SOCX2000

Methods of Social Research

Session 1, Fully online/virtual 2020

Department of Sociology

Contents

General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Senior Lecturer in Sociology
Nicholas Harrigan
nicholas.harrigan@mq.edu.au
Contact via Facebook messenger: nicholas.m.harrigan; WhatsApp: 0490 911 666; Skype ID: nick_harrigan
Level 2, Australian Hearing Hub

Credit points
10

Prerequisites
40cp at 1000 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
Social research is essential in the contemporary world and an important field of employment for graduates in the social sciences and humanities. This unit gives students an opportunity to develop practical skills designing social and organisational research; and in collecting, analysing and presenting data to address research questions. You will consider the best research methods to use and the problems, limitations and traps likely to be encountered by inexperienced researchers. You will also consider the ethical issues in social research, and the impact of new information technologies on social research. A major emphasis in the unit is on the practice of social research. A series of task-based activities introduces major methodological techniques, basic qualitative and quantitative approaches, including interviewing, focus groups, textual analysis, and participant observation. Students also receive a basic introduction to SPSS. Research methods useful to community generated research are also explored. No knowledge of statistics is required. All enrolment queries should be directed to Open Universities Australia (OUA): see www.open.edu.au

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: apply knowledge of the major qualitative and quantitative social research methods to answer important social questions.

ULO2: use statistical software (such as SPSS or R) to analyse quantitative data, and use thematic analysis to analyse qualitative data.

ULO3: articulate important problems and debates that face social researchers, including the scientific status of social research; the strengths and weaknesses of various methods; validity and reliability; and ethical considerations.

ULO4: scope a research problem, design research study, pilot your proposed methods, and write a research proposal to address a serious social issue.

ULO5: collect and analyse original data (qualitative and quantitative), and to be able to write this up and present it as professional academic research

Assessment Tasks

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Assessment details are no longer provided here as a result of changes due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Students should consult iLearn for revised unit information.

Find out more about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and potential impacts on staff and students

General Assessment Information

2.1 Exams/Quizes:

- **Mid-semester exam (20%)**

- **Final exam (20%)**

30 minute online exams (on iLearn). 20 multiple choice questions each. Exams open for 48 hours.

2.1.2 Mid-semester exam: During mid-semester break. Exact dates to be announced. Testing weeks 1 to 7.

2.1.2 Final Exam: During Week 14. Exact dates to be announced. Testing weeks 1 to 13

2.2 Group Project:

- **Pilot Study Report and Presentation (30%)**

- **Final Report and Presentation (30%)**

This is a group project. Form your own groups of 2 to 6 students in Week 1, and register via link on iLearn. If you don't have a group, please post asking for other group members on iLearn discussion.

2.2.1 Instructions:

1. Design, analyse, and present a small-scale replication of an academic study by collecting your own dataset.

   * For 'Pilot Study' (Due Week 8) - collect and analyse qualitative interviews (12 per group in total) Interviews must be 10 to 30 mins in length, with fieldnotes and NO RECORDING. * For 'Final Report' (Due Week 13) - collect and analyse quantitative surveys (50 respondents per group in total) Surveys must be no more than 10 questions and 5 minutes in length. Surveys must be done on Qualtrics, and analysed with SPSS.

2. Find social science study to replicate. This study must be a peer-reviewed academic journal article.

3. For week 8 and week 13, you should present:

   * 10 minute presentation, with powerpoint slides (all group members should present for equal time)

4. Details for presentation:

   1. Internal students will present face to face

   2. External students will present on Skype (or Zoom).

   3. Presentations will be outside class times, in 'Marking Consultations' of 30-60 minutes (depending on group size). Groups will book these online closer to submission date.

5. Bring the following attachments to presentation, and upload to iLearn via Turn-It-In:

   1. A copy of the article you are replicating

   2. Week 13: Dataset as SPSS file + Codebook

   3. Week 8: Fieldnotes for each interview

4. 1,200 word script of your presentation, with tables and references.

6. Group size and sharing work:

   Sample size and project length is the same no matter how small or large your project group is (minimum size group is 2, maximum size of group is 6). Why?

   1. For those who want to work in small groups, you can, but you need to do more of the work of data collection, literature review, analysis, yourself.

   2. This structure rewards those who cooperate and coordinate with larger group - you get less individual work, but have to spend more time communicating and negotiating with group.

   3. Learning to work in large groups is important, but it can be difficult, with costs of communication, negotiation, and compromise.

2.2.2 Marking criteria for group project

Group mark (50%): Half your grade will be awarded based on the quality of the total product as a whole.

Individual marks (50%): Half your grade for the group project will be awarded based on the quality of your individual contribution. This will be judged on:

- A description of each individual's work that is attached to be beginning of each report

- A peer evaluation, which will be confidential and completed online after submission of each report (week 8 and 13).

Grading criteria for reports:

1. WRITING: Clear, straight-forward writing and verbal presentation.

2. MOTIVATION: Identifies and justifies choice of research question.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW: Identifies relevant previous research on the topic, and organises literature into themes based on the different explanations (theories) that answer your research question.

4. METHOD: Clearly articulates a method to collected and analyse data to answer your research question, including:

- **4.1. CONCEPTUALISATION & OPERATIONALISATION:** articulates hypotheses (if

necessary), conceptualisations of variables/concepts, and operationalisation of variables/ concepts,

- **4.2. DATA COLLECTION:** Summarizes techniques for data collection, methods of ensuring ethical data collection, and methods sampling.

5. DATA ANALYSIS: High quality data analysis that clearly analyses and presents the evidence for the main findings of your research.

6. CONCLUSION: Summarizes findings and discusses academic and policy implications.

Delivery and Resources

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Any references to on-campus delivery below may no longer be relevant due to COVID-19.

Please check here for updated delivery information: https://ask.mq.edu.au/account/pub/ display/unit_status

Expectations

In this section I provide an overview of what you can expect of me as your teacher and what I will be expecting of you as a learner.

3.1 What you can expect of me

3.1.1 Before semester starts

Topics, readings, concepts: Before semester starts I will provide weekly topics, weekly readings, and key concepts to identify in your reading.

3.1.2 Communication outside class Messenger or WhatsApp: Outside class you should consult with me via Facebook messenger or WhatsApp. I will also respond to email, but it is not ideal for answering research project questions, as often we need to have a dialogue which is easier on a messaging platform.

3.1.3 Consultations

12-1pm Mondays (after Monday class), and 4-5pm (after Friday class). I will hold a consultation in the one hour after class Weeks 1 to 7, and 9 to 12.

3.1.4 In class, each week:

By 9am Monday (the beginning of Monday's class) I will upload to methods101.com, and iLearn:

- Script and slides for lecture

- Exercises: optional weekly exercises which provide an opportunity for you to apply the concepts of this week to your group project

3.2 What I expect of you

3.2.1 Buy or borrow the textbook

Neuman, W. L. (2013). Understanding Research: Pearson New International Edition. Harlow: Pearson Education UK.

Read the ebook for free at the MQ Library here: https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.simsrad.net.ocs.mq.edu.au/lib/MQU/detail.action?docID=5175361

Buy ebook from Pearson here ($60):

https://www.pearson.com.au/products/M-N-Neuman-W-Lawrence/Understanding-Research-Pearson-New-International-Edition-eBook/9781292033648?R=9781292033648

3.2.2 Join a project group in week 1 + register it

Find a project group (internal students we will do this in class, external students can do on the discussion chat on iLearn). Please register it (details to be provided)

3.2.3 Read the required readings each week

Internal students should read readings before coming to class, and external students before watching the lectures.

3.2.4 Do the ethics training before you start collecting data

Week 2 has compulsory ethics training. Everyone in your group needs to do this before you can start collecting data.

3.2.5 Get written ethical approval from me via email before you conduct interviews or collect surveys

I also need to approve your interview and survey questions and informed consent form before you start collecting data. Please email me these, plus your article to be replicated, and wait for my formal approval before you start collecting any data.

3.2.6 Participate in your project group

Participate and contribute to your project group fully and seriously or you will be penalised in your peer review mark. This includes coming to class (for internal students), as we will do significant project work in each class (we will do workshops at the end of each class, applying the knowledge from that week to your project).

Unit Schedule

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

The unit schedule/topics and any references to on-campus delivery below may no longer be relevant due to COVID-19. Please consult iLearn for latest details, and check here for updated delivery information: https://ask.mq.edu.au/account/pub/display/unit_status

Week	Seminar Topic	Readings
1	Reviewing the literature + choosing a topic	Neuman: Ch 1, Why Research
2	Planning your study + Research Ethics	Complete MQ Social Science Ethics Training at https://ethicstraining.mq.edu.au/ Neuman, Ch 3, Ethics Neuman: Ch 5, Measuring
3	Interviews, fieldnotes, and collecting qualitative data	Neuman: Ch 10, Observing People
4	Surveys, experiments, and collecting quantitative data (Part 1)	Neuman: Ch 4, Sampling Neuman: Ch 6, The Survey
4	Thematic analysis: How to analyze qualitative data.	Neuman: Ch 8: Research with Nonreactive Measures (section on content analysis only) Methods101.com (Week 4)
6	Surveys, experiments, and collecting quantitative data (Part 2)	Neuman: Ch 7, The Experiment Neuman: Ch 9, Making Sense of the Numbers

7	Presenting research: Writing and speaking about research	Neuman: Ch 12, Research Report Writing Strunk & White, Elementary principles of composition (Library) Methods101.com (Week 7)
Recess week 1	ASSESSMENT (20%) Mid-semester exam: ½ hour online quiz open for 48 hours (dates TBC)	-
Recess week 2	-	-
8	ASSESSMENT (30%) Presentation of 'Pilot Study' in marking consultations outside class. • Internal students present on campus • External + OUA students present via Skype or Zoom Book presentation times online (details to be provided)	No classes. Marking consultations instead.
9	Cleaning data + Making indexes	Methods101.com (Week 9)
10	Descriptive statistics + Figures + Graphs	Methods101.com (Week 10)
11	Correlation + Comparison of Means	Methods101.com (Week 11)
12	Regressions	Methods101.com (Week 12)
13	ASSESSMENT (30%) Presentation of 'Final Report' in marking consultations outside class. • Internal students present on campus • External + OUA students present via Skype or Zoom Book presentation times online (details to be provided)	No classes. Marking consultations instead.
Exam Week 1 [Week 14]	ASSESSMENT (20%) Final exam: ½ hour online quiz open for 48 hours (dates TBC)	No classes

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central (https://staff.m

q.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-centr al). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Academic Progression Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Fitness to Practice Procedure
- Grade Appeal Policy
- Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public
- Special Consideration Policy *(**Note:** The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.)*

Students seeking more policy resources can visit the Student Policy Gateway (https://students.m q.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit Policy Central (http s://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/p olicy-central).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/study/getting-started/student-conduct

Results

Results published on platform other than eStudent, (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit http://stu dents.mq.edu.au/support/

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- Getting help with your assignment
- Workshops
- StudyWise

- Academic Integrity Module

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- Subject and Research Guides
- Ask a Librarian

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy. The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Changes since First Published

Date	Description
17/02/2020	Added details of assessment, weekly topics, readings, and expectations of teacher and learner