Laurea / B.A.
in Global Governance

Academic Year 2025-2026
Syllabus
Research Methods for Social Sciences Research
CFU 6
Prof Francesca Marazzi & Prof Andrea Piano Mortari

Course Description:
This course is an introduction to research methods in the social sciences, with a focus on quantitative methods, in particular empirical and experimental methods for impact and policyevaluation. Students will learn how to design a robust research project starting from specific research questions and select an appropriate methodology to answer it.

Teaching Method:
This course is participatory, students are expected to read required materials prior to class meetings, prepare questions and notes, and actively participate in classroom experiments and activities.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Topic 1	**Introduction: the scientific approach, doing research in the Social Sciences and ethical aspects** • Gertler, Paul J., Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, Christel M.J. Vermeersch. 2016. *Impact Evaluation in Practice*. Second Edition. World Bank Publications. Chapter 13
Topic 2	**Data Types, Data Sources, Causal inference and Randomized assignment** • Gertler, Paul J., Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, Christel M.J. Vermeersch. 2016. *Impact Evaluation in Practice*. Second Edition. World Bank Publications. Chapters 3, 4 and 16
Topic 3	**How to evaluate: Matching, Difference-in-Differences, Randomized Control Trials** • Gertler, Paul J., Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, Christel M.J. Vermeersch. 2016. *Impact Evaluation in Practice*. Second Edition. World Bank Publications. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 • Card D, Krueger AB 1994. *Minimum Wages and Employment: A Case Study of the Fast-Food Industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania*. The American Economic Review, Vol. 84, No. 4 • Galiani, S., Gertler, P., & Schargrodsky, E. (2005). *Water for Life: The Impact of the Privatization of Water Services on Child Mortality*. Journal of Political Economy, 113(1) • Jalan, J., & Ravallion, M. (2003). *Estimating the Benefit Incidence of an*

	Antipoverty Program by Propensity-Score Matching. Journal of Business & Economic Statistics, 21(1) • Abadie, A., Diamond, A., & Hainmueller, J. (2010). *Synthetic Control Methods for Comparative Case Studies: Estimating the Effect of California's Tobacco Control Program*. Journal of the American Statistical Association, 105(490) • Anglemyer A, Horvath HT, Bero L. 2013. *Healthcare outcomes assessed with observational study designs compared with those assessed in randomized trials*. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2014, 1 Issue 4
Topic 4	**Module 2 Introduction: Experimental Methods in the Social Sciences**
Topic 5	**Laboratory experiments** • Falk, A., & Heckman, J. J. (2009). *Lab experiments are a major source of knowledge in the social sciences*. Science, 326(5952)
Topic 6	**Field experiments** • List, J. A. (2007). *Field experiments: A bridge between lab and naturally-occurring data.* NBER Working Paper 12992
Topic 7	**Survey experiments** • Stantcheva, S. (2023). *How to run surveys: A guide to creating your own identifying variation and revealing the invisible.* Annual Review of Economics, 15(1), 205-234.
Topic 8	**Students' Presentations**

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

The formal requirement for being labeled as an Attending Student is being present to at least 80% of the classes. Therefore, students **missing more than 20% of the classes (i.e., 4 lectures) will be labeled as Non- attending students.**

All students are required to individually develop a Research Design, consisting of an application of one of the methodologies covered in the syllabus. The application of other methodologies (e.g., qualitative methods) is generally not accepted. Students willing to focus their Research Design on their final thesis topic should discuss this with the Professors.

GRADING

Final grades will be determined as follows.

Attending students

50% Research Design Paper

50% Research Design Presentation

Active participation in class is highly encouraged.

Non-Attending Students

30% Research Design Paper

70% Written exam

Non-attending students can refer to the aforementioned material and to the slides available on the webpage of the course. We highly recommend discussing with Prof. Marazzi or Prof. Piano Mortari the topic and

methodology chosen for the research design well ahead of the exam and before starting to write the Research Design Paper.
The written exam will cover the whole program and assess if the student has acquired i) the knowledge of all the methodologies covered in the program and ii) the relevant skills to plan a research project.

Research Design Paper and Presentation
Students are required to choose a relevant research questions of their interest and develop a research design aimed at answering it. For the sake of the final evaluation, all students are required to write a research design paper illustrating the research design. Specific requirements for the paper are covered in the slides.
The paper should illustrate the relevance of the chosen research question, in light of the existing scientific literature, and apply at least one of the methods learned in the course, discussing its appropriateness.
All activities pertaining to the research design are individual. The use of generative Artificial Intelligence tools is not prohibited but must be explicitly disclosed.

Attending students will also present their research design during the last week of the course. This presentation will contribute to their evaluation; in addition, they will receive feedback on the design before finalizing it and writing the paper.

Important deadlines for attending students

- Research Design Abstract due via e-mail: around 10 days before the presentation week (exact date will be announced in class)
- Research Design Presentations: last week of the course

Important deadlines for all students

- Research Design Paper: due via e-mail around 7 days before the chosen exam call

Participation
You are expected to attend all course sessions, to arrive on time and attend the class until its end. This is your opportunity to ask questions, discuss readings and other course materials, and engage in activities that will deepen your understanding of course topics. High-quality participation might grant bonus points added to the final evaluation.
We expect students to come prepared, and to be respectful, attentive, and actively engaged. In-classroom discussions and activities are an integral part of this course, intended to be additional learning opportunities.

Grade Determination
Students should not submit first drafts and should carefully proofread all work. The following factors will be considered in evaluating students' paper and presentations:

- **Content:** Responds to the assignment questions. Develops and supports a central thesis. Provides a focused argument throughout the essay/talk.
- **Clarity and Presentation:** Writes/speaks clearly by: developing a coherent, well-organized argument; arranging sentences in a logical and coherent manner; using correct punctuation, spelling, and grammar; and providing correct citations in the APA format.
- **Comprehensiveness:** Reviews the relevant literature and material, shows an in-depth

understanding of the topic, and critiques differing points of view on the topic.

- **Creativity:** Draws the reader/listener in and engages him/her in the topic. Makes an original contribution to the topic. Presents material in an interesting and unique way that elucidates the ideas.
- **Accuracy:** Free of obvious errors. All facts are derived from assigned course material and properly cited.

CLASS POLICIES

Plagiarism

Plagiarism of published work is an ethical violation. Any two assignments that are submitted containing the same sentences will be considered a breach. In written work (including overheads or handouts used in presentations), words drawn from others should be indicated by quotation marks, and ideas drawn from others should refer to their source. If you are unsure about what needs to be cited, please talk with us.

AI use

AI tools are not prohibited if they are used ethically and acknowledged in a separate section of the Research Design paper. Their use should support, rather than replace, students' own intellectual contribution. Students remain responsible for verifying the accuracy of all submitted material. Assignments that clearly demonstrate excessive or uncritical reliance on AI, including the inclusion of fabricated references or other AI-generated hallucinations, will be penalised and may receive a failing grade.

NOTE: If you are an **Erasmus** or a **non-Global Governance** student who would like to attend one or more courses in the Global Governance programme, please be aware that, before enrolling in the course, you should have read the **code of conduct** and the procedural rules characterizing our programme. We assume that, if you enroll in the course, **you have read and accepted all Global Governance values and rules**. Notice that attendance is expected from the very first lesson and you need to attend at least 75% of the course to be considered an attending student.

Description of the methods and criteria for testing learning

The examination assesses the student's overall preparation, ability to integrate the knowledge of the different parts of the program, consequentiality of reasoning, analytical ability and clarity of presentation, in accordance with the Dublin descriptors (1. knowledge and understanding; 2. applying knowledge and understanding; 3. making judgments; 4. learning skills; 5. communication skills).
The examination will be graded according to the following criteria:
Unsuitable: important deficiencies and/or inaccuracies in the knowledge and understanding of the topics; the topics are exposed in an incoherent manner and with inappropriate language.
18-20: barely sufficient knowledge and understanding of most of the topics, with some missing items; sufficient capacity for analysis; the topics are sometimes exposed in an inconsistent manner and with inappropriate/technical language;
21-23: basic knowledge and understanding of most of the topics; ability to analyze and synthesize correctly with sufficiently coherent logical argumentation, with possibly some inaccuracy in the technical language.
24-26: good knowledge and understanding of most of the topics; good analytical and synthetic skills with

rigorously expressed arguments, though with possibly a few inaccuracies in the technical language.
27-29: complete knowledge and understanding of the topics; good capacity for analysis and synthesis. Arguments presented in a rigorous manner and with appropriate/technical language, with only minor inaccuracies.
30-30L: very good level of knowledge and thorough understanding of topics. Excellent analytical and synthetic skills and independent judgment. Arguments expressed in an original manner and in appropriate technical language.
