

HPSC0126 Social Research Methods and Data Analysis in STS

Course Syllabus

2022-2023 session | Convenors: Dr Simon Lock and Dr Melanie Smallman

Course Information

This course introduces students to the theory and practice of research methods in STS and social science more generally, comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods. It will cover research design; qualitative and quantitative methods; research management and ethics; and the epistemology of social research. 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 the [ESRC Postgraduate Training and Development Guidelines \(2015\)](#).

Basic course information

Course website:	See Moodle
Moodle Web site:	HPSC0126
Assessment:	See Moodle
Timetable:	See UCL on-line timetable
Prerequisites:	None
Required texts:	See Moodle
Course tutor(s):	Dr Simon Lock and Dr Melanie Smallman
Contact:	Simon.lock@ucl.ac.uk and m.smallman@ucl.ac.uk
Office location:	22 Gordon Square, Room 1.3
Office hours:	TBC

Schedule

Week	UCL Week	Date	Topic	Activity / Guest Lecture
1	6	10/01	Introduction. What is Social Research: (including what is “methodology”?)	<i>Dr Simon Lock and Dr Melanie Smallman</i>
2	7	17/01	Decolonizing Methodologies in STS and unpacking a research paper (preparing for your first assignment)	<i>Dr Michel Wahome</i>
3	8	24/01	Methods: Surveys and Sampling	<i>Dr Amy Unsworth</i>
4	9	31/01	Methods: Documents and Archives	<i>Dr Simon Lock</i>
5	10	07/02	Methods: Interviews and Focus Groups	<i>Dr Melanie Smallman</i>
	11	14/02	Reading Week	
6	12	21/02	Methods: Ethnography and Observation	<i>Dr Noemi Tousignant</i>
7	13	28/02	Methods: Visual Methods	<i>Dr Jean Baptiste Gouyon</i>
8	14	07/03	Methods: Case Studies	<i>Dr Melanie Smallman</i>
9	15	14/03	What is “analysis”?	<i>Dr Simon Lock</i>
10	16	21/03	Research Design	<i>Dr Simon Lock and Dr Melanie Smallman</i>

Assessments

Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit
Essay	See below & on Moodle	20 th February 2023, 5pm	1500 words (max) (40%)
Group presentation	See below & on Moodle	31 th March 2023, 5pm	10 min (max) (60%)

Assignments

Assessment 1 (40%)

Drawing on the methodological lessons learned to date, take one of the papers below and write a 1500 word review of the methods used. Things you might want to describe:

- What was the research question?
- What methods were used?
- Were they appropriate? Explain why you think that.
- What other methods could have been used? Explain why they might be better/worse.

Lock, S.J. *et al.* (2014) “Nuclear energy sounded wonderful 40 years ago”: UK citizen views on CCS’, *Energy Policy*, 66, pp. 428–435. doi:[10.1016/j.enpol.2013.11.024](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2013.11.024).

Michel Wahome & M. Graham (2020) Spatially shaped imaginaries of the digital economy, *Information, Communication & Society*, 23:8, 1123-1138, DOI: [10.1080/1369118X.2019.1701696](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1701696)

Smallman, M. (2020) “Nothing to do with the science’: How an elite sociotechnical imaginary cements policy resistance to public perspectives on science and technology through the machinery of government’, *Social Studies of Science*, 50(4), pp. 589–608. doi: 10.1177/0306312719879768.

Unsworth, A. and Voas, D. (2018) 'Attitudes to evolution among Christians, Muslims and the Non-Religious in Britain: Differential effects of religious and educational factors', *Public Understanding of Science*, 27(1), pp. 76–93. doi: 10.1177/0963662517735430.

Assessment 1 Assessment Criteria (please also refer to those given in the Departmental Handbook)

1. Has the student identified the research question?
2. Has the student identified the research methodology?
3. Has the student understood that the choice of research methods is linked to the question being asked?
4. Has the student understood the pros and cons of different social research methods?
5. Is the assessment written in clear English?
6. is the assessment structured in a logical way?
7. Has the student presented their assessment in a coherent and well-argued way?

Assessment 2 (60%): Group presentation

You have the opportunity to undergo a summer group research project within UCL's Department of Science and Technology Studies. As a group you will submit as a video presentation a research proposal for a project you would like to undertake during this period. 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).

Things to think about

- Try to choose a research topic that is relevant to science and technology studies. It might help you to look at the research profiles of staff on the departmental website or to think about other modules you have taken and the kinds of questions that arise in these modules
- 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 text books and other literature.
- To structure your proposal you can follow the following format:
 1. Introduction – statement of research question and why it is interesting/needs to be answered

2. Background – what we already know about the topic of your question
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)?
4. Conclusion – summarise your key points and confirm the approach you will take.

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

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

Submitting Essay 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.](#)

Video presentation submission:

Assingment 2 will need to be submitted as a video file. It can be simple recording of a powerpoint presentation with your voices narrating it (easily done with zoom), or you could

simply point at camera at you all standing in front of a screen in a classroom at UCL and submit that. The format and presentation style are not important here and are not what you are being graded on. They matter only insofar as we can understand and see clearly your thoughts and arguments. The more clearly presented they are the better. All this is in service of saying that what is submitted does not have to be a slick media presentation that not what is expected. **The presentation should be no longer than 10 minutes.**

In order to be deemed 'complete' on this module students must attempt both 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 introduces students to the theory and practice of research methods in STS and social science more generally, comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods. It will cover research design; qualitative and quantitative methods; research management and ethics; and the epistemology of social research. 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.
- 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

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). 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.

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

Please look at the **UCL Online Reading List** for links to the key readings.

Course expectations

Students are required to attend at least 70% of classes and to participate in discussions.

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.