

CE12A-10 Researching Society and Culture

21/22

Department

Centre for Lifelong Learning

Level

Undergraduate Level 1

Module leader

Steven Gascoigne

Credit value

10

Module duration

25 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study locations

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry Primary

City College, Coventry

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College, Nuneaton campus

Description

Introductory description

The aim of this core foundation module is to introduce students to the nature of sociological research as a reflexive activity. It starts by introducing the varying philosophical and ethical/political starting points of research in the social sciences and goes on to provide foundation level critical analysis and practical training in the key quantitative and qualitative methods that sociologists have deployed to understand and 'capture' the social world in a range of social contexts. The module will ensure that students become 'research minded' from the outset of their degree studies, and develop professional and academic skills that will be built on through more advanced training at Levels 5 and 6, to enable them to undertake substantial undergraduate research.

Module aims

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These aims need to be understood as complementary to those which will be achieved through Sociological Perspectives. Thus while Sociological Perspectives will link theory to research evidence and social contexts, Researching Society and Culture will ensure students understand the linkages between research and theoretical starting points, and the way this is reflected in different substantive areas of analysis.

The two modules together seek to ensure a coherent introduction to Sociology and equip students with the necessary skills to navigate their way successfully through their undergraduate studies.

Among the significant changes being introduced across these two modules will be a stronger emphasis on introducing students to Sociology as an interdisciplinary, theoretically exciting and research based discipline. Both modules will be taught in such a way that connects social theory to social contexts and theoretically informed research. For the first time, students will be introduced at Level 4 to major contemporary social theorists. Researching Society and Culture will give students a thorough grounding in research design, as well as hands-on development of relevant skills, treating them as active researchers from the outset.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

The following is an indicative list of topics. Each college within the partnership has autonomy as to how this is interpreted across Year 1 and Year 2:

Part 1: Approaching Social Research, will introduce students to the nature and purposes of social research as a reflexive ethical/political activity, including a range of ontological and epistemological starting points especially positivism, (critical) realism, naturalism, interpretivism, relativism, and 'standpoint' research approaches. It shows how these lead to the framing of research questions and issues in particular ways, and particular social purposes, and the consequential adoption of different methodologies. A key issue it will address is the need to overcome binary distinctions between qualitative and quantitative methods, and assumptions about a hierarchy of forms of evidence in social research. It will explore the implications for the scientific study of human beings that people are knowledgeable agents with their own interpretations of the social world and also that social scientific knowledge enters and influences the social world. During this section of the module students will receive 2 dedicated professional skills Workshops involving key elements such as use of physical and virtual libraries, referencing and plagiarism, followed by individual study of web based materials with access to model answers following prescribed exercises.

Part 2; Doing Social Research, will explore and concretise these issues in relation to three selected thematic areas: Researching the Social Past; Researching Social Inequalities, and

Researching Everyday Life. This section of the module will involve the critical appraisal of a range of sociological studies, and government, think-tank, pressure group and commercial research evidence, that has utilised a range of methodologies in these thematic areas. It will involve the analysis of comparative research strengths and weaknesses, and investigation of political/ethical implications, and the uses to which research has been put. It will also involve practical exercises that will seek to develop students' competence in a range of quantitative and qualitative methods, including: survey methods and techniques, secondary data sets, digitally gathered information, oral history, biographical research, discourse analysis and 'framing' approaches, visual methods, diary evidence (written and video), content analysis, varieties of observation research and ethnographic approaches.

Thematic areas will address key methodological issues and competencies that will be assessed. For example historical research might address survey methods through Rowntree's 1901 study of Poverty to illustrate positivism and empiricism, and also mass observation as source of qualitative evidence. Researching Social Inequalities will look at positivist approaches to class, such as NS-SEC influenced by Goldthorpe, more recent interpretivist approaches, and feminist research methodologies. Research into ethnicity might compare and contrast 'objective' and 'assigned' approaches in the UK Census with more discursive, qualitative approaches based on research into social identities. Researching Everyday Life will focus among other issues on household surveys, social trends and commercial data, and sociological research in relation to consumption and leisure, discourse analysis on daily conversation, narrative interviews, observation of social settings and analysis of 'body language'.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Understand the nature of social research as a reflexive activity, and demonstrate critical awareness of the factors that shape it.
- Understand the principles behind research design using a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods and the way that these have informed studies.
- Display competence in core academic, professional and research skills in applying and triangulating a range of qualitative and quantitative research skills and presenting the results orally to peers and in the form of written scholarly work.
- Demonstrate awareness of ethical issues and of how to practically apply ethics to empirical research.

Indicative reading list

Braun V. and Clarke, V. (2013) Successful qualitative research: a practical guide for beginners. London: Sage

Braun V., Clarke, V. and Gray, D. (2017) Collecting qualitative data: a practical guide to textual, media and virtual techniques. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Bryman, A. (2016) Social Research Methods 5th edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Denscombe, M. (2017) The good research guide: for small scale social research projects. London, England: Open University Press

Flick, U. (2014) An introduction to qualitative research. London: Sage, 5th edition

Nardi, P. M. (2018) Doing survey research: a guide to quantitative methods. London: Routledge

- Pole, C. and Lampard, R. (2013) Practical Social Investigation: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Social Research, Abingdon: Routledge
- Punch, K. (2016) Developing effective research proposals. London: Sage, 3rd edition
- Punch, K. (2014) Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches, London: Sage, 3rd edition
- Robson, C. and McCartan, K. (2016) Real World Research, Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 4th edition
- Ruane, J. M. (2016) Introducing social research methods: Chichester: Wiley Blackwell
- Wang, G.T. and Park, K. (2016) Student research and report writing: from topic selection to the complete paper. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell

Subject specific skills

Understand the nature of social research as a reflexive activity, and demonstrate critical awareness of the factors that shape it.

Understand the principles behind research design using a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods and the way that these have informed studies.

Display competence in core academic, professional and research skills in applying and triangulating a range of qualitative and quantitative research skills and presenting the results orally to peers and in the form of written scholarly work.

Demonstrate awareness of ethical issues and of how to practically apply ethics to empirical research.

Transferable skills

Construct arguments based upon literature and research.

Synthesise material into written work and oral presentations.

Using qualitative and quantitative data to inform findings

Disseminate findings in written and oral form

Time management skills

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	25 sessions of 1 hour (25%)
Seminars	25 sessions of 2 hours (50%)
Tutorials	24 sessions of 30 minutes (12%)
Other activity	1 hour (1%)
Private study	12 hours (12%)
Total	100 hours

Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

Other activity description

Tutor-led discussion

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A2

	Weighting	Study time
Multi-Format Workbook	100%	

Feedback on assessment

Written and oral feedback

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- USX2-Y202 Undergraduate Social Studies [2 + 2]
 - Year 1 of Y202 Social Studies [2 + 2]
 - Year 1 of Y202 Social Studies [2 + 2]