

Syllabus
for course at advanced level

Research Methods (Master Thesis Proposal)
Research Methods (Master Thesis Proposal) 7.5 Higher Education Credits

7.5 ECTS credits

Course code: SO7240

Valid from: Spring 2016

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Department: Department of Sociology

Subject Sociology and demography

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Decision

Prerequisites and special admittance requirements course

To be admitted to the course, the students are expected to have selected a research topic and have a thesis supervisor, with whom they have met at least once.

Course structure

Examination code	Name	Higher Education Credits
1D24	Research Methods (Master Thesis Proposal)	7.5

Course content

The course is designed to generate proposals for master's theses in sociology and demography. The first part of the course focuses on how to organize a research project, including developing the research question, reviewing and synthesizing prior research and writing, and understanding the elements of a research proposal. Course participants will work together to help each other develop an appropriate and feasible research design, considering the merits of alternative methods. Students will draft sections and eventually a full proposal with feedback from advisors (handledare), the course instructors and classmates. Students should expect to work intensively with their advisors during this period.

Learning outcomes

After completing this course, students are expected to be able to:

In terms of knowledge and understanding:

- identify the elements of a research proposal
- identify the principles of research ethics and understand why they are important to the research community
- understand the purpose and method of peer review

In terms of accomplishment and competence:

- link proposal elements to create a coherent whole
- apply the elements of a research proposal to empirical research questions
- identify relevant previous research on a topic and efficiently manage the information that is acquired from such research
- participate effectively in peer review as both reviewer and reviewee
- critically consider the ethical issues in own and others' research and identify appropriate solutions to ethical dilemmas in research practice

In terms of values and evaluation:

- appreciate the importance of conducting research of the highest quality, both theoretically and methodologically
- appreciate the importance of ethical conduct for the research community and society at large
- appreciate the role of own and others' peer reviews in contributing to better research.

Education

The course is provided at half-time over 10 weeks, with varying concentration on lectures with discussion and independent work. Teaching is conducted through lectures, instructor-led discussions of materials from readings and lectures, and through peer review of proposal drafts.

Forms of examination

Examination: Students produce a thesis proposal and are assigned the work of other students to review. They will also produce an annotated bibliography of key texts and are expected to actively participate in the course.

The final grade is based on the quality of the master's thesis proposal (65 %), two peer reviews (20 %), and course participation (15 %). Each component is graded: A = Excellent, B = Very good, C = Good, D = Satisfactory, E = Sufficient, Fx = Not sufficient, F = Fail. To receive the grade of E for the course, all components must receive a grade of E or better.

The master's proposal is graded as Good, Sufficient or Not Sufficient in each of the following criteria:

- Well-defined research question, its motivation and feasibility
- Identification and application of relevant theories and research
- Critical engagement with the literature
- Convincing and logically organized argument, which follows from the research question
- Clear and strong rationale for the research design, which follows from the research question; demonstrates the logic of the method and its appropriateness and ability to answer the research question
- Clear description of planned data and methods
- Coherent and concisely-written

To receive grade A the judgment Good is needed for at least 6 of the 7 criteria.

To receive grade B the judgment Good is needed for at least 5 of the 7 criteria.

To receive grade C the judgment Good is needed for at least 4 of the 7 criteria.

To receive grade D the judgment Good is needed for at least 2 of the 7 criteria.

To receive grade E the judgment Sufficient is needed for all criteria.

Each of the two peer reviews is graded on the extent of appropriate (supportive and critical) engagement with a classmate's work. Comments on a) introduction and research question, b) argument, and c) research design will be graded as Good, Sufficient or Not Sufficient

To receive grade A the judgment Good is needed for at least 5 of the 6 items.

To receive grade B the judgment Good is needed for at least 4 of the 6 items.

To receive grade C the judgment Good is needed for at least 3 of the 6 items.

To receive grade D the judgment Good is needed for at least 2 of the 6 items.

To receive grade E the judgment Sufficient is needed for all items.

Participation depends on class attendance, timely completion of assignments, and in-class assignments. One full grade will be deducted for each two missed lectures (unexcused absences) or late assignments. One full grade will be deducted for each missed in-class assignment.

Students with grade Fx or F are entitled to take further examination, at assigned examination dates, as long as the course is provided in order to achieve at least grade E. Grades for course participation cannot be altered unless the student participates in the course the next time it is offered. A student with grade E or higher is not entitled to another examination to raise his/her degree. Students who received grade Fx or F on exams twice from the same examiner can request to be evaluated by another examiner. Such request should be sent to the Director of Studies. Students can request to have examination according to this syllabus up to three semesters after the syllabus is no longer valid. Such requests should be sent to the Director of Studies.

Required reading

Committee on the Conduct of Science, National Academy of Sciences. 1995. On Being a Scientist. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. Also downloadable in pieces at <http://books.nap.edu/books/0309051967/html/index.html>

Becker, H.S. 1983. Freshman English for graduate students: A memoir and two theories." *Sociological Quarterly* 24:575-588.

Becker, H. S. 1986. Terrorized by the literature. Pp. 135-149 in H. S. Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gustafsson, Bengt, Göran Hermerén, and Bo Petersson. Vad är god forskningsred? *Vetenskapsrådets Rapportserie* 2005:1.

White, Lynn. 2005. Writes of passage: Writing an empirical journal article. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67: 791-798. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/3600238>

And/or Information in English from Vetenskapsrådets web site

Several handouts on developing research proposals and on writing, reviewing and revising will also be required reading. Students are also responsible for identifying and reviewing research articles, books and other reference materials that are relevant to their master's thesis topic. Such materials are the basis for the required annotated bibliography.

Course schedule Spring 2017

NOTE: All deadlines are firm. Students who fall behind will not receive peer reviews and/or timely feedback from instructors. Lectures and handouts relating to assignments will be provided in advance of the period for each assignment.

Day	Date	Time	Assignment	Lecture	Feedback	Location
Tuesday	21/3	10-12	Thesis Topic & Supervisor	Introduction		B497
Friday	24/3	10-12	Research Question & data	Library & References		B419
Monday	27/3	10-12	Meet w/advisor	Argument & Research Design		E497
Tuesday	28/3	9-11		Research Ethics	RQ & data	FB620
Tuesday	11/4		Ethics discussion			
Tuesday	18/4		First draft: intro & review			
Tuesday	25/4				First Draft	
Thursday	11/5		Full Draft			
Thursday	18/5	10-12	Peer Review	Peer Review Workshop	Full Draft	E371
Thursday	1/6		FINAL Proposal due			