

Research Methods for Area Studies

Attendance of the Research Methods Lectures and Classes are compulsory for all students on the MSc and 1st Year MPhil in Japanese Studies.

Organisation of the course during Covid-19:

The Research Methods course comprises of OSGA lectures (**scheduled for 10.00 am on Monday mornings**) followed by programme specific classes scheduled later in the week. For the Quantitative Methods module, in Hilary Term, there are additional laboratory/practical sessions.

We intend to run the lectures and classes in-person for 2021-22. For Michaelmas Term, the Monday morning QUAL lectures will be in the Nissan Institute Lecture Theatre. The room will be ventilated, and we request that students wear face coverings during the lecture and – as far as possible – leave a space between students, other than those that live together.

If we are not able to hold lectures in-person due to the evolving Public Health situation or for other reasons, this will become a Research Methods Microsoft Teams meeting/lecture and additional information and guidance will be made available through your Programme Administrator and on CANVAS.

Course Description:

This course runs over two terms and comprises two 'modules'.

The first module runs during Michaelmas Term and covers the challenges of research methods in Area Studies, social science approaches to research in Area Studies, various techniques for collecting and analysing qualitative data in the social sciences and humanities, and also highlights the core principles of research design. Following an introduction to Area Studies, the first weeks of the course concentrate on how to collect and work with primary and secondary sources and interrogates the relationship between different disciplinary approaches and the empirical study of an 'area' such as China, South Asia, Japan, Russia and Eurasia or Latin America. Subsequent sessions will consider different approaches to obtaining and analysing qualitative data and through this will provide a robust introduction to various methodologies which students commonly employ in their theses. Each OSGA lecture will be supplemented by a region-specific class organised by the separate area programmes.

The second module runs during Hilary Term and introduces students to core techniques in quantitative analysis. Students will develop the skills to understand and evaluate the quantitative statistics and statistical tests commonly used by authors in academic papers and official reports and will therefore develop the capacity to engage critically with a wider literature. Students will also develop the skills to conduct their own statistical analysis using a software package called R-Studio. The techniques covered range from simple correlations and t-tests to more complex regression analysis. The lectures will be supplemented by practical guided exercises (for working with the software) and region-specific classes organised by the separate area programmes. The emphasis throughout the second module is on understanding and interpretation rather than on the underlying statistics and mathematics.

Through the lectures, classes, laboratories, assessed written work and the weekly reading students will acquire and demonstrate a sound general understanding of the opportunities and challenges of different qualitative and quantitative approaches to research undertaken in area studies. At the

same time, students will enjoy the opportunity and flexibility to develop specialisation in accordance with individual disciplinary and research interests.

Course Objectives:

During the course students will:

- Interrogate the idea and meaning of area and will contemplate its relationship with disciplinary theories and methods.
- Gain an understanding of the inter-relationships between theory and research design and between theory and data collection and analysis.
- Gain a more informed and critical understanding of methodological approaches to the study of 'area'.
- Acquire a working, practical knowledge of key methodological tools sufficient for subsequent specialisation and development in their own research.
- Obtain a critical knowledge of social science debates and the relevance and implications of these debates for the study of 'area'.
- Improve their ability to critically evaluate academic scholarship and other texts produced from different disciplinary traditions (including those of a quantitative persuasion) or from inter-disciplinary approaches with reference to area.
- Improve skills in writing and in the presentation of information and argument.
- Develop awareness of the qualities of good research design and good research practice as preparation for their MSc/MPhil thesis and for further advanced Area Studies research.

Course Assessment:

Summative assessment for this course comprises of two core parts, each weighted equally and tailored to this programme:

- (a) **Qualitative Methods Assignment:** A take-home test on the collection and analysis of qualitative data (word limit 2500 words, including footnotes but excluding bibliography) will be released on Monday of Week 8 of Michaelmas Term with the work to be submitted as an electronic copy via the University approved online assessment platform by **12 noon on Monday of Week 9 of Michaelmas Term.**
- (b) **Quantitative Methods Assignment:** A take-home test in quantitative analysis (word limit 2500 words, including footnotes but excluding bibliography) to be set on Monday of Week 8 of Hilary Term with the work to be submitted as an electronic copy via the University approved online assessment platform **by 12 noon on Monday of Week 10 of Hilary Term.**

Each submission must be accompanied by a declaration indicating it is the candidate's own work.

There will be a third formative assignment which is the Research Proposal.

Research Proposal: An individual research proposal for each student (word limit 2,500 words) to be **submitted to the** Canvas assignments site (further instructions will be given out nearer the time) **by no later than 12.00 noon on Monday of Week 9 of Hilary Term (Monday 14th March 2022).**

Recommended Books for Area Studies and Social Science:

For the Qualitative Methods course:

Ahram, A., Köllner, P. and Sil, Rudra. (eds) (2018) *Comparative Area Studies: Methodological Rationales and Cross-Regional Applications*. Oxford University Press.

Clowes, Edith. and Bromberg, Shelly J. (eds) (2016) *Area Studies in the Global Age: Community, Place, Identity*. Northern Illinois University Press.

Denscombe, Martin (2005) *The Good Research Guide: For Small Scale Social Research Projects*. Sage.

Van Evera, Stephen. (1997) *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Cornell University Press.

Milutinovic, Zoran (Ed). (2020) *The Rebirth of Area Studies: Challenges for History, Politics and International Relations in the 21st Century*

For the Quantitative Methods course:

Agresti, A., and Finlay, B. (2009): *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*, 4th ed., Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall (or later editions)