

Research Master Societal Resilience VU Amsterdam – Courses in the Program

This is a two-year research master program (120 EC). The courses are the following:

Year 1					
P1: Sept. – Oct.	P2: Nov. – Dec.	P3: Jan.	P4: Feb. – Mar.	P5: Apr. – May	P6: June
Big problems (BP, 6)	Foundations of Societal Resilience (FSR, 6)	Advanced Methods I Choose 1:	Choose 2 out of 4: 1. Diversity and inclusive communities (ISR1, 6) 2. Dynamics of interconnectedness (ISR2, 6) 3. Care & Welfare (ISR3, 6) 4. Governance Reform (ISR4, 6)	Writing a Research Proposal (WRP, 6)	Research Integrity and Responsible Scholarship (RIRS, 3)
Qualitative or Quantitative Data Analysis (QQDA, 3)	Big Data, Small Data (BDSD, 9)	1. Qualitative Methods (QM, 6) 2. Data Mining & Text Analysis (DMTA, 6)		Advanced Methods II: Tutorials (AM2, 6)	Communicating Science (CS, 3)
Peer Group Learning: parallel working group, thematic interest group, intervision (PGL)					

Year 2					
P1: Sept. – Oct.	P2: Nov. – Dec.	P3: Jan.	P4: Feb. – Mar.	P5: Apr. – May	P6: June
Societal or Academic Internship (24)		Writing a scientific paper	Master Thesis (30)		
Peer group learning: parallel working group, thematic interest group, intervision					

The blue-coloured courses are primarily focusing on theory.
The green courses are dedicated primarily to methods and methodology.
The yellow courses focus on academic and transferrable skills.

More information about the program is available at www.vu.nl/sr - also on admissions.

Do you have a question? Write us an email at resma.fsw@vu.nl.

Welcome to Amsterdam! Best wishes,

René Bekkers

Program director Societal Resilience

Peer Group Learning

Period: Y1-2, P1-6 (September-June)

Credits: -

Coordinator and lecturer: Tijs van den Broek

Co-lecturers: various

Course objectives

The general aim of the peer group learning sessions is *to create a community of students that help each other make good decisions in the program and in their career, following principles of responsible research*. The sessions contribute to the learning objectives in judgment formation, communication, and learning skills.

Specific aims of the sessions are:

- To create and maintain a sense of community: get to know each other, exchange experiences and plan for the future.
- To think ahead and make choices for the next periods in the program:
 - o Orientation on ISR themes, get acquainted with the theme leaders of the ISR, and the research program leaders of in the departments.
 - o Orientation on research methods (qualitative, quantitative, mixed).
 - o Orientation on tutorials for P4 and P5 in Year 1 and P1 and P2 in Year 2.
- To learn and discuss principles of responsibility and integrity in research.
 - o Recognize and discuss ethical dilemmas in research and teaching.
 - o Learn how ethical review of research works.
 - o Learn how to work open science: how to store data carefully and in an accessible way, how to organize your workflow.
- To learn to review research and performance of peers in a constructive way such that the quality of the work is improved.
- To prepare the internship and master thesis:
 - o Formulate and refine research questions.
 - o Choose an internship and thesis trajectory:
 1. Independent: separate internship and thesis, with different research questions and products
 2. Loosely connected: separate internship and thesis, but with similar research questions and products (e.g., internship to access or collect data, conduct research)
 3. Joined: combine internship and thesis in one project, with one research question and a single product (preferred for international fieldwork)
 - o Survey and contact potential host locations.
 - o Plan internship activities.
- To learn about the labour market:
 - o In academia: learn how the industry of academia works: business models of scientists, universities, publishers, associations.
 - o Outside academia: learn how research is designed, conducted and used in government, business and non-profit organizations
 - o Between academia and society: learn to communicate with colleagues, customers, readers and funders: writing, media training, blogging.

Course content and structure

Throughout the entire research master program students meet each other on a fixed day of the week in biweekly group learning sessions.

There are three types of activities in peer group learning sessions.

1. Group sessions: these are prepared by the coordinator of the research master program.
 - Review the calendar: this week, next week, this month, next month, next period.
 - Discussion of research news: what is the social science news in the centre of the public debate, new academic publications, new data, retraction watch.
 - Discussion on individual progress and collective challenges in ISR theme groups.
 - Work on group assignments.
2. Peer review sessions: these sessions are prepared by students.
 - In pairs or groups of three, students discuss each other's assignments, papers, research proposals.
3. Intervention sessions: prepared by students and the program coordinator.
 - Students discuss issues contributed and prepared by students. The method relies on the ability of students to reflect on their experiences. Students help each other by providing constructive feedback and asking questions in a non-directive approach, not by giving advice or ready-made solutions. The coordinator is a mentor safeguarding the process, not an instructor.

In P2 of Year 1, 4 affinity groups are formed based on preferences for one of the four ISR themes.

Groups consist of a mix of students specializing in qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods.

In P1 and P2 of Year 2, students who go abroad for fieldwork attend the workshop online. The meetings help students abroad stay in touch with the community, provide social and emotional support and practical help.

Assessment

Peer group sessions are not assessed for evaluation. Participation is required and progress is monitored using a rubric.

Big Problems

Period: Y1, P1 (September-October)

Credits: 6

Coordinator and lecturer: Jacquélien van Stekelenburg

Co-lecturer: Duco Bannink

Course objectives

In this course, students learn to analyze today's wicked problems from a multidisciplinary and multilevel (micro, meso, macro) angle. In the course, lecturers discuss issues such as inequality, climate change, polarization and immigration, and the growing costs of healthcare. Students learn to analyze the complexity of societal problems in a globalizing world with multiple layers of governance, in increasingly heterogeneous societies. The course contributes to the learning outcomes in knowledge and understanding (KU), specifically (KU1) of current research questions regarding complex societal problems related to dynamics of interconnectedness, forms of governance, social diversity and issues of care and well-being, and the solutions to these problems; and (KU2) learn to recognize societal resilience in the success and failure of solutions to societal problems. In addition, the course teaches students to analyze societal issues employing knowledge from various disciplines (A6), and from the perspective of societal resilience (JF9). Students learn to reflect critically on these perspectives, as well as on the scientific and societal relevance of research results (JF10). Finally, students learn to present research results and interpretations in a clear manner (C13).

Course content and structure

Due to globalization and the rapid development of communication and information technologies, present day society faces many *wicked* problems: problems that are multi-layered, hard to define and as such challenge the capacity to generate viable and resilient solutions.

Students read about and discuss literature pertaining to wicked problems and how to analyze them. The course makes clear that Big Problems are not neatly organized by nation state borders, but have a global structure. National governments have limited power to solve them and the political courage to do so is often lacking. Still, citizens are concerned about these problems, and they are all interconnected. Climate change and pale economic outlook – especially for the well educated in failed states – cause immigration. Inequality also manifests itself in the consequences of climate change. Communication technology makes inequality visible. In short, Big Problems are all interconnected, and to understand this complexity we need a multidisciplinary approach.

Form of tuition

Lectures by ISR researchers and researchers from partner organisations outside university.

Type of assessment

Assessment will take place through written assignments and oral presentations.

Readings

Rittel, H.W.J., & Webber, M.M. (1973). Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning. *Policy Sciences*, 4: 155-169.

Scheffer, M., (2009). *Critical Transitions in Nature and Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Watts, D.J. (2004). *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age*. New York / London: W.W. Norton.

Foundations of Societal Resilience

Period: Y1, P2 (November-December)

Credits: 6

Coordinator and lecturer: René Bekkers

Co-lecturers: Kees Boersma, Wolfgang Wagner

Course objectives

In this course, students acquire knowledge about individual, organizational and societal resilience (learning outcome KU2). Students analyse complex societal problems related to dynamics of interconnectedness, forms of governance, social diversity and issues of care and well-being from the perspective of resilience (KU1) and are able to reflect critically on the scientific and societal relevance of research in this area (JF10). Students learn how resilience is analysed in various disciplines (A6) and are able to reflect critically on these perspectives (JF9). By the end of this course, students are able to present research results and interpretations to the general public and to societal stakeholders in a clear manner (C13).

Course content and structure

Societal resilience' refers to responses and strategies at the individual, group, institutional and societal level, that are innovative and effective and that contribute to 'a better world'. A resilient society not only tries to respond to disruption and crisis by trying to bring the system *back* into balance, but rather tries to develop solutions that bring a system in a *new state* that is capable of dealing with present and future challenges. In this course, students learn to critically reflect on the concept of societal resilience. They will reflect on the ways resilience has been conceptualized in different disciplines and how the concept of resilience has been used to inform viable solutions to the wicked problems that present day society faces. Students will read theory papers on resilience as well as empirical papers in which individual, organizational and societal resilience is investigated using either a social analytics or a qualitative approach.

Form of tuition

Lectures and workshops.

Type of assessment

Assessment will take place through written assignments and oral presentations.

Readings

Bekkers, R. (2016). Foundations of Societal Resilience – Talma Lecture 2016. January 15, 2016.

https://renebekkers.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/15_01_08_foundations-of-societal-resilience.pdf

Bornstein, J. (2013). The Dynamics of Social Resilience. *Minding Nature*, 6(2).

https://www.humansandnature.org/filebin/pdf/minding_nature/may_2013/The_Dynamics_of_Social_Resilience.pdf

Van den Besselaar, P., Hartmann, T., Westerbeek, L. & Steggeman, M. (2017). *Mapping the structure and dynamics of societal resilience research*. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis

Period: Y1, P1a (September)

Credits: 3

Coordinator and lecturer: Dimitris Pavlopoulos

Co-lecturer: Lorraine Nencel

Course objectives

The goal of this course is to provide students with an adequate background in the qualitative or quantitative analyses of social science data. Students with a background in quantitative data analysis will focus on developing skills in analysing qualitative data, whereas students with a background in qualitative data analysis will focus on learning how to apply multivariate techniques to analysing quantitative data. The course furthers knowledge and understanding outcomes on methodology, specifically (KU4) basic knowledge of and insight into computational, qualitative, and quantitative methods and (A7) the basic skills to apply computational research techniques and methods which are used to collect, edit and analyze large or unstructured data sets. Students learn to present research results and interpretations of data in a clear manner (C13).

Course content and structure

After a general introduction into research design in the social sciences and the type of data that social scientists gather, students will focus on analysing either qualitative or quantitative data related to topics in the Big Problems course. The content of the course will be tailored to the needs of participants, and the level of training will depend on students' existing knowledge. Prior to the course, the coordinator of the research master determines in which method of analysis they receive further training based on the application of the student. Students with a deficiency in quantitative data analysis will be trained in some of the most commonly used quantitative analytical methods in the social sciences. Students with a deficiency in qualitative data analysis will learn about a variety of qualitative methods and on how to analyse qualitative data.

Form of tuition

Intensive workshops, and computer practicums.

Type of assessment

Ungraded formative assignments. Students complete a data analysis assignment, make their code publicly available and write a short report about the procedure they used and the results they obtained.

Readings

Castillo, C. (2016). *Big Crisis Data: Social Media in Disasters and Time-Critical Situations*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Neuendorf, K.A. (2017). *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Big data, Small data

Period: Y1, P1b,P2 (October-December)

Credits: 9

Coordinator and lecturer: Peter Kerhof

Co-lecturers: Christine Moser, Mariken van der Velden

Course objectives

Today's digital and information-dense society produces a massive amount of data. Many of such data are generated by or related to human behaviour and can inform social scientists about societal dynamics, for example social media data, parliamentary minutes, email collections or collections of stories that have been made available in a digital format. In this course, students learn about such data, that are often voluminous, unstructured, and/or embedded in complex data structures. Students learn about how they differ from data generated by traditional social science research methods and the opportunities and challenges that big data pose in present day society. They are introduced into using R, a programming language which they will use to gather and link data, and to make sense of these data. Students learn about ways to analyse data derived from social media such as forums or social network sites using both computational and interpretive approaches.

The course contributes to learning students advanced knowledge of either computational, qualitative, or quantitative methods (KU5), the application of computational research techniques and methods to collect, edit and analyze large or unstructured data sets (A7) and advanced skills in qualitative, quantitative or computational research and analytical methods (A8). Students learn to reflect on the social and ethical aspects regarding the specific nature and scope of big and small data, and of the dissemination and application of research results (JF11) and on their scientific and societal relevance (JF10). Students also learn to visualize data and research results (C13).

Course content and structure

The course consists of two parts. The first part of the course (3 EC) focuses on the role of big data in society and in social science. Students will read about the role big data have come to play in society and on big data ethics (e.g., with regard to privacy and transparency). Although big data are often considered helpful in understanding the complexities of present day society, and as such may contribute to solutions to big societal problems, they are also part of today's problems as they may easily be misused and are easily misunderstood. Students will learn to reflect on the nature and quality of various kinds of big data and how they may be used to answer social science research questions. In the second part of the course (6 EC) students will learn throughout the whole course about ways to collect, organize and analyse and visualize big data. No prior knowledge is required and students will be made familiar with the programming language R and the packages needed to scrape data, to link different sources of data, and to organize and clean data. They will conduct a first analysis of textual data by applying computational methods, and they will experiment with transforming big data to small data and approach small data in an interpretive manner.

Form of tuition

The first part of the course is a series of weekly seminars. The second part is an intensive series of group workshops.

Type of assessment

Students write an essay after the first part of the course and complete weekly assignments for the second part.

Readings

Healy, K. (2017). *Data Visualization for Social Science: A Practical Introduction with R and ggplot2*.

<http://socviz.co/>

Salganik, M.J. (2017). *Bit by Bit: Social Research in the Digital Age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. <http://www.bitbybitbook.com/>

Watts, D.J. (2014). Computational Social Science: Exciting Progress and Grand Challenges. *The Bridge*, 43(4): 5-10. <https://www.nae.edu/File.aspx?id=106114> 2017 Talk at Columbia University:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOoeXzqfO7s>

Advanced Methods I: Qualitative Methods

Period: Y1, P3 (January)

Credits: 6

Coordinator and lecturer: Sierk Ybema

Co-lecturer: Christine Moser

Course objectives

This course teaches students new qualitative research methods for the collection, analysis and interpretation of big data, including digital ethnography, visual ethnography, photovoice action research, and qualitative content analysis. The course contributes to advanced knowledge of research design (KU3) and qualitative methods (KU5), particularly in the collection, analysis and interpretation of big data (A7 and A8).

Course content

Qualitative analyses allow a deep understanding of the changes and challenges of our social world, by unravelling how individuals make sense of their experiences, their actions and beliefs, their identities, their lived experiences and their position in society. In the digital age, the methodological toolboxes are renewed to reflect the complexities and dynamic character of online content. For instance, life stories are not only recorded through face-to-face interviews nowadays but also life stories in the digital domain (e.g. Facebook, blogs). Researchers introduced combinations of narrative research, creative writing and action research to grasp the multiplicity of interconnected positions and locations. Ethnographies of social media show ways to capture the complexity by using picture diaries, maps and/or notebooks. Visual methods such as photovoice interviews give visual insight that tells the experiences from yet another perspective. These innovative qualitative methods are sensitive to shifts that are occurring in both physical and online time and space.

Form of tuition

Lectures, workshops, computer practicums.

Type of assessment

Assignments.

Readings

Hsieh, H-F., & Shannon, S.E. (2008). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9): 1277-1288.

Lupton, S. (2015). *Digital Sociology*. New York/London: Routledge.

Pink, S. (2013). *Doing Visual Ethnography*. London: Sage.

Wang, C. & Burns, M.A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3): 369-387.

Zhao, S., Grasmuck, S., & Martin, J. (2008). Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24 (5): 1816–1836.

Advanced Methods I: Data Mining & Text Analysis

Period: Y1, P3 (January)

Credits: 6

Coordinator and lecturer: Wouter van Atteveldt

Co-lecturers: Kasper Welbers, Mariken van der Velden

Course objectives

This course teaches students the basics of data mining and text analysis, two essential techniques for analysing large amounts of unstructured or semi-structured data. Attention will be paid to different ways of preparing textual data for analysis and to analyse the structure and content of textual data (e.g., scaling, topic models, sentiment analysis, network analysis). Additionally, students will learn the basics of data modelling and machine learning techniques to mine information from very large data sets, and will learn about the possibilities and pitfalls of various visualization techniques.

This course serves learning outcomes in methodology: students learn to design and analyse big data in order to answer research questions regarding resilience and societal problems (KU3), and have advanced knowledge of computational methods (KU5). Students learn to apply this knowledge (A7, A8), and report results (C12, C13).

Course content and structure

Our online and offline actions increasingly leave digital traces that are a treasure trove for analysing social behaviour, both for academics and companies. These traces are often in textual form, such as Facebook and Twitter posts, product reviews, and online profiles; or in the form of large semi-structured data sets such as communication logs and purchasing records. This poses a challenge to the social scientists or analyst, as new techniques are needed to make sense of these data.

In groups of 4, students write a report of the project, in which students use a combination of text and data analysis techniques to analyse the content and structure of online reviews.

Form of tuition

Lectures, workshops, computer practicums.

Type of assessment

Students complete weekly assignments.

Readings

- Amatriain, X., & Pujol, J. M. (2015). Data mining methods for recommender systems. In: *Recommender Systems Handbook* (pp. 227-262). New York: Springer.
- Grimmer, J., & Stewart, B. M. (2013). Text as data: The promise and pitfalls of automatic content analysis methods for political texts. *Political analysis*, 21(3), 267-297.
- James, G., Witten, D., & Hastie, T. (2014). *An Introduction to Statistical Learning: With Applications in R*. New York: Springer. [selected chapters]
- Silge, J. & Robinson, D. (2017). *Text Mining with R: A Tidy Approach*. Sebastopol: O'Reilly. [selected chapters]
- Welbers, K., Van Atteveldt, W., & Benoit, K. (2017). Text Analysis in R. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 11 (4): 245-265.

Thematic Courses in P4

Period: Y1, P4 (February-March)

Credits: 12 (2x6)

Course objectives

In P4 of the first year students choose two of four seminars that offer an introduction into four domains, each of which are related society's wicked problems: diversity, issues related to care and welfare, interconnectedness and communication technologies, and processes of societal governance. In each of the four courses offered, students both read and discuss social scientific papers related to the issues at hand, while simultaneously analysing data in methods seminars that are either qualitative or focus on quantitative methods and social analytics.

Course content and structure

During each course, seminars are organized in which students read and discuss key theoretical and empirical papers with regard to the topic at hand (4EC). For each course, students choose between several methods seminars (2EC) in which they collect and analyse data using techniques learned in the P3 courses (AMQM/DMTA) in order to confront theory with empirical observations.

Theme 1: Diversities and inclusive communities

Period: Y1, P4 (February-March)

Credits: 6

Coordinator and lecturer: Halleh Ghorashi

Co-lecturer: Romy van der Lee

Course objectives

The aim of this course is to profoundly engage students in the most important theoretical discussions on diversity and inclusion. The course provides students with the knowledge and conditions that enable them to critically assess these discussions and transform them to academic and thoughtful insights on these socially heated and somewhat polarizing topics. Students develop an academic view of the societal issues related to diversity by learning to contextualize and theorize them and critically reflecting on their own position, opportunities and responsibilities as social scientists.

The course contributes to learning outcomes in knowledge and understanding (KU1, 2, 4) of diversity and inclusion, application of this knowledge (A6, 7), and critical reflection on it (J9, C11). The course contributes to students' learning to write (C12), their ability to work in an interdisciplinary and multi-methodological research environment (LS14), and their intercultural and communication skills (LS16).

Course content and structure

In the era of late or liquid modernity, a solid foundation of security has been replaced by the mobility of ideas, people, practices, and resources. That said, mobility continues to be connected to structures of inequality and exclusion, providing some individuals and groups with more resources to be mobile than others. In addition, consolidating nation states are guarding their borders and focusing on security issues instead of inclusiveness. Yet intensified global mobility and migration alongside more accessibility as a result of the advent of the internet have led to increasing contacts across cultural borders. Societies, organizations and individuals are in the midst of growing diversity in terms of people, values and ideas. The paradoxical presence of increased mobility and connectedness (e.g., through new technologies) and extreme disconnectedness and polarization (because of indifference and individualism) provides a new angle in investigating the layers of diversity. We observe growing transnational connections going hand in hand with ethno-politics. Culture, ethnicity, religion seem to have become sites of contestation and

identity politics. Although societies have always been diverse, some scholars have argued that the diversity of the late modern era presents us with new challenges. Steven Vertovec uses the concept 'super-diversity' to describe this new condition. The rise of numbers of migrants, the diversity of the groups of migrants, and most importantly the differences within diverse groups introduces new complexities and challenges to the existing diversities in the world. Growing populism and radicalization in Europe and beyond, are only visible examples of the ways that diverse communities are reacting to these challenges. In this era we observe various forms of communities, differing from gated communities (which are homogenous and emphasis on excluding the other) and inclusive communities (which are heterogeneous and embrace multiplicity). This course will focus on the challenges of inclusive communities (on micro, meso and macro level) in the context of growing polarization and homogenization of connections.

Students will read and discuss text theories regarding liquid modernity and liquid communities (Bauman), super diversity (Vertovec/Crul), power (Foucault/Gramsci), structure/agency (Giddens), and democracy and inclusion (Young/Ghorashi). Additionally, students will work with a combination of ethnographic, social media and survey data.

Form of tuition

Lectures, workshops.

Type of assessment

Group assignments and an individual final paper.

Readings

- Bauman, Z. (2000). Introduction and chapter 1: Emancipation, from the book: *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 1-53.
- Crul, M. (2015). Super-diversity vs. assimilation: how complex diversity in majority-minority cities challenges the assumptions of assimilation. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1061425>.
- Ghorashi, H. (2014). Rooted connections in late modern time. In: U.M.Vieten (ed.) *Revisiting I.M. Young on democracy, inclusion, and normalization*. Houndmills: Palgrave, 49-67.
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In: Jonathan Rutherford (Ed.) *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (pp. 222-237). London: Lawrence & Wishart. http://people.ucsc.edu/~jizamora/Hall_Cultural_Identity_and_Diaspora.pdf
- Prasad, A. & Prasad, P. (2002). Otherness and large: identity and difference in the new globalized organizational landscape. In: Iiris Aaltio & Albert J. Mills (eds) *Gender, Identity and the Culture of Organizations*. London: Routledge, pp. 57-71.
- Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(6): 1024-1054. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01419870701599465>

Theme 2: Dynamics of Interconnectedness

Period: Y1, P4 (February-March)

Credits: 6

Coordinator and lecturer: Tilo Hartmann

Co-lecturer: Jacquélien van Stekelenburg

Course objectives

The aims of this course are:

1. To provide a better understanding of the role of online communication within the context of the democratic function of mass media;
2. To understand the scientific state-of-the-art regarding the interplay of online communication and polarization in society;
3. To learn how to conduct both automated content analysis and experimental research;
4. To conduct and report a research project in a team of students that examines polarization both in the content (based on automated content analysis) and as a potential effect (based on an experimental examination) of online communication.

By the end of this course, students

1. Will understand what societal polarization is and why it might threaten societal resilience;
2. Will be able to provide a differentiated picture on how the Internet/online communication might affect societal polarization;
3. Will achieve a basic understanding of automated (big data) content analysis, its relevance and ethical implications, and how to conduct (and analyze/report) it;
4. Will achieve a basic understanding of experimental research, its relevance and ethical implications, and how to conduct (and analyze/report) it;
5. Will have further improved their research reporting and academic writing skills.

Thus, the course contributes to learning outcomes in knowledge and understanding (KU1, 2, 4) of interconnectedness, application of this knowledge (A6, 7), and critical reflection on it (J9, C11). The course contributes to students' learning to write (C12), their ability to work in an interdisciplinary and multi-methodological research environment (LS14), and their intercultural and communication skills (LS16).

Course content and structure

Mass media play an essential role in modern societies, and are considered an important pillar of democracy. However, the rise of the Internet dramatically changed how people communicate and receive information about the world, leading to new dynamics of interconnectedness. The Internet differs from traditional channels like television, radio, or newspapers. Not only does the psychology of online communication differ from traditional mass communication and face-to-face communication (e.g., due to role of anonymity). But in contrast to traditional media, on the Internet "everybody can also be a journalist", the veracity and quality of provided information strongly varies, the veracity of information is often hard to judge (and usually barely scrutinized), and selective exposure to like-minded content or echo chambers is easier. These differences raise concerns that particularly in already segregated and politically polarized environments (including the US political landscape of liberals vs. conservatives, and populist movements in Europe) online communication might further threaten social stability and coherence in society rather than induce deliberation and mutual understanding among partisans. The present course will address these concerns by reviewing literature on the psychology of online communication, online polarization, and related processes of online information processing and truth judgments. These processes will then be applied to empirically illuminate polarization tendencies (and their effects) within social and communicational (semantic) online networks. The ultimate goal is to

understand if and how the new dynamics of interconnectedness fostered by online communication may threaten democratic functioning by contesting rather than fostering deliberation, mutual understanding, and eventual social stability.

The course will address four closely related theoretical domains: (1) theory on role of mass media in democratic functioning, (2) theory on the general processes of computer-mediated online communication, (3) theory on online polarization: selective exposure, echo chambers, online incivility, flaming, and hate speech online, (4) theory on reality perceptions: online believability and truth judgments, confirmation biases. In the empirical part, the methodological focus will be on quantitative analyses. The idea is to engage in both a quantitative automated content analysis subproject of online content (to illuminate polarizing tendencies) and an experimental test of how related online communication might shape polarization. Accordingly, in the empirical part of this course, students will obtain and examine data from big data/automated semantic analyses as well as experimental data in order to illuminate and advance existing theory on how online communication and polarization are related.

Readings

- McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* (6th edition). London: Thousand Oaks.
- Flaxman, S., Goel, S. & Rao, J.M., (2016). Filter bubbles, echo chambers, and online news consumption. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 80, 298–320.
- Lelkes, Y., Sood, G., & Iyengar, S. (2017). The hostile audience: The effect of access to broadband internet on partisan affect. *American Journal of Political Science*, 61(1), 5-20.
- Coe, L., Kenski, K., & Rains, S.A. (2014). Online and uncivil? Patterns and determinants of incivility in newspaper website comments. *Journal of Communication*, 64(4), 658–679.
- Prior, M. (2013). Media and political polarization. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 16, 101-127.

Theme 3: Care & Welfare

Period: Y1, P4 (February-March)

Credits: 6

Coordinator and lecturer: Yannis Kyratsis

Co-lecturers: Bianca Beersma, Marjolein Broese van Groenou

Course objectives

This course contributes to learning outcomes in knowledge and understanding (KU1, 2, 4) of care and welfare, application of this knowledge (A6, 7), and critical reflection on it (J9, C11). The course contributes to students' learning to write (C12), their ability to work in an interdisciplinary and multi-methodological research environment (LS14), and their intercultural and communication skills (LS16).

Course content and structure

Informal and formal social structures, such as families, communities and societal organizations, are the vehicles of societal solidarity. They offer citizens security, integration and care, and together they provide an important safety net for the vulnerable and dependent. These social structures and the way they are arranged in society are influenced by macro-developments such as individualization, globalization, welfare state retrenchment, virtualization and aging. Our society to date is challenged particularly as the reform of collective arrangements evokes a shift towards more private responsibility for care and welfare in times where demographic developments (ageing, migration) lead to more citizens in need. This calls for innovative forms of solidarity at all levels. Studying societal resilience in the domain of care and welfare thus raises new questions regarding 1) forms and functioning of social capital in informal groups, 2) organizational aspects of civic participation, 3) collaborative relationships between government, private and public partners, 4) welfare policies that 'prepare' individuals and societies to cope with social risks, and 5) outcomes of new types of arrangements in terms of cohesion and inequality in society. Students will be acquainted with the conceptual, theoretical and empirical elaboration of these questions from an individual, organizational and societal perspective. They will review literature from sociology, social gerontology, organization science and public administration in order to understand some of the complexity of societal resilience in the domain of care and welfare.

This course will combine theories of several theoretical domains: 1. Theory from social gerontology on families and social networks, ageing and the life course in the era of post-modernization, 2. Theory from organization sciences applied to health care management in a changing policy context, and 3. Theory from sociology and public administration applied to shifting responsibilities between government and citizens in a changing policy context. In the empirical part of the course students will apply quantitative methods to examine trends in care and welfare in panel studies and cross-national surveys; apply qualitative methods to study care organizations, local communities or families in depth; or apply computational methods to textual data with regard to care and welfare.

Form of tuition

Lectures, workshops.

Type of assessment

Short empirical research paper (10 pages) based on the discussed theoretical corpus and a re-analysis of the provided empirical data of choice.

Readings

Allan, G. (2008). Flexibility, friendship and family. *Personal Relationships*, 15, 1-16.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2007.00181.x/pdf>

- Broese Van Groenou, M.I. & Boer, A.H.. de (2016). Providing informal care in a changing society. *European Journal of Ageing*, 13, 271-279. doi: 10.1007/s10433-016-0370-7.
- Noordegraaf, M. (2015). Hybrid professionalism and beyond: (New) Forms of public professionalism in changing organizational and societal contexts. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, 2(2), 187-206. doi:10.1093/jpo/jov002
- Van Oorschot, W. & Aarts, W. (2005). The social capital of European Welfare states: The Crowding out hypothesis revisited. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 15(1), 5-26.

Theme 4: Governance Reform

Period: Y1, P4 (February-March)

Credits: 6

Coordinator and lecturer: Willem Trommel

Co-lecturer: Catherine de Vries

Course objectives

This course contributes to learning outcomes in knowledge and understanding (KU1, 2, 4) of governance reform, application of this knowledge (A6, 7), and critical reflection on it (J9, C11). The course contributes to students' learning to write (C12), their ability to work in an interdisciplinary and multi-methodological research environment (LS14), and their intercultural and communication skills (LS16).

Course content and structure

This course focuses on (the analysis of) governance reform. Increasingly, the governments of nation states are unable to deal with the complexity of contemporary social problems. A major cause is the 'glocalisation' of social interdependencies. Often, social issues have global antecedents and local manifestations. As a consequence, one can observe a shift towards a 'transnationalization' of governance systems ('multilayered governance') but also towards a more improvising and networked governance style at the local level ('multi-actor governance'). The course explores a) the drivers behind these reforms, b) the processes of institutional change, c) the various shapes in which new modes of governance emerge, as well as d) their impact upon the results of public problem solving. The overarching question concerns the effects in terms of societal resilience: to what extent and in what sense do the current governance reforms support and /or undermine societal resilience?

The course draws on the following theoretical building blocks: Theories of societal 'glocalisation', theories of institutional change, theories on the logic of multi-layered governance, and theories on networked public-problem solving. The methodological focus is either quantitative / social analytics (e.g., in a comparative analysis of activity in networks and reform patterns in municipalities), or qualitative (e.g., in an in-depth analysis of 'transformative mechanisms').

Form of tuition

Lectures, workshops.

Type of assessment

Short paper in which a concrete puzzle of governance reform is analysed.

Readings

Pierson, P. (2000). Increasing returns, path dependence, and the study of politics. *American Political Science Review*, 94(2), 251-267.

Van Kersbergen, K. & Van Waarden, F. (2001). *Shifts in Governance: Problems of Legitimacy and Accountability*. Den Haag: NWO.

Rhodes, R.A.W. (2007), Understanding Governance: Ten years on. *Organization Studies*, 28 (8), 1243-64.

Sassen, S. (2008). Neither Global nor National; novel assemblages of territory, authority and rights. *Ethics and Global Politics*, 1(1-2): 1-19.

Van der Heijden, J. (2011). Institutional Layering: A review of the Use of the Concept. *Politics*, 31(1): 9-18.

Advanced Methods II: Tutorials

Period: Y1, P5 (April-May)

Credits: 6 (2x3)

Coordinator and lecturer: Tijs van den Broek

Co-lecturer: various

Course objectives

The program offers several methods tutorials of 3 EC each which offers to students the possibility to specialize in a methodological topic. Tutorials can also be organized by students themselves, either individually or in small groups of up to five participants. Methods tutorials focus on a specialized methodological topic and allow students to take advantage of the expertise of Faculty researchers on a topic of their need.

By the end of this course, students have advanced knowledge of and insight into the formulation of research design, methodology, procedure and analysis (KU3) in either computational, qualitative, or quantitative methods (KU5), and possess advanced skills in qualitative, quantitative or computational research and analytical methods (A8). Students learn to reflect critically on the scientific and societal relevance of research results based on these methods (JF10) and are able to present their results and interpretations to the general public and to societal stakeholders in a clear manner (C13). Students learn about the ethics involved in the methods (S14), and learn to collaborate and communicate on the methods (S16).

Course content and structure

The content is highly variable, and depends on the research interests and needs of the student and the input of the proposed available professor. The tutorials are organized across three lines:

1. Statistics, e.g., multilevel analysis, longitudinal data analysis, structural equations modelling, time series analysis, Bayesian inferencing;
2. Social analytics, e.g., linked data, supervised machine Learning, dynamic data, advanced methods of text analysis;
3. Qualitative methods, e.g., qualitative interviewing, mobile and multi-sited method, stakeholder analysis, reflexivity and research, participatory research.

Form of tuition

Given the small-scale set-up, tutorials are usually highly interactive, and have a hands-on character.

Type of assessment

Assignments

Readings

To be determined by the professor supervising the student(s).

Writing a research proposal

Period: Y1, P5 (April-May)

Credits: 6

Coordinator and lecturer: Ivar Vermeulen

Co-lecturer: Pal Nyiri

Course objectives

This course aims to support students in formulating and delimiting their research question, to review and evaluate the literature, and to determine appropriate methodologies for their research project. During the course students specify a research plan. The course will teach participants to position their research vis-à-vis an established body of literature, identifying gaps in the literature and innovations in their own research.

By the end of this course, participants (1) have reviewed the existing literature on their research problem; (2) have discussed alternative theoretical approaches; (3) have developed the best research approach for their research; (4) have explored alternative research approaches; (5) have identified potential problems and disadvantages of the preferred research approach, and repaired them as much as possible; (6) have written a research plan.

The focus of this course is on judgment formation (JF), communication (C) and learning skills (LS) outcomes. By the end of this course, students are able to formulate good arguments on the scientific and societal relevance of research design and results (JF10), and are able to reflect on the social and ethical aspects of the collection and analysis of big and small data, and of the dissemination and application of research results (JF11). Students learn to write a research proposal that can be submitted to a funding agency (C12) that clearly presents the research design, and its expected results, and makes a convincing case for funding (C13). Students abide by ethical values and codes of conduct (LS14) and learn to reflect on their own learning skills and abilities.

Course content and structure

Participants in this course develop a research proposal in three stages:

1. Participants formulate and sharpen their research questions, describing their scientific and societal relevance.
2. Participants review the existing literature, describing the key issues, identifying the gaps and criticizing shortcomings of previous research.
3. Participants develop the research approach and methodology of their project.

Form of tuition

This course has three forms of meetings: lectures, workshops, and individual / small group appointments with one of the lecturers. The lectures will focus on how to develop the problem statement, how to review and discuss previous research, what reviewers want, the advantages and disadvantages of common research designs in the social sciences, and validity and reliability of methods. You will also discuss examples of good and bad research questions and examples of full proposals. In preparation of the workshops participants complete individual assignments, which are discussed during the meetings. In the individual or small group appointments with the lecturer participants discuss their own research proposal. Taking into account that quantitative /social analytics vs. qualitative research approaches often come with different requirements, the group will, in a number of sessions and depending on the composition of the participating group, be split in two subgroups supervised by the lecturer from the relevant background. Research proposals will be presented at a final meeting in a conference format. ISR theme leaders and professors from the ISR themes are invited to participate and review the papers presented.

Type of assessment

The research proposal text is evaluated by an ISR core faculty member with expertise on the topic of the proposal.

Readings

Bekkers, R. (2017). *Academic Writing: A practical guide*. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Schneider, G. (2011). How to avoid the seven deadly sins of academic writing. *European Political Science*, 10: 337-345.

Torraco, R. (2005). Writing Integrative Literature Reviews: Guidelines and Examples. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4 (3): 356-367.

Communicating Science

Period: Y1, P6 (June)

Credits: 3

Coordinator and lecturer: Camiel Beukeboom

Co-lecturer: Sinan Çankaya

Course objectives

This course teaches students how the industry of academic research works and improves their skills in presenting academic research to a lay audience, policy makers, and other stakeholders in society. The impact of social science research is much more than the number of citations in academic outlets. In addition to these traditional outlets, scientific discourse nowadays increasingly occurs on fast online blogging sites hosted by individual researchers or groups, or interactive scientific news sites. This trend fits in an increasing emphasis for scientists to valorise their work and show the societal relevance and real world impact of their research. This course aims to train students in communicating their research ideas and results beyond the traditional means of journal articles and books.

This course focuses on judgment formation, communication, and learning skills. Students reflect critically on the scientific and societal relevance of research (JF10), learn how to disseminate research results using innovative means (C12, 13) and their social and ethical aspects (JF11). Students also learn to collaborate in internationally diverse teams, and train their communication skills (LS16).

Course content and structure

The course consists of two parts: a series of presentations and group discussions on the industry of academic research and a series of assignments producing presentations of research papers, open peer review reports, blog entries, and entries on Wikipedia.

Form of tuition

Lectures and presentations by students and group workshops.

Type of assessment

Oral presentations; written assignments; blog at <https://socializingsciencevu.com/>

Readings

Beukeboom, C. (2017). *Science Blogging*. Amsterdam: Graduate School for Social Sciences, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. https://fsw.vu.nl/en/Images/ScienceBloggingManualMar17_tcm250-834426.pdf

Research Integrity and Responsible Scholarship

Period: Y1, P6 (June)

Credits: 3

Coordinator and lecturer: René Bekkers

Co-lecturer: Gjalte de Graaf

Course objectives

This course seeks to contribute to a reflection and discussion on the normative consequences of the abstract ideals of science and an awareness of standards of good conduct among students in the social sciences. Students learn about codes of conduct and ethics review at the Faculty of Social Sciences (KU3, LS14), learn to reflect on ethical dilemmas in all phases of the research process (JF10), and specifically on the social and ethical aspects of big and small data (JF11). Students write a short paper on such ethical aspects (C12).

Course content and structure

Recent scandals in the social sciences have put integrity in research at the heart of much debate in the press and in the academic community. The highly visible cases in social psychology, economics and anthropology may only be the tip of the iceberg. Violations of research integrity include a wide range of behaviours, from seemingly minor problems resulting from 'sloppy science', to questionable research practices (QRP), research misconduct (RM), abuse of power by dissertation supervisors, and outright fabrication, fraud, and plagiarism (FFP). How can such violations of research integrity be prevented? What should researchers do when they notice violations of research integrity? Formulated in a more positive way: how can researchers contribute to responsible social science research?

The course consists of five meetings with lecturers from different backgrounds in which you will discuss integrity in research conduct and handling of data and its requirements according to faculty, university, national and disciplinary agreements. You will explore the terrain of scientific integrity and research quality, discuss violations of integrity, sloppy science, and questionable research practices. You will learn about proper data collection and storage; reliable and verifiable publication practices, impartiality, independence and norms on co-authorship.

Form of tuition

Course meetings are a mix between lectures and workshops.

Type of assessment

During the course you will write a paper reflecting on an issue of your choice – usually connected to your own discipline or research subject – regarding integrity and quality of research, which you will present in the final conference meeting. You will also comment on two papers by other participants.

Readings

Edwards, M.A. & Siddhartha, R. (2017). Academic Research in the 21st Century: Maintaining Scientific Integrity in a Climate of Perverse Incentives and Hypercompetition. *Environmental Engineering Science*, 34(1): 51-61. <https://doi.org/10.1089/ees.2016.0223>

Leetaru, K. (2017). Should Open Access And Open Data Come With Open Ethics? *Forbes*, July 20, 2017. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kalevleetaru/2017/07/20/should-open-access-and-open-data-come-with-open-ethics/>

Simmons, J. P., Nelson, L. D., & Simonsohn, U. (2011). False-positive psychology: Undisclosed flexibility in data collection and analysis allows presenting anything as significant. *Psychological Science*, 22,

1359-1366.

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (2017). Research Data Management Policy.

https://vunet.login.vu.nl/_layouts/SharePoint.Tridion.WebParts/download.aspx?cid=tcm%3a165-749091-16

Academic or societal internship

Period: Y2, P1-2 (September-December)

Credits: 24

Coordinator and lecturer: Tijs van den Broek

Co-lecturer: various

Course objectives

In the internship, students apply research skills they have gained in Year 1, build their networks and learn how to coproduce research with stakeholders in society.

While the internship involves knowledge and understanding of all phases of the research process and of both theories on resilience and research methods, the focus of the course is on the application of knowledge in practice (A6, 7), specifically with an eye to collaboration and communicative skills (LS14, 15 and 16). In addition, judgment formation in societal issues (JF9), theories (JF10), and ethics (JF11) are important learning outcomes served by this course.

Course content and structure

Students can engage in two types of internships:

1. academic research
 - at FSS VU faculty members from the ISR core themes,
 - at other VU faculties (e.g., Computer Science, Humanities)
 - at research universities abroad, in the Netherlands or beyond, with which the ISR has a partnership agreement
2. professional research
 - e.g., at the Social and Cultural Planning Office, O+S Amsterdam, Statistics Netherlands (CBS), Netherlands Court of Audit (Rekenkamer), Inspectorate of Education (Onderwijsinspectie), Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR)

Students seek internship possibilities themselves. Students formulate their interests, priorities and ambitions in the intervision group in P3 of year 1 to start the search. In collaboration with the internship host and the (intended) academic supervisor, the student writes a research proposal, describing the period, name of supervisor at host institution, the frequency of meetings, the activities during the internship, the workload for student (days per week) and the deliverables. When the research master coordinator deems the proposal ready, the student arranges a meeting between the supervisor at the host institution and the (intended) academic supervisor. Students can start their internship after an assessment of the research internship proposal by the coordinator of the Research Master. The primary supervisor is a social scientist affiliated with the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The supervisor has experience in supervising PhD project(s). Other scientists can be involved in the project, but they have only an advisory role regarding the formal assessment of the internship.

Type of assessment

Students discuss their progress in the internship during intervision meetings at the VU. At the end of the internship, students present their findings at a research conference at the VU. The student's performance in the internship is evaluated using a rubric (see Appendix 14.2) by the academic supervisor, based on the student's report of her activities and an exchange with the host. Course credits are awarded based on the final grade, which must be sufficient (min 6., max 10).

The internship and thesis are two separate products. The internship can be the starting point for the thesis, by providing contacts with informants for the thesis research or access to data.

Writing a Scientific Paper

Period: Y2, P3 (January)

Credits: 6

Coordinator and lecturer: Ben Crum

Co-lecturer: Jasper Muis

Course objectives

In this course, students gain insight and knowledge on the publication process in general and of writing scientific articles in particular. The course covers the entire process of writing a scientific paper – from developing a promising research question to the final round of revisions before acceptance for publication. Thus, the course primarily serves communication learning outcomes (C12, 13). In the process of writing, however, students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the subject (KU1, 2), their ability to apply this knowledge (A6, 7), their ability to formulate good arguments on the scientific and societal relevance of research design and results (JF10), and their awareness of social and ethical aspects of the research reported (JF11, LS14).

Course content and structure

In P3 of the second year, students will write a full research paper based on data that have been collected during the internship in P1/P2 of the second year. In order to prepare students, two full day sessions (beginning of September, beginning of December) will be organized. As of January, students are expected to work on their own article and present problems and progress to the group.

Form of tuition

Course meetings are a mix between lectures and workshops.

Type of assessment

Research paper.

Readings

Bekkers, R. (2017). *Academic Writing: A Practical Guide*. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Harvard College (2017). *Strategies for Essay Writing*.

<https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/strategies-essay-writing>

Sand-Jensen, K. (2007). How to write consistently boring scientific literature. *Oikos*, 116: 723-726.

Masterthesis

Period: Y2, P4-6 (February-June)

Credits: 30

Coordinator and lecturer: Tijs van den Broek

Co-lecturer: various

Course objectives

The master thesis is an original, individual piece of social science research with which the student concludes the RM program. The thesis answers a research question on societal resilience of the student's choice and is developed under supervision of one of the ISR core faculty members on an individual basis. The thesis includes a thorough review of relevant literature, an explicit theoretical framework, a well-justified research design, an analysis of the findings, and a conclusion and discussion.

The thesis is the proof of a student's learning throughout the entire research master program, and involves practically all learning outcomes.

Course content and structure

The master thesis builds on the research proposal produced in P5 of the first year. Students can commence with the master thesis when the research proposal has received a sufficient evaluation. When additional research opportunities emerge during the internship in P1-P2 of Year 2, the research proposal may be amended and resubmitted to the research master coordinator. The master thesis is supervised by an ISR core faculty member.

Form of tuition

Students discuss their progress and obstacles during peer group learning workshops.

Assessment

Independent evaluations by primary supervisor and a second reader (see Appendix 13).

Readings

To be determined by the student and supervisor.