



Spring 2022-2023

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 impact evaluation and experiments. Students will learn how to robustly design a research projects starting from specific research questions and select an appropriate methodology to collect the data.

### 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.

### SCHEDULE OF TOPICS:

<b>Topic 1</b>	<b>The Scientific Approach, Research Questions and Research Ethics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gertler, Paul J., Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, Christel M.J. Vermeersch. 2016. <i>Impact Evaluation in Practice. Second edition.</i> World Bank Publications. Ch. 1-2, 13</li><li>• Flick, Uwe. 2011. "Ethics in Qualitative Research". In <i>Designing Qualitative Research.</i> SAGE Publications. 1-9.</li></ul>
<b>Topic 2</b>	<b>Data Types, Data Sources and Causal inference</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gertler, Paul J., Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, Christel M.J. Vermeersch. 2016. <i>Impact Evaluation in Practice. Second edition.</i> World Bank Publications. Ch 3 and 16</li></ul>
<b>Topic 3</b>	<b>How to evaluate: Randomized assignment, Instrumental variables, Matching, Difference-in-Differences, Randomized Control Trials.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gertler, Paul J., Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, Christel M.J. Vermeersch. 2011. <i>Impact Evaluation in Practice.</i> World Bank Publications. Ch. 4-8</li><li>• Anglemyer A, Horvath HT, Bero L. 2013. Healthcare outcomes assessed with observational study designs compared with those assessed in randomized trials". <i>Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews</i> 2014, Issue 4. Art. No.: MR000034. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.MR000034.pub2..</li></ul>

<b>Topic 4</b>	<b>Observing the behaviour of economic agents: rational models and behavioural economics. Why economic experiments?</b>
<b>Topic 5</b>	<b>Choices under risk and measuring risk aversion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Experiments:</i> investment game; Holt &amp; Laury</li> <li>• <i>Reading:</i> Dohmen, T., Falk, A., Huffman, D., Sunde, U., Schupp, J., &amp; Wagner, G. G. (2011). "Individual risk attitudes: Measurement, determinants, and behavioral consequences." <i>Journal of the European Economic Association</i>, 9(3): 522-550</li> </ul>
<b>Topic 6</b>	<b>Strategic risk and social preferences</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Experiment:</i> dictator and ultimatum games</li> <li>• <i>Reading:</i> Thaler, R.H. (1988) "Anomalies: The ultimatum game." <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> 2: 195-206</li> </ul>
<b>Topic 7</b>	<b>Public good games and the voluntary contribution mechanism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Experiment:</i> repeated public good game</li> <li>• <i>Reading:</i> Fischbacher, U., Gächter, S., &amp; Fehr, E. (2001). "Are people conditionally cooperative? Evidence from a public goods experiment." <i>Economics letters</i> 71(3): 397-404</li> </ul>
<b>Topic 8</b>	<b>Toolbox: identifying a research question and designing an experiment</b>
<b>Topic 9</b>	<b>Research Design Presentations</b>

**Weekly Reading:**

Part of readings for this course are listed above and will be made available to students via a course website, others will be suggested during the course.

**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

The class requirements include: in class participation and discussion; a research design paper based on anticipated (or hypothetical) research project and a presentation of your research design during the last week of classes.

**Grading Summary:**

Final grades will be determined as follows:

- 40%                      Research Design Paper
- 40%                      Research Design Presentation
- 20%                      Participation

**Non-Attending Students:**

- 30%                      Research Design Paper
- 70%                      Oral Exam

Non-attending students shall contact Prof Marazzi or Prof Piano Mortari well ahead of the exam date in order to receive instructions on textbooks and materials for preparing the oral exam.

**If you miss more than 20% of the classes (i.e. 4 lectures) you will be labelled as a Non-attending student**

## **Research Design Paper, Presentation:**

At the end of the semester, you will write a research design paper based on an anticipated research project. Part of this paper will include drafting a data collection instrument that draws on at least one of the methods learned in the course. You will present the research design in one of the last sessions of the course. More detailed assignments for these items will be posted on the course website or given in class.

## **Deadlines:**

- **Research Design Abstract due via Email 5:00 PM CET April 9, 2023**
- **Research Design Presentations: April 17-18, 2023**
- **Research Design Paper: deadline will be established in class**

## **Participation:**

You are expected to attend all course sessions. This is your opportunity to ask questions, discuss readings and other course material, and engage in activities that will deepen your understanding of course topics. Your participation grade will be based on: 1) attendance; and 2) the quality of your participation, including demonstrating you have thoughtfully completed the reading. 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. If you must be absent at any point, please notify me via email as soon as possible, ideally before that course session begins.

## **Grade Determination:**

Writing and public speaking are essential to success in many careers. Students will be held to professional standards. Students should not submit first drafts and should carefully proof read all work. The following factors will be considered in evaluating student assignments:

- **Content:** Responds to the assignment's 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**

You are encouraged to form study groups to review course material and discuss general approaches for assignments. However, you are expected to complete assignments

independently. 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.