses of the interview approach, biases that might occur, how to construct a topic guide for high-quality data.

**Optional reading**

SESSIONS 19 - 20

**Focus groups**
In this session, we will focus on observation. Why conduct focus groups? How do you design and conduct focus groups? What makes a good focus group?
How to prepare a focus group protocol
In class practice session

**Optional reading**
Focus Groups

SESSIONS 21 - 22

Qualitative Analysis of Texts
What do we do once we have collected the data? Introduction to the practice of text data analysis. How do we conduct thematic analysis? What makes a good thematic analysis?
In class practice session using software
B.C.: Qualitative research methods in public relations and marketing communications. Chapter 18: Analysing and interpreting the data (Printed)

SESSIONS 23 - 24

Observational research
Ethnography and participant observation, research design and data analysis. In this session, we will focus on observation. The emphasis for observation is on the process of moving from recording observations to interpretation of social interaction.
T.N.: Qualitative research methods in public relations and marketing communications. Chapter 16: Observation

SESSIONS 25 - 26

Other approaches
Digital media, automated text analysis
In class practice session using software
R.A.: Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects

SESSIONS 27 - 28

Project presentations
Outline of a research proposal. Prepare and deliver a presentation detailing your research plan, including your problem definition, research question(s), sample survey questions (if applicable), and plans for data analysis.
No reading required

SESSIONS 29 - 30

Recap of qualitative research methods (Q&A), Final Exam
No reading required
We will use the following compulsory textbook for the quantitative part of the course (sessions 2-16):


This book is available as an eBook through the IE library. The library in Segovia also has a hard copy.

As a supplementary text, particularly if you find you have difficulty with conducting or interpreting analyses with SPSS software, you may want to consult this text:


For the qualitative party of the course we will use the following textbook (sessions 17-30):


Other recommended but not required books:


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>30 %</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>20 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Class Participation (20%)

You are expected to come to class. It is mandatory to attend 70% of the classes. Beyond simply showing up, participation in class discussions and activities is an important component of this course. Listening carefully is as important a component of participation as speaking. Please be aware of your own style of participation: if you find it difficult to speak up in class, push yourself to do so. If you realize you tend to dominate discussions, make a point of listening to others.

Class participation helps me assess whether you understand a concept, and are able to constructively build on it. Three main criteria will be used in reaching a judgment about your class participation:
1. Depth and Quality of Contribution: The most important dimension of participation concerns what it is that you are saying. A high quality comment reveals depth of insight, rigorous use of case evidence, consistency of argument.

2. Moving Your Peers’ Understanding Forward: Great ideas can be lost through poor presentation. A high quality presentation of ideas must consider the relevance and timing of comments, and the flow and content of the ensuing class discussion. It demands comments that are concise and clear, and that are conveyed with a spirit of involvement in the discussion at hand.

3. Frequency: I would like everyone in the class to participate frequently in the discussions, but only as long as there is something new to say. In particular, one must be especially careful that quality is not sacrificed for quantity. If anything, claiming more than a fair share of “airtime” without adding anything to the discussion will lower your participation grade.

Finally, your attempts at participation should not be such that the instructor has to “go looking for you”. You should be attempting to get into the debate on a regular basis. For every session you will get a participation grade.

You should expect to receive below a 7 if you miss more than 4 sessions; come to class consistently unprepared; are disruptive (this includes having to be repeatedly asked to put away devices or pay attention); do not participate at all or do not do so in a positive, thoughtful, and considerate way; or in any other way do not contribute positively to the learning atmosphere.

To receive a 7 or above you must come to class consistently prepared and contribute thoughtfully and positively to class activities and discussions. The difference between a 7 and a 10 is based on the level of analysis, thoughtfulness, responsiveness, and originality in your contributions, as well as your respect for the contributions of others. The average level of participation usually satisfies the criteria for a “7”, which would correspond to a “B”.

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Midterm Exam (30%)

This exam will help me evaluate the extent to which you were able to follow the quantitative part of the course, and whether you can use this learning to make specific decisions. After the first part of the course (quantitative research methods), you will take a Midterm Exam. The purpose of the exam will be to test your level of understanding, as well as your ability to take decisions based on the topics covered in the first part of the course. Please note that you’re being graded for your thinking and thought process, so please don’t worry about particular formulas or calculations.

Group Presentation of Research Proposal (20%).

This presentation will help me evaluate whether you can create a compelling research plan to solve a real problem, and also whether you are able to present in convincingly. Most of the times, the interest of an audience on what you have to say (e.g., in a meeting) is not given, but something that must be earned. In this assignment, each group will have to convince the class audience that they know what they are doing, regarding a research project. Convince your classmates that your research will be interesting, important, and will be done correctly. In order to maximize your performance in this, choose a research problem to investigate ASAP. This research problem can be anything that any business/non-profit/goverment agency etc. might be interested in finding out. The earlier you identify this, the better able you will be to apply your learning to the specific problem you will present.

Each group presentation will last 10-15 minutes (including questions, depending on the number of groups). Each group must present a research plan that consists of:
An Introduction. Why should we spend 15 minutes of our life to listen to you? Why is this presentation going to be interesting?

- Why is the content of the presentation interesting? Why is it important?
- 2-3 Research questions. What will you investigate?
- Research plan: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods that you will use
- Analyses plan. What analyses will you do to answer these questions? Use examples with different analyses that we will cover during the course. These examples must include specific variables, and their measurement.

Final Exam (30%)
This exam will help me evaluate the extent to which you were able to follow the course, and whether you can use this learning to make specific decisions. After the second part of the course (qualitative research methods), you will take a Final Exam. The purpose of the exam will be to test your level of understanding, as well as your ability to take decisions based on the topics covered in the course.

PROFESSOR BIO

Professor: LAURA ZIMMERMANN
E-mail: lzimmermann@faculty.ie.edu

Dr Laura Zimmermann is an Assistant Professor in Behavioural Science at IE University's School of Human Sciences and Technology. Before earning a PhD in Management from the London School of Economics and Political Science, Laura received an MSc and BSc in Experimental Psychology from the University of Regensburg in Germany.

Laura’s research investigates consumer behavior. She is interested in understanding what factors influence consumers’ decision-making processes and how to improve decisions with a specific focus on health-related behaviors and the role of technology. For her research, she is using lab and field experiments as well as large-scale, cross-sectional surveys and RCTs. One of her research streams focuses on exploring the effects of physical activity on information processing and attribute weighting in unrelated consumer decision making. She is also investigating how digital technology can be optimized, based on behavioural science, to improve health-related decisions. More recently, Laura also started working on intervention-based studies in developing countries (an RCT on the impact of digital marketing on market expansion and firm growth in Kenya; Deprivation and coping mechanisms to improve resilience in underprivileged children in India).

Previously, Laura has been teaching classes and seminars at LSE and Peking University for Undergraduate, Masters and Executive students as well as Summer School students. Her teaching covers several business and behavioural science modules, including courses in Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Judgment and Decision Making for Management, Decision Analysis and Entrepreneurship.

OTHER INFORMATION
IE email address: laura.zimmermann@ie.edu

CODE OF CONDUCT IN CLASS

1. Be on time: : Students arriving more than 5 minutes late will be marked as “Absent”.

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Only students that notify in advance in writing that they will be late for a specific session may be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).

2. **If applicable, bring your name card and strictly follow the seating chart.** It helps faculty members and fellow students learn your names.

3. **Do not leave the room during the lecture:** Students are not allowed to leave the room during lectures. If a student leaves the room during lectures, he/she will not be allowed to re-enter and, therefore, will be marked as “Absent”.

Only students that notify that they have a special reason to leave the session early will be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).

4. **Do not engage in side conversation.** As a sign of respect toward the person presenting the lecture (the teacher as well as fellow students), side conversations are not allowed. If you have a question, raise your hand and ask it. If you do not want to ask it during the lecture, feel free to approach your teacher after class.

If a student is disrupting the flow of the lecture, he/she will be asked to leave the classroom and, consequently, will be marked as “Absent”.

5. **Use your laptop for course-related purposes only.** The use of laptops during lectures must be authorized by the professor. The use of Social Media or accessing any type of content not related to the lecture is penalized. The student will be asked to leave the room and, consequently, will be marked as “Absent”.

6. **No cellular phones:** IE University implements a “Phone-free Classroom” policy and, therefore, the use of phones, tablets, etc. is forbidden inside the classroom. Failing to abide by this rule entails expulsion from the room and will be counted as one absence.

7. **Escalation policy: 1/3/5.** Items 4, 5, and 6 above entail expulsion from the classroom and the consequent marking of the student as “Absent.” IE University implements an “escalation policy”: The first time a student is asked to leave the room for disciplinary reasons (as per items 4, 5, and 6 above), the student will incur one absence, the second time it will count as three absences, and from the third time onward, any expulsion from the classroom due to disciplinary issues will entail 5 absences.