CMEN20: KEY METHODS IN MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

Spring 2019

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Office Hours:

Course Schedule: Mondays and Wednesdays 10:15 to 12:00 (January 21st to March 1st 2019)
Fridays 13:15 to 15:00 (April 5th to May 31st 2019)

Course Duration: January 21st – May 31st 2019

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims to provide a comprehensive overview of foundational social scientific research theories and procedures, research methodologies, and research proposal writing. Through a combination of lectures, seminars, workshops, presentations and written assignments, students will acquire theoretical knowledge and applied practical skills in various aspects of the research process, from reflection, planning and outline, to data collection, processing, analysing and reporting of research. Emphasis will be placed on understanding how various methodological perspectives apply to contemporary Middle Eastern studies.

The course begins with an introduction to research design, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative research methods and their uses, seen in relation to the question of validity. Research techniques necessary for data collection and analyses of interviews, surveys, observation, and database material will be taught in a combination of seminars and workshops. Development of the skills required for both written and oral dissemination of results is also a key feature of the course. Assessment for the course will be based on a combination of in-class and take-home assignments, as well as the final research proposal. The methods course is not least designed to prepare students for their master’s thesis project. In the individual research proposal assignment, which concludes the course, students are expected to engage with their thesis project ideas. The final assignment consists of a written research proposal, with an emphasis on methodological reflection. This proposal is intended to be shared with the student’s respective supervisor upon assignment mid-way through this course.

The course consists of four units of teaching and an extended individual project period. The course breakdown is as follows:

- Unit 1: Introduction to research methodology
- Unit 2: Qualitative research methods
- Unit 3: Quantitative research analysis
- Unit 4: Individual research planning project

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course the student shall be able to:

Knowledge and understanding

- be able to describe epistemological foundations and research methods in social sciences and explain the differences between various research paradigms
- be able to account for the differences between various research methods and research designs
- be able to explain the principles and procedure of drawing up a research plan
Skills and abilities

- be able to discuss and account for ethical and legal issues within social scientific research
- be able to compare varying forms of data collection and determine which form is suitable for a particular study
- be able to conduct different types data collection methods and analyses
- be able to draw conclusions measurement, validity and reliability
- be able to write a formal project proposal in Middle Eastern studies

Evaluation ability and approach

- be able to assess links between theory, methodology and analysis
- be able to critically evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, ethical implications and potential limitations of different research designs as well as examples of research in Middle Eastern studies
- be able to critically assess individual statistical data and statistically based studies

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Class Attendance and Participation

This course consists of a combination of lectures, seminars and workshops, with a heavy emphasis on discussion and practical implementation. The lectures are meant to complement and comment on the assigned readings. The seminars and workshops focus on the practical implementation of research techniques. Students are required to actively engage with the course material, both in-class and online.

This course builds progressively, so it is important that students keep up with the assigned readings and attend all lectures, seminars and workshops. If you miss a class you will be at a disadvantage, especially when it comes to the quantitative section which is cumulative in nature. Attendance records will be kept for every class meeting. In case a missed seminar or workshop, students are required to submit a make-up assignment. The nature of this assignment will be determined by the student in dialogue with the instructor. All make-up assignments are due one week after the date of the missed seminar/lecture.

To successfully complete the course, students are expected to:

- Attend all class meetings;
- Read all course material critically before coming to class;
- Discuss the readings (electronically as well as in-class);
- Answer questions presented by the instructors and other students (electronically as well as in-class);
- Engage in dialogue with other students (electronically as well as in-class);
- Ask questions relating to readings or comments that are presented by other students (electronically as well as in-class).

Assignment Assessment

The formal assessments for this course are divided by unit. Each unit consists of in-class as well as take home tasks which will be formally evaluated at the conclusion of each unit. Assignments are to be submitted through the course teaching platform by the set deadline. The grade distribution for the course is as follows:

- Unit 1 Research Methodology Assignment 20%
- Unit 2 Qualitative Methods Assignment 20%
- Unit 3 Quantitative Research Analysis Assignment 20%
- Unit 4 Research Proposal 40%

Students should keep in mind the following points for the course assignments:
Assignment topics/analyses should aspire to move beyond descriptive analysis and actively reflect on the relationship between the question, issue or problem and the method(s) being applied. Pick literature that is relevant to that topic and/or assignment. Focus on analytical insights and avoid opinionated statements. Connect ideas, sentences and paragraphs. Make sure that your writing flows and that sentences are well constructed to show how ideas relate. Write simply. Use course material, academic journals and scholarly books. Reference all sources used in the paper both within the body of the paper and in a Works Cited page, in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style. Spoken presentations must be kept within given time limits and should be well prepared and well structured. All students must actively participate in discussions. All students are required to uphold a respectful and creative discussion class climate.

Assignments will be assessed based on the student’s ability to:
• Demonstrate understanding of the methods of each assignment task
• Demonstrate elementary abilities to conduct assigned methods
• Critically engage with all the required readings for each assignment
• Present (written and spoken) arguments coherently in good academic English and with proper references

Grading scale
Grades will be granted based on the following scale:
A = Excellent work that goes well beyond the requirements of the assignments and demonstrates distinct critical skills and creativity. Mastery of course material is clearly evident.
B = Work that demonstrates a thorough understanding of the course material, fulfils all aspects of the assignments, in part beyond minimum required elements.
C = Work that fulfils all aspects of the assignment with satisfactory understanding of course material. If you do the assignment exactly as it is assigned, you will receive an average grade.
D = Work that shows a basic understanding of the material but displays certain weaknesses in implementing course objectives.
E = While all assignments have been submitted, the work significantly fails to demonstrate a satisfactory engagement with the course material.
F = Failure to show up to class, submit assignments and/or course work that fails to meet the basic expectations of the assignment.

ASSIGNMENTS

Unit 1: Research Methodology Assignment

Unit 2: Qualitative Methods Assignment

Unit 3: Quantitative Research Analysis Assignment

Unit 4: Final Assignment Research Proposal – See appendix 1

The aim of this assignment and seminar is for the students to write a research proposal that can be used as a point of departure for their master’s thesis. The research proposal must be no more than 3000 words. See below for some guidance concerning what sub-sections to include in your proposal.
Note: Since this is the final assignment for a research methods course, make sure you devote particular attention to discussing research methods issues. Also, be sure to use at least seven texts from the course literature. The research proposal must include the following sub-sections/topics:

1. Introduction and background with references to relevant research in your chosen research topic (1 – 3 paragraphs), but the ‘literature review’ element is of subordinate priority for this assignment
2. Aim, purpose and research question (1 paragraph)
3. Preliminary theoretical reflections (2 – 3 paragraphs)
4. Choice and implementation of research method(s) and relevant methodological reflections on, for instance, self-reflectivity, representation, omissions and limitations (1 – 2 pages)
5. Choice of material and implementation of analytical models (2 – 4 paragraphs)
6. Expected outcomes (in terms of type of data collected) (1 paragraph)
7. Foreseen ethical and practical problems and other difficulties with the chosen research design (2 – 4 paragraphs)
8. Time plan (1 paragraph)
9. List of References

During the two peer review seminars, students will present working drafts of their proposals to small working groups. The objective of these seminars is to both give and receive constructive feedback on their proposals as they develop. Students prepare for both of the seminars by reading the drafts of the peers in their working groups, and providing written comments. It is the responsibility of each student to submit the written feedback they prepare for their peers prior to the start of the seminars. Please upload the feedback as a single document to the LUVIT folder "Peer Review Seminar 1 – Working Group Feedback".

See the appendix for more in-depth instructions.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Unit 1: Introduction to Social Scientific Methodology

(Mon) 21/01 Lecture: What is research methodology and what is it good for?  
*Time: 10:15-12:00*

- **Key themes:**
  - Presentation of the course. What do we mean by social scientific methodology and what does it do for social inquiry? What are the epistemological foundations of social science and what does this mean for the venture of doing social science in Middle Eastern studies? The lecture will present the notion of sociology of knowledge and knowledge creation from a methodological standpoint.

- **Required readings:**
  - Berger and Luckmann 1966, 1 – 30
  - Babbie 2013, 3 – 29

- **Supplementary readings:**
  - O'Reilly 2012, Ch. 1 (pg. 1 – 27)

(Wed) 23/01. Lecture: Research paradigms and research design  
*Time: 10:15-12:00*

- **Key themes:**
  - A research paradigm is “the set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed” (Kuhn, 1962). In other words, a research paradigm is a set of philosophical assumptions that frame how knowledge is viewed, as well as the researcher’s relation to this knowledge. This lecture discusses some of the most prominent research paradigms used in social science research, and how they are applied to an investigation. The lecture will also explore the social scientific research process. Which research design is most appropriate and based on what considerations?

- **Required readings:**
  - Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 105-117
  - Creswell 2009, Ch. 1 (pg. 1-20)
  - Denzin and Lincoln 2017, 213 – 229

- **Supplementary reading**
  - Bryman 2012, Ch. 1 (pg. 1-16)

**Unit 1 Assignment due: 25/1/2019 due (23:59) – upload to 'Unit 1 Assignment’ LUVIT folder**

Unit 2: Qualitative Research Methodologies

(Mon) 28/01. Lecture: Qualitative research designs and reflexivity  
*Time: 10:15-12:00*

- **Key themes:**
  - In Unit 2 we will explore various aspects of qualitative social scientific methodologies. The first
lecture is devoted to the concept of ‘reflexivity’ as an important *modus operandi* throughout the research process. We will devote particular attention to how you define a research design for a given research problem and field.

- **Required readings:**
  - Babbie 2013, 323 – 357
  - Yin 2015, Ch. 4 (pg. 83-115)
  - Warren and Hackney 2000, Ch. 1 and 2 (pg. 3 – 35)

- **Supplementary readings:**
  - Babbie 2013, 88 – 122
  - Cannella and Lincoln 2013: 169 – 187
  - O’Reilly 2012, Ch. 2 (pg. 28 – 61)

(Wed) 30/01. Lecture: Discourse theories in context
*Time: 10:15-12:00*

- **Key themes:**
  - What do we mean by discourse analysis? What is a discourse analysis – and what is it *not*? What variations in discourse analysis methodologies do we find and how do they interrelate? How does discourse analysis relate to other critical social scientific methodologies, such as social constructivism and gender critique. A recurrent theme in this unit will be gender as both an aspect of, and a tool in discourse analyses.

- **Required readings:**
  - Sunderland 2004, 3 – 26
  - Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, 1 – 18
  - Taylor 2001, 5 – 48

- **Supplementary readings:**
  - Fraser 1985/1989, 35 – 54
  - Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, 37 – 73
  - Diaz-Bone 2007

(Mon) 4/02. Lecture: Observations and field notes
*Time: 10:15-12:00*

- **Key themes:**
  - Observations constitute the kernel of ethnographic methods. Half this lecture will introduce key issues pertinent to determining what methods are appropriate for what expected research outcomes. We will also discuss opportunities and challenges of observing and the recording of research in field notes.

- **Required readings:**
  - O’Reilly 2012, Ch. 4 (pg. 86-116)
  - Mehta and Bosson 2009, 1 – 27
  - Yin 2015, 150-160, 169-179
• Supplementary readings:
  o Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw 2011. (pg. 29-40)
  o O’Reilly 2012, Ch. 3 (pg. 62-86)
  o Yin 2015, Ch. 5 (116-135)

(Wed) 6/02. Lecture and workshop: Interviews, transcription, and coding of interview data
Time: 9:15-12:00
• Key themes:
  Qualitative interviews are perhaps the most widely used method in qualitative research. What constitutes an ‘interview’ has changed over time, in connection to the role of the researcher as ‘objective’ information collector to subjective knowledge creator. This lecture will discuss the different forms that qualitative interviews can take and the kinds of tools or aids to discussion that can be used during interviews. From there the class will discuss how can spoken words be transferred into written text for analysis? How do we proceed to code, that is to classify our recorded data in order to make analysis possible? And what is an analysis? What do we attempt to achieve in processing data in relation to theoretical models and concepts – and how may we do it? In short – how do we move from a successful recording of data to a discussion of our results in relation to our research question?

• Required readings:
  o O’Reilly 2012, Ch. 8 (pg. 179 – 207)
  o Babbie 2013, 389 – 412
  o Bryman 2012, Ch. 15 (pg. 329-353)

• Supplementary readings:
  o O’Reilly 2012, Ch. 9 (208-231)
  o Yin 2015, Ch.

(Mon) 11/02. Lecture: Methodological and ethical considerations for research in the Middle East
Time: 10:15-12:00
• Key themes:
  Following up on the notion of ‘reflexivity’, we will explore and discuss various aspects of ethics and regulations in qualitative research. How do we assess the effects of our research for individuals or groups participating in or otherwise being affected by research? What measures can we employ to minimise negative effects? What are the inevitable power effects of academic research in various settings and are there specific concerns to consider in Middle Eastern research?

• Required readings:
  o Christians 2013, 125 – 167
  o Romano 2006, 439 – 441
  o Carapico 2006, 429 – 431
  o Schwedler 2006, 425 – 428
  o Clark 2006, 417 – 42

• Supplementary readings:
  o Cannella and Lincoln 2013, 169 – 187
  o O’Reilley 2012, 62 – 85
Unit 3: Quantitative Research Methods and Analysis

(Wed) 13/02. Lecture: Quantitative Research – Understanding and Using Statistics
Time: 10:15-12:00

- Key themes:
  The lecture will introduce students to quantitative research, and in particular, how it differs from qualitative research both in process and outcomes. Quantitative analysis models will be discussed as well as the types of research questions or problems that are most appropriate for this approach. The second half of the lecture will introduce students to different ways of collecting quantitative data, as well various sampling considerations that must be addressed in a quantitative study.

- Required readings:
  - Babbie 2012, 123-162
  - Caputi and Balnaves 2001, 64-87
  - Field 2013, 1-12

- Supplementary readings:
  - Huff 1993, 53-59
  - Blakie 2003, 15-23

(Mon) 18/02. Lecture and workshop: Designing and Utilising Questionnaires in Research
Time: 9:15-12:00

- Key themes:
  This lecture is intended to help students understand the qualities of a well-designed questionnaire. After reviewing the attributes of different types of questionnaires – such as exploratory and formal standard questionnaires – the lecture will discuss the process of designing questionnaires. Students will also critically examine existing questionnaires to identifying their strengths and weaknesses.

- Required readings:
  - Rea and Parker 2014, 36-59
  - Marpsat and Razafindratsima 2010, 3-16

- Supplementary readings:
  - Presser et al. 2004, 109-131
  - Fowler 1995
  - Tourangeau et al. 2000

(Mon) 25/02: Online Lecture: Introduction to SPSS

- Key themes:
  The objective of the online SPSS lecture series is to learn basic data analysis using quantitative data. In this first lecture students will be introduced to the data analysis programme SPSS. A brief overview of the programme’s interface will be covered, followed by a discussion on how students can create their own datasets. In connection to this we will discuss how to clean data, as well as how to code data. We will work with real data in a hands-on activity.
• Required readings:
  o Watch online lecture material
  o Read Darcy’s tutorial

• Supplementary readings:
  o Field 2013, 61-69
  o Pallant 2010, 25-27

(Wed) 27/02. Online Lecture: Data Entry in SPSS

• Key themes:
  This lecture will discuss the use of different types of datasets and the ways in which they can be entered into the programme. We will look at how to define variables, and how to manipulate and transform variables when necessary.

• Required readings:
  o Watch online lecture material
  o Read Darcy’s tutorial

• Supplementary readings:
  o Field 2013, 69-86
  o Pallant 2010, 27-43

(Mon) 4/03. Online Lecture: Basic Analysis Using SPSS – Descriptive Statistics

• Key themes:
  Understanding and producing descriptive statistics will be the focus of this lab session. We will focus on selecting the appropriate descriptive analysis technique for the type of question(s) being investigated. Students will learn how to compute means and standard deviations, frequency tables and cross-tabulations.

• Required readings:
  o Watch online lecture material
  o Read Darcy’s tutorial

• Supplementary readings:
  o Pallant 2010, 51-83

(Wed) 6/03. Online Lecture: Basic Analysis Using SPSS – Inferential Statistics

• Key themes:
  Students will learn to carry out correlation and association analyses.

• Required readings:
  o Watch online lecture material
  o Read Darcy’s tutorial

• Supplementary readings:
  o Field 2013, 175-179, 688-700
  o Pallant 2010, 121-128
Unit 3 Assignment  due: 29/03/2019 (23:59) – upload to 'Unit 3 Assignment’ LUVIT folder

Unit 4: Individual Research Planning Project

(Fri) 5/04. Research Proposals
Time: 13:15-15:00

• Key themes:
  What are the elements of a good research proposal? After a short introduction, the assignment will be discussed in detail – including what elements need to be included in the proposal. This proposal is intended to be the starting point for your thesis work, so it is important students take some time to reflect on possible topics.

• Required readings:
  o O'Reilly 2012, 208 – 230
  o Babbie 2013, 118 – 119

(Fri) 12/04. Drop-In Office Hours
Time: 13:15-15:00

First draft research proposals due: 18/04/2019 (23:59) – upload to 'Draft 1 Research Proposal’ LUVIT folder

(Fri) 26/04. Peer review seminar 1
Time: 13:15-15:00

• Key themes:
  Students will present drafts of their research proposals and give constructive critique in peer seminars.

Second draft research proposals due: 10/05/2019 (23:59) – upload to 'Draft 2 Research Proposal’ LUVIT folder

(Fri) 17/05. Peer review seminar 2
Time: 13:15-15:00

• Key themes:
  Students will present drafts of their research proposals and give constructive critique in peer seminars.

(Fri) 24/05. Drop-In Office Hours
Time: 13:15-15:00

Final Draft Research Proposal (Unit 4 Assignment) due: 31/05/2019 (23:59) – upload to ‘Final Draft Research Proposal’ LUVIT folder
Appendix 1: Research Proposal Structure

- The importance
  - Structuring your thoughts, references.
  - Identifying the problems, needs (literature/methods)
  - Selling your ideas!

- The purpose
  - To convince! Remember who your readers are! (In this case, the examiners, so base on course plan and required readings)
  - Requires coherence, structure, clarity, well-formulated presentation, good language, well founded in research

- The structure
  - Can vary. The most important thing: that it has a clear structure. That your reader can get a clear picture fast. Your proposal may be one of dozens, hundreds.
  - Key elements are:
    - Title: Informative but catchy. Not too long.
    - Abstract: This is everything!!!! Quite literally: a concentrate of what this project aims at. Remember: often evaluators read the abstract only...
    - Introduction (with or without literature review elements). There are two common models:
      - Research question followed by elaborative discussion connected to background, research.
      - Background description with literature references, ending in a formulation of problem. In both cases: keep it short and poignant– yet solid!
    - Literature review. Stay focused! Preferably thematic – not just heaping references without interconnection. Keep and revisit the read thread! Be critical, updated. Don't dwell – trust your references. And remember who you are writing for!
    - Methods: Remember that you must convince us that this is a feasible project! Discuss material and how to obtain it and issues connected with that (methodology, ethics etc.), connected to literature.
    - Expected results. How will your project contribute to existing research? What limitations?
    - Optional: Outline of research (time plan, structure, etc.)
    - Bibliography: selected, strategic.
Required readings


Supplementary readings:


