

SO31Q-15 Experiments in the Social Sciences and Humanities

21/22

Department

Sociology

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Ulf Liebe

Credit value

15

Module duration

9 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Is the gender wage gap caused by discrimination? What explains differences in voter turnout? Which form of education and development aid is effective? What affects the movement of visitors in an art gallery? Experiments are the “gold standard” for uncovering causal effect and they were rediscovered in social science research and the humanities in the last decades. The results of experimental research give valuable insights for theory testing and programme evaluation.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

This course will develop students' understanding of experimental method as well as why experiments can help to solve a wide range of research puzzles and social problems. The course will provide students with the skills to conduct and critically reflect on experimental research in the social sciences and humanities.

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.

Week 1: Why do we need experimental research?

- This session will introduce experimental methods and refer to many applications in social science research and the humanities.

Week 2: What makes a study an experiment?

- This session will review key concepts of experimental research such as causal inference and randomization.

Week 3: Why are there so many types of experiments?

- This session will introduce laboratory experiments and field experiments and reflect on their advantages, pitfalls, and problems.

Week 4: Why are there even more types of experiments?

- This session will introduce natural experiments as well as related types and reflect on their advantages, pitfalls, and problems.

Week 5: How can experiments be integrated into surveys?

- This session will introduce different types of survey experiments and reflect on their advantages, pitfalls, and problems. Further, students will present their own ideas about conducting an experiment.

Week 6: Reading Week

Week 7: How can we 'walk the experiment talk'?

- Students will conduct fieldwork by carrying out their own experimental research. They will be supervised by the lecturer.

Week 8: What does my experimental data tell me?

- Students will continue with the fieldwork and analyse the data. They will be supervised by the lecturer.

Week 9: What can I tell you about my experiment?

- In this session students will present their experimental studies.

Week 10: What did we learn?

- In this session students will reflect on the overall course content.

Learning outcomes

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

- (1) to familiarise students with different types of experiments;
- (2) to raise students' awareness of the advantages, pitfalls, and problems of experimental methods used in social science and humanities research;
- (3) to equip students with the skills to understand and undertake experimental research.

Indicative reading list

Andreoni, J. and R. Petrie. (2008). "Beauty, Gender and Stereotypes: Evidence from Laboratory Experiments." *Journal of Economic Psychology* 29: 73-93.

Auspurg, K. and T. Hinz, T. (2014). *Factorial survey experiments*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Auspurg, K., Hinz, T. and C. Sauer (2017). "Why should women get less? Evidence on the gender pay gap from multifactorial survey experiments." *American Sociological Review* 82: 179–210.

Baldassarri, D. and M. Abascal (2017). "Field Experiments Across the Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 43: 41-73.

Barrera, D. and B. Simpson (2012). "Much Ado About Deception: Consequences of Deceiving Research Participants in the Social Sciences." *Sociological Methods & Research* 41:383-413

Bower, G.H. (1976). "Experiments on story understanding and recall." *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* 28: 511-534.

Bourdeau, L. and J.-C. Chebat (2001). "An Empirical Study of the Effects of the Design of the Display Galleries of an Art Gallery on the Movement of Visitors." *Museum Management and Curatorship* 19: 63-73.

Field, A. and G. Hole. (2003). *How to Design and Report Experiments*. Sage Publications.

Gerber, A.S. and D.P. Green. (2000). "The Effects of Canvassing, Direct Mail, and Telephone Contact on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 94: 653-63.

Gerber, A. and D. Green. (2012). *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis and Interpretation* W.W. Norton.

Hainmueller, J., Hangartner, D. and Yamamoto, T. (2015). "Validating vignette and conjoint survey experiments against real-world behavior." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112(8): 2395-2400.

Holland, P.W. (1986). "Statistics and Causal Inference." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 81: 945-960.

Hulstijn, J.H. (1992). Retention of Inferred and Given Word Meanings: Experiments in Incidental Vocabulary Learning. Pp. 113-125, in: P.J. L. Arnaud, and H. Béjoint (Eds.), *Vocabulary and Applied Linguistics*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Keizer, K., S. Lindenberg, and L. Steg (2008). "The Spreading of Disorder." *Science* 322: 1681-1685.

McEwan, P.J. (2015). "Improving Learning in Primary Schools of Developing Countries: A Meta-Analysis of Randomized Experiments." *Review of Educational Research* 85 (3): 353-394.

Miller, D. (1992). "Distributive Justice: What the People Think?" *Ethics* 102: 555-593.

Mutz, D. (2011). *Population-Based Survey Experiments*. Princeton University Press.

Pager, D. (2007). "The Use of Field Experiments for Studies of Employment Discrimination: Contributions, Critiques, and Directions for the Future". *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 609 (January):104-133.

Przepiorka, W. and J. Berger (2016). "The sanctioning dilemma: A quasi-experiment on social norm enforcement in the train." *European Sociological Review* 32(3): 439-451.

Sekhon, J.S. and R. Titiunik. (2012). "When Natural Experiments Are Neither Natural Nor Experiments." *American Political Science Review*, 106 (1): 35-57.

Shadish, W., T. Cook and D. Campbell. (2002). *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Wadsworth Cenage Learning.

Singer, E. and F.J. Levine (2003). "Protection of Human Subjects of Research: Recent Developments and Future Prospects for the Social Sciences." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 67: 148-164.

Smith, V. (1994). "Economics in the Laboratory." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 8: 113-131.

Tilcsik A. (2011). "Pride and prejudice: employment discrimination against openly gay men in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 117:586–626.

Webb, S. (2007). "The Effects of Repetition on Vocabulary Knowledge." *Applied Linguistics* 28(1): 46–65.

Research element

Some fieldwork required in teaching

Interdisciplinary

Interdisciplinary module for students in the social sciences and humanities

Opportunities for interdisciplinary learning are communicated to students

Subject specific skills

Systematic understanding, coherent and detailed knowledge of key concepts of experimental research in the social sciences and humanities

Ability to describe and comment on the advantages and pitfalls of experimental methods

Ability to manage and conduct experimental research

Communication of research findings and limitations related to experiments in social science research and the humanities

Transferable skills

By developing and conducting own projects ...

the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility,

decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts in field settings.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Fieldwork	3 sessions of 6 hours (12%)
Private study	114 hours (76%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Reading for seminars

Preparation for seminars

Preparation for fieldwork

Preparation of presentations

Preparation and writing of formative work

Preparation and writing of summative work

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time
Assessed presentation	30%	
Group presentation		
Assessed essay	70%	
Individual 2000 words essay		

Feedback on assessment

Regular informal feedback will be provided throughout the module seminar sessions.

\r\n\r\nFormative: Feedback will be provided on the formative essay. \r\n\r\nSummative: Written feedback will be provided on the summative essay.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 3 of ULAA-ML33 Undergraduate Law and Sociology

This module is Optional for:

- USOA-L301 BA in Sociology
 - Year 3 of L301 Sociology
 - Year 3 of L301 Sociology
 - Year 3 of L301 Sociology
- Year 4 of USOA-L306 BA in Sociology (with Intercalated Year)
- UHIA-VL16 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
 - Year 3 of VL16 History and Sociology (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
 - Year 4 of VL16 History and Sociology (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)

- Year 3 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)
- Year 3 of UPOA-M162 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Quantitative Methods
- Year 4 of UPOA-M167 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Quantitative Methods (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Option list A for:

- ULAA-ML34 BA in Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
 - Year 3 of ML34 Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
 - Year 4 of ML34 Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
 - Year 4 of ML34 Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
- Year 4 of ULAA-ML33 Undergraduate Law and Sociology

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 3 of UPOA-ML13 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology
- Year 4 of UPOA-ML14 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology (with Intercalated year)

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 3 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 4 of UHIA-VL14 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with Year Abroad)