

HPSC0126 Social Research Methods and Data Analysis in STS

Course Syllabus

2024-2025 session | Convenors: Professor Emily Dawson & Professor Simon Lock | e-mail simon.lock@ucl.ac.uk

Course Information

This course introduces students to the theory, practice and critique of research methods in STS and social science more generally, comprising both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, methods and techniques. We will cover how to read, break-down and critique published research papers as well as how to design your own research project. The course will also introduce you to a range of common STS research methods (interviews, surveys, case studies and different kinds of analysis). Each week we will also talk about how research ethics are involved in any given issue.

The course is strongly recommended for any students wanting to undertake empirical social science research for their dissertation, and for students who want to familiarise themselves with how social scientists (particularly within STS) undertake research. In addition, for those wishing to apply for ESRC +3 PhD funding, it is designed to cover the core training requirements specified within Annex I of the [ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines \(2009\)](#).

Basic course information

Moodle Web site:	Search "HPSC0126" on moodle
Assessment:	See Moodle
Timetable:	See UCL on-line timetable
Prerequisites:	None
Required texts:	See Moodle
Course tutor(s):	Professors Simon Lock & Emily Dawson
Contact:	simon.lock@ucl.ac.uk and STS-DoR@ucl.ac.uk
Office location:	Simon's office: Rm 2.2, 22 Gordon Square Emily's office: TBC
Office hours:	Emily: Thursdays, 2-4 (IRL & online) Simon: Tuesdays, 11-1 (IRL & online)

schedule

UCL Week	Topic	Date
6	ED - Introduction. What is Social Research: Decolonizing Methodologies in STS (including what is “methodology”!)	3.10.24
7	SL - Queering methods & data	9.10.24
8	SL -Methods: Documents -	17.10.24
9	Methods: Surveys and Sampling (<i>Guest Lecture from Dr Amy Unsworth</i>)	24.10.24
10	ED - Methods: Interviews and Focus Groups - ethics	31.10.24
11	Reading Week	7.11.24
12	SL - Research Design (support for 2 nd assessment)	14.11.24
13	Methods: Visual Methods (<i>Guest Lecture from Prof. Jean Baptiste Gouyon</i>)	21.11.24
14	SL - Methods: Case Studies	28.11.24
15	ED - Methods: Ethnography and Observation - ethics	5.12.24
16	ED - What is “analysis”?	12.12.24

Assessments

Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit
Research Paper critical review	1000 words of structured critique of a research paper	Thursday 24 th October, 5pm.	1000 words (30%)
Group research /plan proposal	Group project: Research proposal	Monday, 16 th December, 5pm.	2000 words (65%)

Participation	Active participation in classes	Throughout term	(5%)
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Assessment 1 (30%)

Write a structured critique of one of the STS papers listed below.

Word limit: 1000 words max (see breakdown in criteria below)

What to include in your critique:

1. Who wrote the paper, when, which country were they in and what was their career position at the time? (100 words)
2. What methodological approach? (100 words)
3. What methods were used? Are there n numbers or other measures? (100 words)
4. What analytic approaches were used? (100 words)
5. How were ethics addressed (if they were not, can you identify any issues?) (50 words)
6. What are the limitations of the paper? (100 words)
7. What, from a decolonial and/or feminist and/or queer methods approach, might you say about this paper? (200 words)
8. Propose an alternative framework for doing the study in the paper? (150 words)
9. How did this paper make you think differently about the topic being researched? Did you change your mind about anything? (100 words)

Here are the papers you can choose from:

1. Polino, C., Massarani, L. & Dawson, E. (2024). Social inequality determines science museums attendance in Latin America: A quantitative analysis of data from seven countries. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, online first.
2. Bareis, J. & Katsenbach, C. (2021). Talking AI into being: The narratives and imaginaries of National AI strategies and their performative politics. *Science, Technology & Human Values*. 47 (5): 855 – 881.
3. Hughes, S. (2024). Hearts and minds: The technopolitical role of affect in sociotechnical imaginaries. *Social Studies of Science*, 0(0).
4. Morales, M., Franklin, M., Vossoughi, S., Carroll, S., Lansana, O., Bang, M. and Mayed, S. (2024). World-making through a feminist abolitionist lens in a STEAM middle school program. *Reading Research Quarterly*. Online first.

Assessment criteria (please also refer to those given in the Departmental Handbook)

- Has the student followed the guidance above (including writing to the word counts)

- Has the student demonstrated skills in line with the STS Departmental mark scheme (which can be found in the back of the Departmental Handbook).

Assessment 2 (65%): Group research proposal

Word limit: 2000 words group research plan/proposal

Topic: AI & inequality

Your group has been invited to apply for the prestigious Dawlock Foundation Grant Scheme. The Autumn 2024 call asks scholars to engage with the theme of AI & inequality. Your group is invited to apply for a research grant on any aspect of AI & inequality that you want to examine. You could, for instance, look at AI & inequalities in the labour force in Kenya by examining policy documents, or investigate the effects of AI and inequalities on students at UCL by carrying out focus groups.

The proposal should explain what question you want to investigate, why you want to carry out this research, and outline how you would undertake the project, describing which methods and analytical approaches you will take and why you have selected these (rather than other methods).

Given the brevity of the funding application form, you will not have the space to outline a detailed budget, staff allocation or timeline for your project. The grant proposal outline is below.

Dawlock Foundation Grant Scheme Funding Proposal Outline:

1. Introduction – statement of research question and why it is interesting/needs to be answered **(250 words)**
2. Background – what we already know about the topic of your question **(450 words)**
3. Methods – how you will investigate the question (description), why you have chosen this method (critique), what are the shortcomings of the methods (critique), what other methods did you consider and why did you reject them (critique) **(1000 words)**
4. Conclusion – summarise your key points and confirm the approach you will take. **(300 words)**

Things to think about

Remember that your choice of a research method(s) should be guided by your research question.

You can choose your methods from the range covered in the course. All work should contain references to methods textbooks and other literature.

A submission portal will be added to Moodle once we have a full list of groups and members. Groups will be randomly allocated by class tutors.

Assessment 2 Criteria (In addition to the departmental criteria in the STS Handbook)

1. The group has followed the instructions and has structured the proposal according to the steps laid out above.
2. The group has formulated clear research questions.
3. The research proposed demonstrates a good understanding of the relationship between research question and methodological approach.
4. Each choice of research method is convincingly argued.
5. The proposal demonstrates engagement with the relevant literature and class materials.
6. The proposal is delivered in a clear and accessible way and each member of the group has contributed to the report

Assessment 3 (5%): Participation

Students, working in small groups, will lead the discussion of the essential readings on a weekly basis. This is what your participation grade will be based on. We will randomly assign students to 9 groups in week 1.

Grade	Criteria
0	Failure: Failed to attend assigned paper presentation week, failed to deliver paper presentation. Attended but demonstrated no understanding of the paper, had not read the paper in advance, had not prepared discussion questions.
1	Fair. Presented paper as a basic description with limited critical thinking, minor inaccuracies. Under-prepared to lead paper discussion, discussion questions limited, inadequate or inaccurate.
2 -3	Merit (Good). Presented paper to a good standard. Demonstrated some critical thinking and insights. Interesting discussion questions, no inaccuracies.
4 -5	Distinction (excellent). Presented paper to a high standard with accuracy and sufficient detail, without errors or shortcomings. Demonstrated a sophisticated level of critical engagement with the paper. Discussion questions were well designed and insightful.

Submitting Assessments:

You **MUST** submit your assessments using the submission points below.

- Check your work is referenced properly using Turnitin.
- Do not put your name anywhere on the work that you upload - **only use your UCL student number/candidate number.**
- Do not put your name in the filename of any work you upload (we see the filename!).
- Put the essay number or a brief essay title in the filename of what you upload.
- Get help using Turnitin:
 - check your work for plagiarism
 - submit your assessment
 - read your feedback.

Refer to the Module syllabus for the assessment schedule.

In order to be deemed 'complete' on this module students must attempt all the assignments.

Criteria for assessment

The departmental marking guidelines for individual items of assessment can be found in the STS Student Handbook. Further specific guidance is given on Moodle.

Aims & objectives

This course aims to introduce students to the theory, practice and critique of research methods in STS and social science more generally, comprising both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, methods and techniques. The course is strongly recommended for any students wanting to undertake empirical social science research for their dissertation, and for students who want to familiarise themselves with how social scientists (particularly within STS) undertake research. In addition, for those wishing to apply for ESRC +3 PhD funding, it is designed to cover the core training requirements specified within Annex I of the *ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines (2009)*.

By the end of this course you will:

- Be introduced to a range of qualitative and quantitative social research methods used in STS and understand their strengths and weaknesses.
- Understand how to read, break-down and critique published research papers as well as how to design your own research project.
- Be introduced to underlying epistemological, ontological, ethical and axiological issues underpinning social research
- Know how to formulate research questions.
- Understand the relationship between research questions and methodological approach.
- Have engaged with the relevant academic literature on research methods.

Reading list

See weekly moodle pages.

We have a weekly reading list for this module, but here are a few key texts you could usefully read all of (& they also appear on the week by week lists below). For instance, the Sage Handbook covers pretty much every method you can think of, as well as analytic techniques & theories of knowledge. Decolonizing methodologies presents a comprehensive view of all the aspects of carrying out research, but from a very clear stance about the power of research.

- Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples* (Second Edition ed.). London: Zed Books. Introduction
- Norman. K. Denzin & Yvonne. S. Lincoln (Eds.)(2018), *The Sage handbook of qualitative*

research (Fifth ed) Sage: London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi

- Alan Bryman (2016 or 2012), *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Matthew B. Miles, A.M. Huberman and Johnny Saldaña (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: a methods sourcebook*. 4th Edition. Sage: Los Angeles

See individual sessions on Moodle for further reading.

Course expectations

In addition to submitting assessed material, students are expected to watch all lectures, join all seminar discussions and critically read all essential readings. They are expected to be able to discuss the essential reading each week and be willing to discuss the lecture content.

Important Policy Information

Details of college and departmental policies relating to modules and assessments can be found in the STS Student Handbook www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/handbook. All students taking modules in the STS department are expected to read these policies.

AI/ChatGPT Policy 2024-25

The use of ChatGPT or any other AI platform or tool to generate either ideas or written content, or to produce any other material is prohibited in this module. This aligns with [UCL's Category 1 guidance for students here](#).

This policy is for a number of reasons, many of which we encourage you to explore as part of your time studying science and technology studies, as they are all good case studies in the politics, ethics and cultures of technology in society, and how these intersect with social and environmental justice:

- This class is designed to improve your research and writing skills; if you're not learning how to do research for yourself, think for yourself and write for yourself, you're not developing the skills you came here to learn nor improving them.
- Using AI opens up academic honesty issues, both because it raises the question of whether the work is "your" work, and also because tools like ChatGPT rely on taking uncredited material from scholars and writers mostly without their permission.
- Using AI does not produce reliably accurate results. See [here](#).
- ChatGPT has serious negative environmental impacts, particularly in relation to water usage (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) for more info).
- Open AI has exploited workers from the global south, especially workers in prisons and refugee camps, and workers in Kenya, the Philippines, Colombia, and elsewhere (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) & for more info).

- To put it more bluntly: there are thousands of people in the world who would love to be in your position-getting to be a student at a major UK research university with relatively small class sizes and extremely prestigious faculty. Education like this is not available to everyone. Furthermore, someone is paying for you to be here (whether that's yourself, parents/relatives, scholarships/grants, loans, etc).

If you choose to spend this (both incredible and incredibly expensive) opportunity to learn by trying to avoid doing the work and learning through the use of AI tools, you are only cheating yourself-and contributing to environmental harms, copyright infringement and labour exploitation in the process.

For these reasons, the use of ChatGPT or any other AI tools is not a part of this classroom community, no exceptions.