

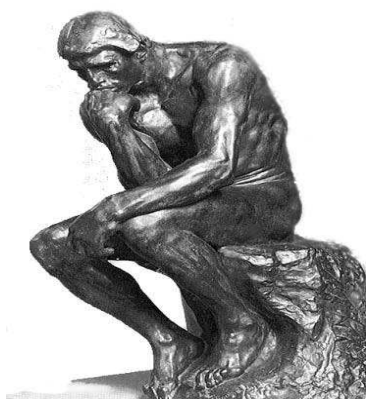
# Research Methods in Social and Political Sciences

PSIR 5015

Core Course  
Credit Value : 3  
Fall Semester

Taught by : **Dr. Luciano Baracco**

This course introduces MA students to the philosophy of social sciences as well as providing some foundations in research methods in social and political sciences. Following a survey of philosophies of social sciences and social enquiry, an introduction to quantitative research techniques and sources is explained before introducing a range of qualitative research techniques and materials. In so doing, all students will then be able to undertake an initial preparation of their thesis topic.

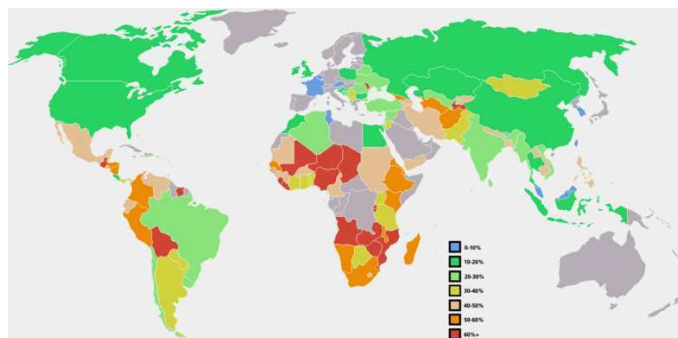


We shall introduce you to debates about the nature and possibility of knowledge, problems of ontology, explanation and interpretation of social actions and the nature of 'social facts', and in turn confront the difficulties of abstraction, reductionism and methodological individualism, and the development of hermeneutic analysis. We shall open up questions of the problems of rationality, values and the problems of relativism in social and political enquiry will be considered. In the light of these foundational questions and problems we shall then turn to the specifics of conducting qualitative and quantitative research trying

out a number of research techniques.

The aim of this course is to :

- i. To provide students with the core skills and knowledge required for a possible transition to higher levels of research in Political Science and International Relations
- ii. To enable students to develop



a critical understanding of the methods and epistemologies of social and political sciences.

- iii. To enable students to develop a specialized theoretical and methodological knowledge in social sciences.

By the end of the course students will expected to be able to:

- iv. Know, understand and critically evaluate a range of approaches to the philosophy of social sciences.
- v. Possess an advanced knowledge and understanding of philosophy and methods in social science.
- vi. Handle, interpret and present qualitative data and quantitative data.
- vii. Acquire and retain, analyse, critically reflect upon, summarise and disseminate knowledge of philosophy and methods in social science.
- viii. Apply practical transferrable skills, including note-taking, organisation, co-operation and team working, presentation and communication skills.



## Course Outline :

- philosophy of social sciences (I)
- introduction to research methods
- concepts, theories and evidence (I)
- concepts, theories and evidence (II)



- introduction to qualitative research sources
- problems in epistemology
- problems in ontology
- structures and agents (I)
- hermeneutics, discourse and subjectivities
- research questions and research design (I)
- research questions and research design (II)

- introduction to quantitative research techniques
- introduction to quantitative research sources
- introduction to qualitative research techniques

## Key Readings :



Benton, T. & Craib, I. *Philosophy of social science : the philosophical foundations of social thought*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke. 2001.

Berg, B. *Qualitative research methods for social sciences*. Pearson, London. 2006.

Collier, A. *Critical realism*. Verso, London. 1994

Delanty, G. & Styrdom, P. *Philosophies of social science : the classic and contemporary readings*. Open University Press, London. 2003.

Mannheim, J., Rich, R., & Willnat, L. *Empirical political analysis : research methods in political science*. Longman, Harlow. 2002.

Sayer, A. *Method in social science : a realist approach*. Routledge, London. 1992. [2<sup>nd</sup> ed]

Somekh, B. & Lewin, C. *Research methods in social science*. Sage, London. 2004.