

RESEARCH METHODS
POLS 108 – Spring 2016

Instructor: Ass. Prof. Fabio Vicini (fvicini@29mayis.edu.tr; **office hours:** Wednesday 14:00-18:00)

Class Time: Wednesday 11:00-13:00, Thursday 9:00-11:00

Location: U213, U214

Course Description

The course is designed to provide an overview of the main methods of inquiry and research techniques of the social sciences. It covers the whole research process, from the initial steps of designing a project to data collection and academic writing. After providing some epistemological foundations, the course first illustrates how to develop solid research questions and prepare effective research plans. It later explores research methodologies (analysis of official statistics and surveys, interviewing, fieldwork), their ethical and practical implications. Finally it focuses on academic writing. Particular attention will be given to qualitative research methods, while quantitative approaches will be only mentioned. Starting from the assumption that especially in the case of research methods students learn them only by practice, the course has been conceived as based on a practical approach. You will be asked to exercise yourself with some research methods as well as to submit a final short paper to be prepared according to academic analytical tools, style and language. Whether you plan to work or hope to pursue a career in academia, this will be an indispensable module which will teach you how to conduct your own investigations as well as how to evaluate the reliability of other people's own researches and reports.

Course Goals

This course is designed to give the learner in the social sciences an exposure to the basic research tools and techniques of data collection and an opportunity to develop the essential skills in how best to:

- Understand the epistemological foundations of research
- Ask relevant research questions
- Structure a research plan
- Make a literature review
- Write about research methods
- Managing both practically and psychologically the research process

Course Website

“Learn More” website (www.lore.com) is the place to find this syllabus and readings that are not in the textbook, course’s power points, calendar, links to related material, and announcements about the course. After giving me your e-mail address I will add you. I welcome your constructive feedback about how well it works for you and how we might make better use of it.

Textbook

The textbook for the course is **Sarantakos, Sotiros. 2013. *Social Research* (4th edition). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.** Second hand copies of previous version of the book are available on the Internet. You can buy either the [3rd edition](#) or the [4th edition](#). A 3rd edition copy of the book is available at the university library. All the other course materials (articles and book chapters) will be provided in class or through 'Lore'. Please, be aware of the book sources that can help you throughout your study. You can reach them at: www.palgrave.com/companion/Sarantakos-Social-Research/workbook/

Class Format

By week number 3 (Tuesday 8 March, time 15:00) you will be asked to choose one research topic and one related organization or association that will be the topic of your research project and hence of all the assignments you have to submit for the course. The organization should be an existing one and it has preferably to be located in Istanbul (in order for you to acquaintance with its members and being able to conduct your interview more easily). This can be:

- A civil society organization (e.g. a charity, a human rights organization etc.)
- A political organization (e.g. a youth or women's branch of a political party or any other organization with specific political goals etc.)
- An intellectual institution or organization (e.g. a reading group, a seminar, a religious organization etc.)
- A service agency or a related agency (e.g. a hospital, a school, a library etc.)

Please beware that once you have chosen the topic you will not be allowed to change it. During the course you will be asked to make a *literature review*, to *formulate your research question*, to *conduct and interview* and a *final short research project* on this main topic. These are the **four main assignments that together will make up 50% of your final grade**.

Attendance and participation during the classes is highly considered by the lecturer. For this reason I suggest you to make an effort to ask and answer questions, make comments based on the readings and being an active participant of the class, especially during in-class exercise (usually taking place in L2: Thursday's lesson).

The Middle-term (vize) and Final tests are worth 10% and 40% of the final grade respectively (50% in total). For a summary on the composition of your final grade, see the 'Assignments and Grading' section below.

I highly suggest you to read each assigned chapter before the corresponding lesson, so that you can follow the lecture and memorize its contents in a much easier way. Please note that the lectures and exercises in class are intended to supplement the reading, **not** substitute for it. **Both the textbook and the lecture notes will be object of the Final exam.**

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory and you are entitled to miss maximum 30% of the actual total number of hours of the course. Also notice that an elevated number of absences will sensibly affect this portion of your grade. Moreover, since this is a very practical kind of course, scarce attendance might negatively affect your ability in accomplishing the assignments.

In case you experience an unforeseeable problem (extended illness, death, injury), please inform our head of department and/or me. In such cases perhaps, with proper verification, I can grant an additional excused absence.

Assignments must both be given to me in class **and** sent to me by email by the day they are due. No exceptions are allowed. This means that I will not accept late homework and that if you submit it late this will significantly influence (minus 20% for up to 24-hour late, minus 40% for up to 72-hour late) the evaluation of that assignment. In case you anticipate not being in class the day the assignment is due, you should make arrangements to hand it in early or at least to send it by e-mail within the indicated deadline.

Plagiarism

Istanbul 29 Mayıs University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offenses. Plagiarism occurs when you copy or summarize someone else's work without clear and accurate acknowledgement of what you have borrowed and from where. When you submit work, whether an essay, a short piece of writing, a project or a dissertation, you are claiming to be its author. This means that the work consists of your own ideas and is written in your own words, except where you specifically indicate other sources.

This means that students must not claim others' (including other students') work as their own. Doing so is a form of cheating. In addition, students must make every effort to avoid plagiarism arising out of defects in note-taking, attribution of sources and presentation of work. Ensure that all submitted work uses a proper referencing style (see "Style, Translation and Transliteration Guides" below). Ignorance of the requirements for proper referencing and attribution does not constitute a defense against an accusation of plagiarism.

Any concerns about proper referencing must be brought to the attention of the lecturer before the work is submitted. Allegations of plagiarism are initially dealt with by a panel convened by the Board of Examiners of the degree program concerned, and conducted in accordance with Istanbul 29 Mayıs University regulations. In extreme cases, plagiarism may be classed as a dishonest practice. Proven cases of plagiarism will form part of a student's record.

For a guide on plagiarism see one of these two documents: 1 and 2. In case in this course a student is caught with plagiarism this automatically translates into a "0" for that particular assignment plus other possible penalties according to the gravity of the attempt. In case of repeated plagiarism the student will be assigned with a "0" in the final grade.

Assignments and Grading

The composition of the final grade is as follows:

- First Assignment 10%
- Second Assignment 5%
- Middle-Term Test 10%

- Third Assignment (interview) 15%
- Final Short Essay 20%
- Final Test 40%

Grading Scale

AA	4.00	90-100
BA	3.50	85-89
BB	3.00	80-84
CB	2.50	75-79
CC	2.00	70-74
DC	1.50	65-69
DD	1.00	60-64
FD	0.50	50-59
FF	0.00	0-49

Internet Useful Sources:

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/contents.php>

Useful Resources for Literature Search:

<http://www.ebscohost.com/>

www.jstor.org

Style, Translation and Transliteration Guides:

Chicago Manual Style: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

IJMES: <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displaySpecialPage?pageId=5680>

COURSE OUTLINE

PART I: FOUNDATIONS

Week 1 (24, 25 February)

(L1) **Introduction to the Course**

(L2) Politics, Ethics and the Production of Knowledge

[Sarantakos, Chap. 1](#)

Week 2 (2, 3 March)

(L1 & L2) **Varieties of Social Research: Quantitative, Qualitative and Beyond**

[Sarantakos, Chap. 2](#)

[Sarantakos, Chap. 3](#)

**** By next week you have to choose your main general topic and, possibly, organization on which you will conduct your mini-research project. Communicate it to the supervisor through email by Tuesday 8 March 2016 at 3:00 p.m.*

PART II: DESIGNING

Week 3 (9, 10 March)

(L1) **Beginning the Research: Research Design and Literature Review (LR)**

(L2) Practice: Using Bibliographical Resources

[Sarantakos, Chap. 5](#)

[Blaxter, Hughes, Tight, How to Research, chap. 4 \(sent by the lecturer\)](#)

**** **For next week** search and pick up a book concerning your research topic from ISAM or the University Library and **bring it to class***

Week 4 (16, 17 March)

(L1) **The Principles of Social Research: Measurement**

(L2) Practice: Reading a book in 5 minutes; Academic Referencing and How to write the LR

[Sarantakos, Chap. 4](#)

**** **First Assignment Due (10%):** For next week students must submit a literature review (between 400 and 500 words, bibliographical references excluded) of minimum 10 and maximum 15 articles or books related to their chosen topic. This exercise serves you to gain confidence with the literature on the chosen topic and make you get acquaintance with academic referencing style. The deadline is Tuesday 22 March 2016 at 3:00 p.m.*

* Useful Tutorials: “Write a Literature Review” [The University of California Santa Cruz]; “How to write a Literature Review” [University of Canberra]

Week 5 (23, 24 March)

(L1) **Initiating Social Research: How to Define the Research Question**

(L2) How to write a Research Question and an Abstract

[Sarantakos, Chap. 6](#)

[White, Developing Research Questions, chap. 1, \(sent by the lecturer\)](#)

**** Second Assignment Due (5%): For next week students must submit their Research Question and an abstract of 300 words. This will be presented and discussed in class next week. The deadline is Tuesday 29 March 2016 at 3:00 p.m.*

* Useful Tutorial 2: “How to Write an Abstract” [The University of Adelaide]

Week 6 (30, 31 March)

(L1) **Sampling**

(L2) In Class Presentation and Discussion of the Research Questions

[Sarantakos, Chap. 7](#)

Week 7 (6, 7 April)

(L1 & L2) In Class Presentation and Discussion of the Research Questions

11 - 17 April 2016: Mid-term Exam

PART III: RESEARCHING

Week 8 (20, 21 April)

(L1) **Preparing Questionnaires**

(L2) *In-class Analysis of a Survey*

[Sarantakos, Chap. 11](#)

Week 9 (27, 28 April)

(L1) **Interviewing**

(L2) How to Conduct an Interview

[Sarantakos, Chap. 12](#)

Week 10 (4, 5 May)

(L1) **Fieldwork Research**

Sarantakos, Chapt. 9

(L2) How to write the Final Research Project

**** Third Assignment (15%) due: Students are asked to prepare and conduct a structured interview with one member or person close to the chosen organization. The number of the questions must be between a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15. Students have either to record it (if allowed) with an audio recorder or to take notes during the interview. Finally they have to present the whole text of the interview or a summary of it in a maximum of 1.500 words, written down in style Times New Roman, font 12, Interline 1,5. The deadline is Tuesday 10 May 2016 at 3:00 p.m.*

Week 11 (11, 12 May)

(L1) Documents

(L2) In-class Analysis and Discussion of one or more documents

Sarantakos, Chap. 13

PART IV: ANALYSIS and REPORTING

Week 12 (18, 19 May)

(L1 & 2) Writing in an Academic Style 1

Sarantakos, Chap. 15

Week 13 (25, 26 May)

(L1 & 2) Writing in an Academic Style 2

Sarantakos, Chap. 17

Week 14 (1, 2 June)

(L1 & 2) In Class Check of the Final Assignments before submission

**** Fourth Final Assignment (20%): By the final week students are asked to prepare a short essay (between 1,500 and 2,000 words) Content and Forms will be discussed in class. The deadline is **Sunday 5 June 2016 at 11:59 p.m.***

Useful Resources:

- On how to write review of a paper see:

<http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/general/lit-reviews/7.xml>

<http://www.ufv.ca/media/assets/writing-centre/handouts/summarizing-a-scholarly-journal-article-2009.pdf>

- On writing academically:

[http://www.essex.ac.uk/myskills/How to improve your academic writing.pdf](http://www.essex.ac.uk/myskills/How%20to%20improve%20your%20academic%20writing.pdf)

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/studyadvice/NewtoUniversity/sta-writingacademically.aspx>

<http://www.library.dmu.ac.uk/Support/Heat/index.php?page=488>

<http://www.dcielts.com/ielts-writing/10-wayswriting-more-academic/>