Course outline Research Designs and Research Questions

Course outline:

Quick-and-dirty number-crunching ‘quantoids’ face them. Carefully describing and interpreting ‘smooshes’ face them. No matter where they stand on ontological and epistemological grounds and how we stereotype the respective ‘other side’, all researchers face similar challenges posed to core issues of research design. A research design is a plan that specifies how you plan to carry out a research project and, particularly, how you expect to use evidence to answer your research question.

The goal of this course is twofold. First, it should provide an overview about the universe of potential research designs. Second, this course should facilitate students and interested faculty to be able to see the trade-offs involved in choosing a particular research design in their research projects. Consequently, students are expected to develop own ideas about potential research questions and actively participate in those seminar-style meetings that are organized within this lecture course.

Day 1 (9:00 – 17:00 h):

1. Research Question
2. Core Issues of Research Design
3. Conceptualization and Measurement
4. Case Selection

Day 2 (9:00-15:00 h):

5. Experiments and the logic of Causal Inference
6. Causal Inference with Observational Data
7. Causal Inference in Case Studies
8. Improving Interpretation: Graphs vs tables

In case we have time and there is popular demand, I am happy to provide short sessions also on ...

- Nested Analysis
- Simulation as a research design tool
- Statistical Control
- How to write a publishable paper

Preparation:

Prepare the readings in advance so that you can come to class with particular questions in mind. You will learn primarily by reading and then discussing that material with your instructor and classmates. The more actively you participate in the discussions the easier it will be to comprehend the new material and the more fun we will have working on this together. A reading list will be provided on page two:


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