Instructor: Quack

1360 Logic of Social Inquiry Summer Term 2012
Tuesday 10:00 - 11:30 am (MPIfG, Paulstr. 3, 50676 Cologne)

Please note that there will be double sessions from 9.00 – 12.00 on April 17, April 24, June 5 and June 12; there will be no class on May 1\textsuperscript{st}, May 29 and June 19.

1. Objectives
See 4. Contents

2. Prerequisites
Graduate students. In exceptional cases, also advanced undergraduates interested in the topic.

3. Relevance for study programmes
The course is open for CGS-students, other doctoral students of the WiSo-Faculty. The course is primarily addressed at doctoral students at the beginning of their dissertation project. Advanced BA/MA/Diploma students who are planning an empirically based bachelor/master or diploma thesis can also participate.

4. Contents
The course provides an introduction to the logic of inquiry and research design in the social sciences. Specifically, it reviews comparative, historical and longitudinal approaches in the social science research. The course, however, focuses on many issues that apply to qualitative, quantitative or mixed research designs. It starts with an overview of the debates over key issues in the philosophy of social sciences. It then deals with key questions of how to develop a dissertation project. It provides an overview of different research approaches, research designs and case selections. The focus will be on methodological approaches in comparative and historical research. In the course of the seminar, participants will be asked to undertake practical exercises in order to work stepwise towards developing a design for their own research projects.

Course Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Issues to be discussed</th>
<th>Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.4. (10.00 – 11.30)</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Overview key topics Planning</td>
<td>Presentation lecturer/Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.4. Double session (9.00 – 12.00)</td>
<td>Methodological pluralism in the social sciences</td>
<td>Positivist, critical rationalist and interpretative approaches; ontological and epistemological questions</td>
<td>Student response memos (obligatory) Panel discussion animated by lecturer</td>
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Building a base for common discussion: What is social inquiry about?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Delivery</th>
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| 24.4.      | Problem-finding and identification of research question/hypothesis       | Formulating a theoretically relevant research question/hypothesis; competing theoretical explanations                                                                                                     | Student presentation
|            |                                                                          | Discussion                                                                                                                                                    |                   |
| 24.4.      | Concept formation and development                                         | Roles of theory for empirical research, broad- and middle range theories, theory frames, concept formation, ladder of abstraction                                                                               | Student presentation
|            |                                                                          | Discussion                                                                                                                                                    |                   |
| 1.5.       | Transfer exercise I (individual)                                         | Try to formulate your research problem and question/hypothesis, identify sensitizing theories and concepts                                                                                                 | Student transfer memo I |

**Anticipating your argument: Types of explanation in the social sciences**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Delivery</th>
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| 8.5.       | Types of explanation I: Probabilistic causality                          | Correlation, causal explanation, multi- and equicausality, necessary and sufficient conditions                                                                                                               | Student presentation
|            |                                                                          | Discussion                                                                                                                                                    |                   |
| 15.5.      | Types of explanation II: Social mechanisms                               | Different definitions of mechanisms, underlying action theories, pragmatist critique                                                                                                                              | Student presentation
|            |                                                                          | Discussion                                                                                                                                                    |                   |
| 22.5.      | Types of explanation III: Explanatory typologies                          | Difference between typology and taxonomy; property spaces; How can typologies be used to explain?                                                                                                               | Student presentation
<p>|            |                                                                          | Discussion                                                                                                                                                    |                   |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29.5.</td>
<td>Transfer exercise II (individual)</td>
<td>Try to develop an explanatory argument for your research</td>
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<td>Student transfer memo II Student poster to be presented on 5.6.</td>
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<td>29.5.</td>
<td>(no class, self-learning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.7.</td>
<td>Network, field and multi-level analysis</td>
<td>Relational and field perspective of embeddedness, micro-macro link, multi-level processes</td>
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<td>Student presentation Discussion</td>
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<td>3.7.</td>
<td>(10.00 – 11.30)</td>
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<td>5.6.</td>
<td>Working towards a research design: Explicating your methodological approach</td>
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<td>5.6.</td>
<td>Double session (9.00 – 12.00)</td>
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<td>Student poster exhibition</td>
<td>Collectively reflecting on results of transfer exercises</td>
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<td>Discussion moderated by lecturer</td>
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<td>Overview on different research designs</td>
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<td>Rival explanations, causal arguments and different research design; triangulation</td>
<td>Presentation lecturer and discussion</td>
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<td>12.6.</td>
<td>Why, when and how to do case studies?</td>
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<td>Student presentation Discussion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Why, when and how to do case studies?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.6.</td>
<td>Double session (9.00 – 12.00)</td>
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<td>Comparative analysis</td>
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<td>Mill’s method, most similar-most different design, critical and exceptional, negative case analysis</td>
<td>Student presentation Discussion</td>
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<td>19.6.</td>
<td>Transfer exercise III</td>
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<td>Develop a proposition for comparative dimensions and case selection for your research</td>
<td>Transfer memo III</td>
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<td>19.6.</td>
<td>(no class, self-learning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.6.</td>
<td>Process and historical analysis</td>
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<td>Temporal analysis and causality, designs for micro processes and macro history, process tracing</td>
<td>Student presentation Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.6.</td>
<td>(10.00 – 11.30)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.7.</td>
<td>(10.00 – 11.30)</td>
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**Summarizing and looking ahead**
10.7.
(10.00 – 11.30)
Outlook: How to develop your potential contribution in a PhD exposé and beyond?

Writing a research proposal, strategies of specifying your contribution, research ethics and quality criteria for research

Presentation lecturer/Discussion

Recommended textbooks for use in the course

Recommended books and readers for further reading

**Philosophy of social sciences**
Chalmer, Alan (1999), What is this thing called science?. Hackett Publishing
   German version: Chalmer, Alan (1986), Wege der Wissenschaft. Springer-Verlag.

**Research process and research design**
Flick, Uwe (2007), Designing qualitative research. Sage.
Flick, Uwe, von Kardoff, Ernst and Steinke, Ines (eds) (2004), A companion to qualitative research. Sage.
Geddes, Barbara (2003), Paradigms and sand castles. The University of Michigan Press.
Hancké, Bob (2009), Intelligent research design. Oxford University Press.
Explanation in the social sciences
Mayntz, Renate (2009), Sozialwissenschaftliches Erklären. Campus.

Different dimensions of research design
Flick, Uwe, von Kardoff, Ernst and Steinke, Ines (eds) (2004), A Companion to Qualitative Research. Sage.
Georg, Alexander L. and Bennett, Andrew (2005), Case studies and theory development in the social sciences. MIT Press.
Saldana, Johnny (2003), Longitudinal qualitative research. AltaMira Press.
Readings by session:

**April 10, Introduction**
no reading

**April 17 (double session), What do we study and how do we know? Methodological pluralism in the social sciences and implications for the research process**

*Required reading:*

*Additional reading (one of the following, to be assigned in the first session):*
Weber, Max (1978), Basic sociological terms, in “Economy and Society, ed. by G. Roth and C. Wittich, University of California, pp. 3-12.

*Further reading:*

**April 24 (double session), Problem-finding, research question and concept development**

*Required reading:*

*Further reading:*
Geddes, Barbara (2003), Big questions, little answers. How the questions you choose affect the answers you get. In: Geddes, Barbara, Paradigms and sand castles, University of Michigan Press, chapter 2, pp. 27-88.
May 8, Types of explanation I: From covering laws to probabilistic causality

Required reading:

Further reading:

May 15, Types of explanation II: Social mechanisms

Required reading:

Additional reading (application to a case study):

Further reading:

May 22, Types of explanation III: Explanatory typologies

Required reading:

Further reading:

June 5, Overview on different research designs

Required reading:

Further reading:

June 12 (double session), Case studies and comparative analysis

Required reading:
George, Alexander L. and Bennett, Andrew (2005), Case studies and theory development in the social sciences. Chapter 1, Case studies and theory development. MIT Press, pp. 3-36.

Further reading:
**June 26, Process and historical analysis**

**Required reading:**

**Additional reading (one of the three following examples):**


**Further reading:**


**July 3, Network, field and multi-level analysis**

**Required reading:**


**Further reading:**


July 10, Summarizing and looking ahead

Required reading:
Schmitter, Philippe (2002), The ‘ideal’ research proposal.  

Further reading:

Working requirements and assessment method

The course will be taught through a combination of lectures, student presentations and discussion. You are expected to come regularly to class having done the assigned reading and be ready to discuss it. In addition, you are expected to complete the following assignments:

1) Submit one response memos (approx. one page) on the reading for the session April 17. You can choose to comment on one of the four additional readings. The memo should summarize the key arguments. Furthermore, it should reflect critically on what you consider as problematic, not plausible or missing. Please end the memo with a question arising from reading the text that you would like to discuss in class. Memos can be in German or English. The memos need to be posted on the iversity platform by Sunday 8 pm before class at the latest.

2) Give a short verbal presentation (no longer than 10 minutes, done in groups of two) in one of the seminar meetings. The topic of the presentation should be discussed with the lecturer (can be the presentation of key points from the reading, or presentation of an exemplary empirical study). Presentation should always aim to end with a few questions which have the potential to animate and structure class discussion.

3) Write three transfer memos (about 2 pages long) on a) your research problem and concepts, b) the explanatory approach, and c) case selection and possible comparative perspective for your own planned dissertation project or diploma thesis. Prepare a poster which summarizes the results of a) and b) to be presented in class. Students who do not yet have a topic for their thesis should consult the lecturer. Memos are due to be uploaded on the iversity platform by Sunday 8 pm on May 6, June 3 and July 1st. Posters are to be brought to the session on June 5.

4) Write a research proposal (approx. 10 pages) in which you develop the research question and research design for your PhD or diploma project. In order to prepare this you should arrange an individual meeting with the lecturer during June or early July. The jointly agreed task will be tailored to the current stage of your PhD project and should help you to develop it further. For PhD students, the deadline for submission
of the paper via the iversity platform is **August 31**. Diploma students have to submit their research paper by **July 27** in paper form at the library of the sociological seminar.

**Memos and research papers** can be submitted in **German or English**. **Presentations in class and posters** should be in **English**.

**Summary of deadlines for assignments in written form**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>One response memo on reading for April 17</td>
<td>15 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memo from transfer exercise I</td>
<td>6 May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memo from transfer exercise II</td>
<td>3 June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poster from transfer exercises I and II</td>
<td>5 June</td>
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<tr>
<td>Memo from transfer exercise III</td>
<td>1st July</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research proposal</td>
<td>Diploma students July 27; PhD students 31 August</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final grade for the seminar will be based on the following evaluation criteria:

- Presentation and class participation 20%
- Memos and poster 40%
- Research proposal 40%

**Coordination/contact**

Professor Dr. Sigrid Quack [quack@mpifg.de](mailto:quack@mpifg.de)
Student assistant Carsten Gerards [gerards@mpifg.de](mailto:gerards@mpifg.de)