Research Methods I

SKI1004

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Jeroen Moes

Jeroen.Moes@MaastrichtUniversity.nl

University College Maastricht

Faculty of Humanities and Sciences

Maastricht University

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Introduction

What is this course about?

Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.

– Zora Neale Hurston

Research is "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge […]"[1]. This goal can be achieved in a wide variety of ways. We can count 'things', add them up, calculate statistics about them, and get a reliable overview of 'things'. We can also describe those things in great detail and question why they are the things that they are, and what that means in the context of those things. Which approach is better?

The answer is that this depends on what you want to learn about those 'things'. In other words, if we want to "increase the stock of knowledge", it partly depends on which knowledge you are interested in increasing (your 'puzzle' and specific questions), and partly also on what you consider 'knowledge' to be in the first place. In Research Methods I, we will address these issues in great detail, and we will go into how a research project can be set up in alignment with the answers to these questions. We will also address the steps that follow: what and where is 'data', and how can we analyze various types of data? This includes in-depth 'qualitative' types of research, but also statistical 'quantitative' approaches and an introduction into basic statistics.

Coming to UCM meant that you explicitly chose to study at an interdisciplinary institution, and that you are expected to have a broad interest in many fields. For that reason, the Research Methods courses form a hands-on introduction to research methods in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences, and you are required to invest your time and energy in all of those subjects. It will enable you to understand research findings from a broad variety of studies and academic disciplines, and covers the entire process of conducting systematic, empirical research.

The end goal (during the Project period) of the three Research Methods courses ahead of you will be to conduct your own original, high quality research, on any topic of your choice, using any academic methodology available.

For more detailed information on what we will be doing in this course, please consult the sections *Objectives* and *Planning*. Have a look at the *Assessment*, Readings, House Rules & Additional Information, and especially the Tutorials (detailed weekly instructions) too, and if anything is still unclear, don't hesitate to get in touch (see *Contact information*).

A note on Problem Based Learning

In this course, we will employ a mixture between 'classical' PBL and more exercise-oriented teaching in the tutorials. As we progress from Research Methods I to Research Methods II, and finally the Research Project, there will be an increasing emphasis on PBL discussions, while during the first weeks in Research Methods I, we will emphasize 'practical' exercises in order to get a firm grasp of how the research tools we are discussing work.

[1] *OECD (2002) Frascati Manual: proposed standard practice for surveys on research and experimental development, 6th edition. Retrieved 27 May 2012 from www.oecd.org/sti/frascatimanual*

Student Portal

You are expected to check Student Portal regularly for course updates, assignments, supplemental information, and general announcements. This is the main communication tool for this course between the coordinator, the tutors, and the students.

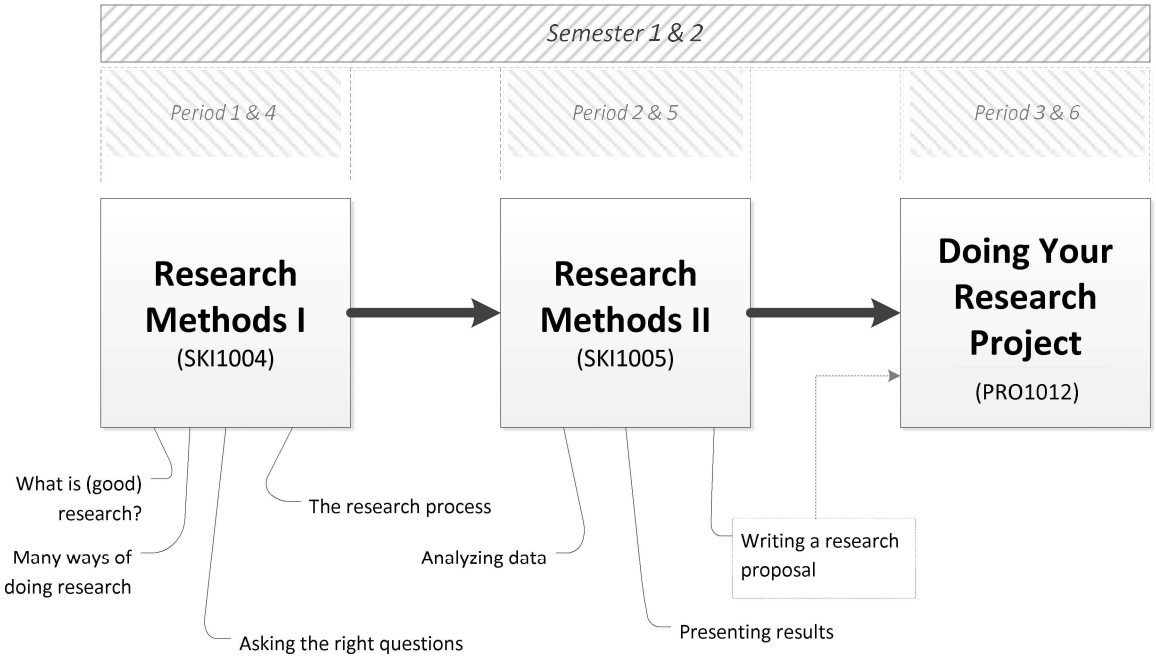
Why didn't I get a hardcopy of this course manual?

With so many online tools and platforms at our disposal, and virtually all students carrying a device on which they can access those platforms, we are experimenting with making this course a little more environmentally sustainable. The first step in this endeavor is to have digital versions of the course manual instead of hardcopy ones. It is also a small part of a bigger effort to build this course into a more tightly integrated set of online and face to face exercises, instructions, and exchanges. If you are not happy about having just the digital course manual, please get in touch with Jeroen Moes, the course coordinator.

How does this course relate to other research methods courses at UCM?

The research methods semester

Research Methods I, Research Methods II, and the Research Project form one coherent semester-long block of courses in which you will start from scratch and end with your own, original finished research project. You will first learn the basics of what research is, what methodology is, and how you can design a wide range of research projects during Research Methods I. In Research Methods II you will learn how to gather data, how to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' research, how to analyze the data you have, and how to write a proper report according to the chosen style of research. Finally – at the end of Research Methods II – you will propose your own research project, which we will then execute during the project period. Schematically, this looks roughly like this:



In other words, Research Methods I & II will provide you with all the tools you need to formulate interesting questions, design a suitable 'plan of attack' for conducting the research, analyzing data, and presenting data. In the project period, you will then employ all of these newly acquired tools to conduct your own research project over the course of four weeks. The choice of topic and methodology is completely free, but we do expect you to employ

the tools you gained during Research Methods I & II wherever they reasonably apply. This does not mean that, for example, you *have* to use statistics if you're doing a qualitative, in-depth research project – perhaps the most important skill you will have learned is to select the proper methods and techniques for the specific job at hand.

Related courses

After taking the three research methods courses above, you will have gained an understanding of what research is, what flavors there are in terms of methodology and varying approaches, and how you can conduct your own empirical research project. However, in order to become truly proficient in a specific style of research you will need to take additional courses at UCM (or beyond). Below are some of the courses offered within the UCM curriculum that can be considered follow-up courses to this broad introduction. The column on why it may be interesting often refers to the Research Methods course contents, and we will discuss them during lectures and tutorials. Don't worry if there are words in there that you don't know yet.

Course name	Code	Why it may be interesting
Back to the Sources	SKI2005	A humanities / historiographical approach to research, this course connects to our discussion on primary vs. secondary sources, and to archival research.
Datamining	SCI2033	Essential if you are interested in this type of gathering data, or if you have ambitions towards working with 'big data'.
Ethnography and Qualitative Interviewing I	SKI2085	You will have gained a basic understanding of qualitative interviewing during Research Methods, and we will devote thorough attention to ethnography as a methodological approach as well. If you find the qualitative approach to research interesting, you should certainly take this coherent track as a follow-up.
Ethnography and Qualitative Interviewing II	SKI3052	
Ethnography and Qualitative Interviewing III	PRO3009	
Graph Theory	SCI2026	If you found the references to (social) network analysis during the Research Methods courses interesting, this is a recommended next step for you.
Introduction to Game Theory	SCI2010	Game Theory is an approach to analyzing social behavior, but is strongly embedded in a mathematical approach to methodology.
Lab Skills: Cell Biology	SKI2077	During Research Methods II, we will also go into the basic skills required for a sciences research project. The 'Lab Skills' courses build further on these skills.
Modelling Nature	COR1005	This course goes further into the idea that we can analyze problems through modelling them. Usually, this will connect intimately to many of the more quantitative approaches in the sciences and social sciences.
Narrative Media	HUM3036	A methodological approach to analyze narrative media from a humanities perspective. Somewhat related concepts we discuss in our course: discourse analysis, biographical interview.
Philosophy of Science	COR1002	Notice how this course connects to issues like epistemology and ontology that we discussed in the Research Methods courses.
Quantitative Research Methods	SKI2065	Quantitative research methods is one of the two central pillars in the Research Methods courses you are now taking. If you find the quantitative approach to research interesting, this course is a highly recommended follow-up.
Statistics 1	SSC1028	These two statistics courses form a coherent package, and are essential if you plan on expanding your knowledge on quantitative research methods and statistics. SPSS is also
Statistics 2	SSC2026	

		used in these courses (though Statistics 1 starts with Excel), so you will have some useful knowledge to start with.
MaRBLe (formerly named PEERS)	UGR2001 UGR3001	In Research Methods 1, 2, and Project you will learn how to do research within a discipline of your own choice. PEERS offers the opportunity to work together with a researcher at Maastricht University on actual on-going research. This course spans an entire semester, and replaces two skills and one project (i.e. 10 ECTS). PEERS requires a GPA of over 7.5 and a successful application with a motivation letter.
Documentary	UGR3002	If you are interested in visual methods, this semester long (10 ECTS) course may be interesting to you. You can execute your own research within a set number of elective themes. Documentary Project requires a GPA of over 7.5 and a successful application with a motivation letter.
Capstone	CAP3000	For your final thesis at UCM, or the 'Capstone', many projects involve (empirical) research. The Research Methods courses are your foundation for conducting this independent research.

Objectives

What is the aim of this course?

Research Methods I (SKI1004), Research Methods II (SKI1005), and Research Project (PRO1012) form one coherent semester-long block of courses in which you will start from scratch and end with your own finished research project (see also *The research methods semester*). The overarching goal for this semester is to introduce you to a wide range of approaches to doing research. You will learn to evaluate and apply those methodologies, and learn what each of them can or cannot accomplish in terms of answering particular research questions. We will address types of research frequently conducted in the humanities, social sciences, and the sciences. Another goal of this sequence of courses is for UCM as an academic community to further develop its multi/interdisciplinary character, and for students to be able to reflect and comment on each other's work, no matter how diverse that may become in the course of three years.

The first component of this three-course block is Research Methods I. Within this block, you will learn the basics of research: about the systematic and logical aspects that are (virtually) universal across research styles, and about the differences that define them. We will develop a common vocabulary to evaluate and talk about research, and we will work on where it all begins: asking the right questions. From there, we will consider the sub-questions and hypotheses that flow from the central research questions, which data (broadly defined) we would need to find answers, and how we can analyze that data. You will get a basic introduction into the statistical computer program SPSS (see also *SPSS*), and a review of more specific or perhaps even 'exotic' research methods.

In Research Methods II, we will build on this foundation to work towards your own research proposal at the end of that course, and in the research methods Project in period 3 or 6 you will execute that proposal and finish with a paper presentation about your findings.

What will you know and be able to do?

After taking Research Methods I, you will know about:

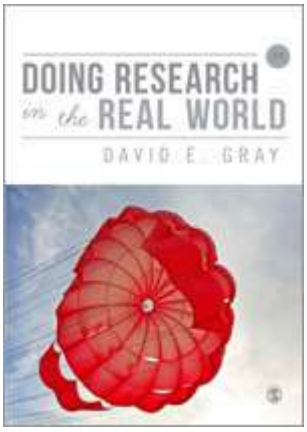
- What research is, and what the concepts are by which to evaluate it;
- The basic philosophical underpinnings of research methods;
- What an effective and systematic research design entails;
- Formulating a good research question;
- Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed Methods, and some 'exotic' methods, and what their respective advantages are;
- How to interpret research outcomes from a wide variety of approaches;
- Basic statistics, sampling strategies, and survey question design; and
- How produce statistics with *SPSS* and execute basic commands.

Readings

Mandatory reading

Throughout this entire semester-long period (SKI1004, SKI1005, and PRO1012; see *Introduction*), we will use one handbook as our go-to reference:

Gray, D. E. (2014). Doing Research in the Real World (Third ed.). London: SAGE Publications.



If you buy the book new, you will also receive free access to an interactive eBook and to the companion website at http://www.uk.sagepub.com/gray3e/main.htm, which has videos by the author and additional videos that explain concepts, links to supplementary online information, further reading, and some datasets. However, if you can get your hands on a second-hand copy that is absolutely fine as well, as long as it is the third edition of the book.

This book should provide you with a helpful resource where methodological concepts, issues, and various approaches are explained in an accessible style of writing. It is not an exhaustive resource for any and all things that we will discuss this semester, though. This means that we will supplement this book with **additional mandatory readings**. Those will be assigned during the course (normally one or two weeks in advance), and you are expected to read those as well. For this reason, keep an eye on *Student* Portal at all times, listen carefully to your lecturer and tutor, and if you are absent from any meeting (see *Attendance*) make sure that you know what you are expected to have read before your next meeting. There will be an online reference list made available to you with both mandatory and suggested readings, which will be accessible through *Student* Portal.

> **Note:** we will interpret the word 'readings' quite broadly to possibly include videos and other media as well.

Suggested readings

During the course, your lecturer and/or tutor may suggest additional readings. You are highly encouraged to venture into these materials. They may be useful for you if you find a particular topic especially interesting, or if something is still unclear and you feel you need a bit more background information.

Reading Schedule

The schedule below lists readings you are expected to do ***before*** **that respective week's tutorial meeting**. Please note that we will actively use those readings during the tutorials, and that not having read them in advance will prevent you from participating actively during the meeting, and *can* be grounds for not receiving attendance. For an overview of the weekly planning itself, please see *Planning* below, and make sure you have a good look at the

section called '*Tutorials (detailed weekly instructions)*' as well. Note that the list below may be supplemented with additional required readings during the course itself.

- **Week 1:**
  - *No readings assigned before the tutorial.*
- **Week 2:** Carnival break
- **Week 3:**
  - *Gray book:*
    - Chapter 2.
    - Chapter 3.
    - Skim Chapter 1 if you find it helpful.
  - *Articles to read in advance and to be discussed in the tutorial:*
    - Support for Radical Left Ideologies in Europe - Visser, Lubbers, Kraaykamp & Jaspers Support for Radical Left Ideologies in Europe - Visser, Lubbers, Kraaykamp & Jaspers
    - 'Beauty is in the eye of the beer holder': People who think they are drunk also think they are attractive - Bègue, Bushman, Zerhouni, Subra & Ourabah 'Beauty is in the eye of the beer holder': People who think they are drunk also think they are attractive - Bègue, Bushman, Zerhouni, Subra & Ourabah
    - Walking With Coffee: Why Does It Spill? - Mayer & Krechetnikov Walking With Coffee: Why Does It Spill? - Mayer & Krechetnikov
    - The Soviet Sausage Renaissance - Klumbytė The Soviet Sausage Renaissance - Klumbytė
- **Week 4:**
  - *For discussion during the tutorial:*
    - Della Porta & Keating, Chapter 2 (on Student Portal)
  - *As background, and to consolidate the materials in the lecture:*
    - Gray, Chapter 6
    - Gray, Chapter 7
    - Gray, Chapter 8
- **Week 5:**
  - *To prepare for the tutorial:*
    - Review the materials in the folder 'Tutorial 4' on Student Portal.
    - Read Gray, Chapter 22
- **Week 6:**
  - *To prepare for the computer lab session:*
    - Gray, Chapter 21
- **Week 7:** No assigned readings (but they may be assigned later).
- **Week 7:** No readings (exam week).

Planning

The first part of your education in research methods this semester is 'Research Methods I' (SKI1004). In this first part, we will lay the foundation for your further development later on in the semester. See *Introduction* and *Objectives* for more on this.

Research Methods I consists of **4 lectures, 5 tutorial meetings, and 1 computer lab session**. All tutorials and the lab session are mandatory (see *Attendance*). An outline of what we will discuss during each meeting is represented in the overviews on the pages below. Note that the readings mentioned under *Reading Schedule* should always be read **before** the meeting itself.

There are **two assessments**. The deadlines for those in are indicated in the section entitled '*Assessment*'.

Tutorials are typically used to consolidate what we learn in the lectures and the readings, so there is some intentional overlap between the two. This means that tutorials are normally connected to the topic of an earlier lecture (which, depending on the planning by OSA, may be the week before or in the same week). The logic here is that different students learn in different ways, and some will prefer to learn by listening to a lecture while others learn by doing. For that reason, the lectures will focus on more theoretical and general aspects, while tutorials serve to critically assess that information and look at practical examples. The first tutorial is an exception, and will be a somewhat broader and more 'intuitive' introduction into research methods.

Please make sure that you read the detailed description of each tutorial meeting under the header *Tutorials (detailed weekly instructions)*.

Lectures overview

When?	What?
Week 1	*[No lecture: only tutorials]*
Week 2	*[Carnival break]*
Week 3	Formulating research questions, and research, what is it (good for)?
Week 4	Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods
Week 5	An Introduction to Statistics
Week 6	*[No lecture: computer lab sessions]*
Week 7	Wrapping up: Q&A and looking ahead
Week 8	*[No lecture: exam week]*

Tutorials overview

When?	What?
Week 1	An introduction to thinking methodologically
Week 2	*[Carnival break]*
Week 3	Research approaches
Week 4	Philosophy and/in research
Week 5	Reading and understanding statistics
Week 6	*[No regular tutorials: computer lab session instead]*
Week 7	Wrapping up
Week 8	*[No tutorial: exam week]*

Tutorials (detailed weekly instructions)

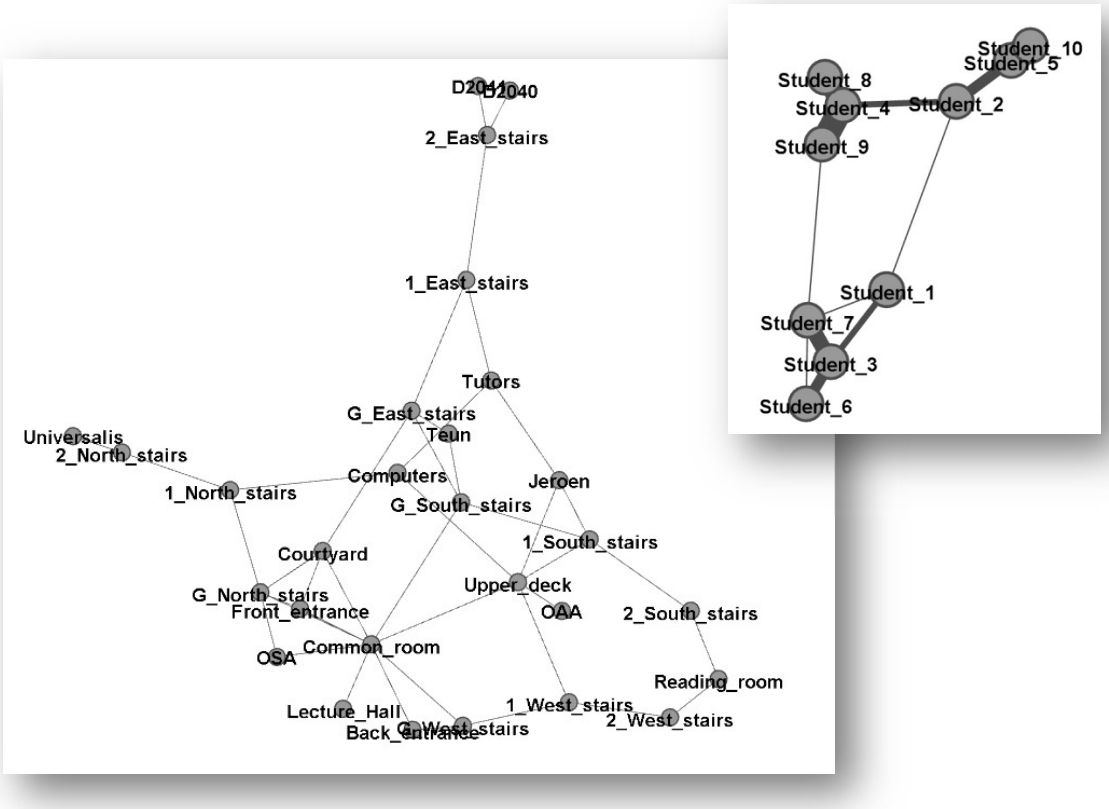
While the section above gives you a general outline of what we will discuss and when, please have a look at the instructions for each weekly tutorial session below. You are expected to come to tutorials prepared with the information and questions indicated below.

Week 1 – An introduction to thinking methodologically

This first week, you will be introduced to 'thinking methodologically' about the world around you, and to the idea that potentially, everything can be data.

Before the tutorial, make sure you have read this Wikipedia entry:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Bridges_of_Konigsberg

During the tutorial, we will do a couple of exercises, among which the aim is to create graphs like this:



We will also go deeper into measurement types. The table below may be a useful overview for that. Try to understand what each measurement type means, and come up with an example before the tutorial:

Table 1 - Measurement scales (O'Leary, 2014; p. 280).

	Nominal	Ordinal	Interval	Ratio
Classifies	X	X	X	X
Orders		X	X	X
Equidistant units			X	X
Absolute zero				X

Week 2 – Carnival break

No tutorial this week.

Week 3 – Research Approaches: disciplinary commonalities & differences

This week, we will look at some radically different takes on what it means to do research, how those approaches tend to match a certain academic discipline (sociology, engineering, etc.), and what each approach's merits are. In preparation, please skim the following four academic journal articles (available on Student Portal):

Please bring a printed or digital copy to the tutorial for each of these papers.

1. Visser, M., Lubbers, M., Kraaykamp, G. & Jaspers, E. (2013). Support for radical left ideologies in Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*. doi: 10.1111/1475-6765.12048
2. Bègue, L., Bushman, B. J., Zerhouni, O., Subra, B., & Ourabah, M. (2013). 'Beauty is in the eye of the beer holder': People who think they are drunk also think they are attractive. *British Journal of Psychology, 104*(2), 225-234. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8295.2012.02114.x
3. Mayer, H. C., & Krechetnikov, R. (2012). Walking with coffee: Why does it spill? *Physical Review E, 85*(4), 046117.
4. Klumbytė, N. (2010). The Soviet Sausage Renaissance. *American Anthropologist, 112*(1), 22-37. doi: 10.1111/j.1548-1433.2009.01194.x

During the tutorial, we will dissect these further, and you will get some time to look at them again.

Week 4 – 'Methodenstreit': philosophy and/in research

When people talk about *Methodenstreit* in academic debate, they are generally referring to an academic controversy (especially within economics and the broader social sciences) that took place mainly between the Austrian School and the German Historical School. The main point in this debate at the time was to what extent a scientific approach can explain human behavior and action.

An excerpt from Wikipedia on the history of the *Methodenstreit*:[2]

> The Historical School contended that economists could develop new and better social laws from the collection and study of statistics and historical materials, and distrusted theories not derived from historical experience. […] The Historical School were themselves reacting against *materialist determinism*, the idea that human action could, and would (once science advanced enough), be explained as physical and chemical reactions.
>
> The Austrian School […] argued against this, that economics was the work of philosophical logic and could only ever be about developing rules from first principles — seeing human motives and social interaction as far too complex to be amenable to statistical analysis — and purporting to deduce universally valid precepts from human actions.

For any given (empirical) research project, it is important to be aware of your basic assumptions (i.e. your epistemological ideas) about your object of study, and to reflect on that. Doing this as a standard practice in your academic / educational career will improve your work, and make your research more systematic and logical.
One could say that there are essentially three ways of considering your ontological and epistemological assumptions. Traditionally, the various academic disciplines have often each had a more or less 'default' way of thinking within their own fields. These have often changed over time, and after much debate (i.e. paradigm shifts within those

[2] Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodenstreit

disciplines), but for a given period, and a given academic discipline, there often was – and still is – a generally accepted way of understanding the world. From there, questions relevant within that paradigm are formulated, methodologies are built, and analyses are conducted. As a student within one such discipline, one would generally be taught to think in a certain way, and, subsequently, to do research in a certain way. This may generally not work very well among critical UCM students, though… Nevertheless, for someone who has a strong 'monodisciplinary' inclination – say you want to do *just* economics – this is often the reality of the matter.[3]

A second approach might be to do some 'soul-searching' and thinking of your own. You may have your own individual beliefs about reality and knowledge, and may therefore identify more strongly with one of the paradigm options on the academic menu. If you are very convinced of your own philosophical worldview, you may approach any potential question from your own, individual perspective, no matter whether the academic disciplines that you are interested in has a compatible approach or not (your life will be slightly more difficult that way, though).

A third approach could be to have a more agnostic attitude about these questions; essentially saying "I don't know". Perhaps you are not so sure about your own basic beliefs about reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology). You might also feel that on occasion changing perspectives on these things might actually teach us different things, even though on a philosophical level we may or may not be able to combine those insights in the end.

All three of these approaches are perfectly valid, especially within a Liberal Arts college. For the debate today, however, you will be forced to take on one particular approach to reality and knowledge, and stick with it until we arrive at the final discussion. Within the Research Methods courses more broadly, you will be required to at least understand and appreciate various different approaches, even though they may be different from your own.

Debate

Today, you will take on the position of either a (Post-)Positivist, or an Interpretivist. The literature will assist you in considering those positions. Feel free to consult Gray's book, the book chapter by Della Porta & Keating that was circulated by email/Student Portal, and the lecture slides/notes at any time during the tutorial. From those basic epistemological positions, you will approach one of the following phenomena. Within your group come up with the following aspects:

1. **A research question**, written down. This can also be about a sub-question or specific sub-set of the general topic.
2. **A methodological approach** (in general terms) – use the book, circulated chapter, and lecture slides/notes.
3. **Possible answers** to the research question (i.e. what *could* an answer look like? What would you expect to come out of it?).

Topics

Below are three brief descriptions of topics that you can choose to talk about today. They refer to what some sociologists have referred to as the three central questions of their discipline: social cohesion, rationalization, and inequality. We will choose only one. All three of these topics concern what could be labelled either as a 'social reality' and/or as a concept describing certain human behaviour.

1 – European Identity

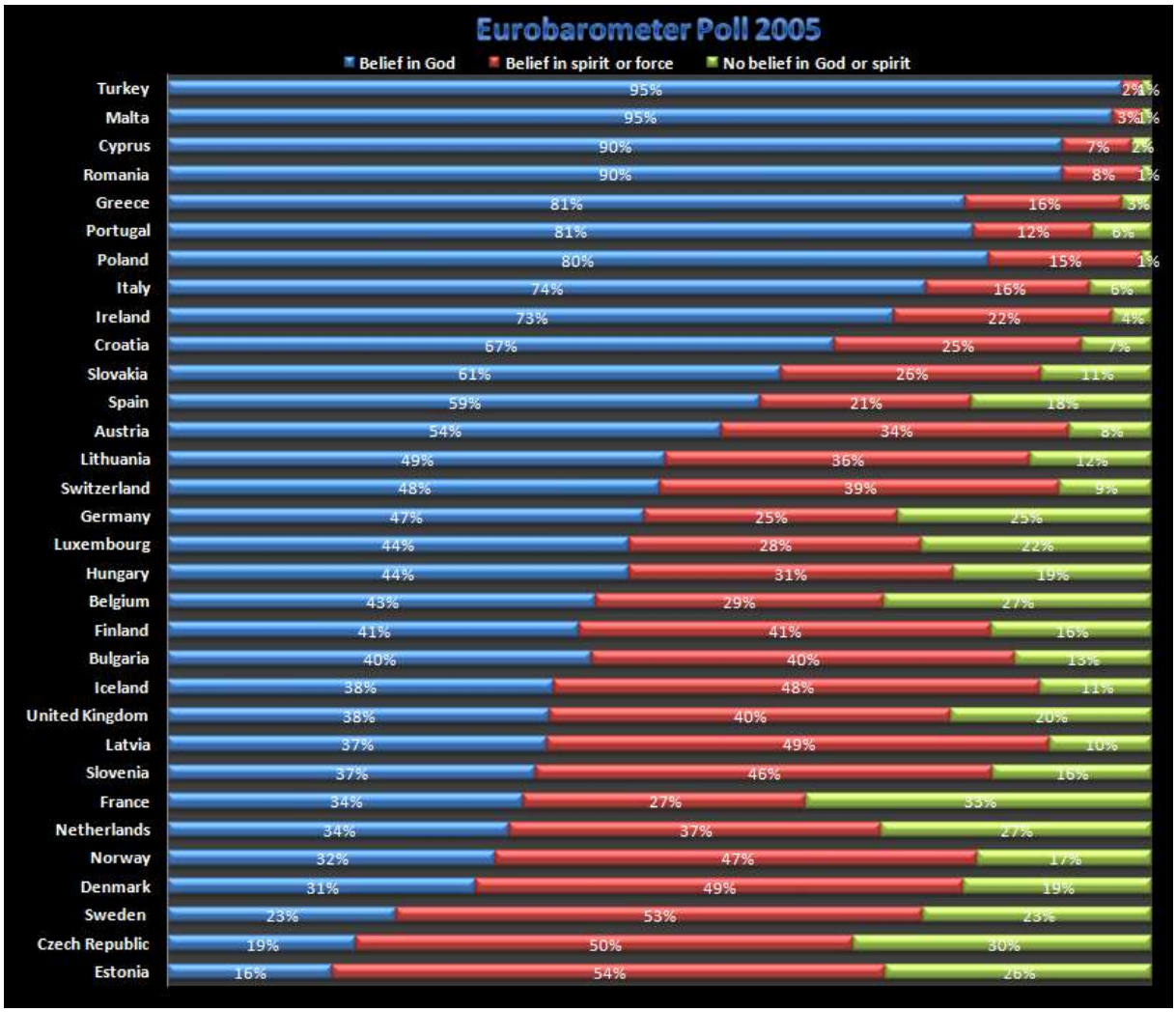
Our relationship to 'Europe' has become a hot political topic, especially in recent times. Some scholars suggest that as a result of over half a century of European integration, more and more people have started to identify with the concept of Europe. The economic crisis may have redefined all of this, however, or perhaps what those academics have called 'identity' over the years is really nothing more than set of behaviours that people have because they can buy their gasoline and alcohol for lower prices across the border. What is an identity to begin with, and who or

[3] Note that at a later point in this course (during Research Methods 2), we will also do a practical exercise to see which academic disciplines tend use which types of approaches.

what creates it? Can we really speak of identity in this case, and if so, what are the right questions to ask about it, and how can we answer them?

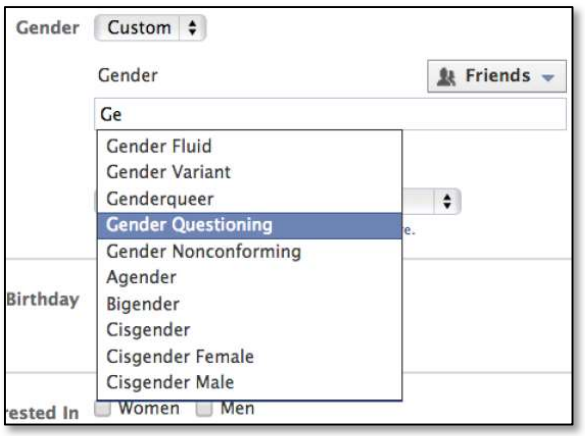
2 – The Decline of Religion

Secularization (i.e. the decline of religion) has long been more pertinent in Europe than it has been in most other areas of the world (see graph on the next page, which is better in colour). Scholars have speculated about the reasons for this change, and the significance that it may have for these societies and their people. Will this decline continue, and if so, does something else take its place? Is there a relationship between this trend and (the decline of) social cohesion generally? Most intriguingly, perhaps, how can we explain or understand this development?



Gender Inequality

Despite lofty ideas about democratic and egalitarian societies, women are still at a structural disadvantage in most countries. Their statistical chances on the labour market and in politics are generally worse than those of men, and many have argued that the social image of women is still stuck in the pre-1950's in several ways (think of body image, household chores, supposed erratic behaviour, etc.). In addition to the apparently persisting social dominance of (white) males over women, we could also think about gender minorities in this issue. Consider, for example, the fact that Facebook has only recently opened up their gender categories for people's profile pages:



Week 5 – Reading and understanding statistics

This week, we will discuss introductory statistics, hopefully reinforcing what you have learned during the lecture on this topic. It also connects to what we will discuss in the lab session this week. **Please look at the materials in the folder 'Tutorial 4' on Student Portal before coming to the tutorial.**

The main learning goals for this tutorial are:

1. To intuitively understand what correlation means.
2. To be able to read a simple regression table (coefficients).
3. To distinguish between descriptive and inferential statistics.
4. To not be afraid of statistics ('statophobia').
5. To consider sampling bias, and biased questions.

In preparation, please have a look at the regression tables below, and try to understand what they mean. We will discuss these further during the tutorial.

Table A1. Descriptive Statistics from Introductory Sociology Assignments

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Quiz average	80.1	81.3	10.6	30.5	100
Exam 1	84.8	86.5	10.7	50	100
Exam 2	84.7	86	11.7	0	100

Notes: n = 339, 10 sections, all scores presented as percentages.

Table A2. Regression of Exam 1 Performance on Quiz Score

	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Beta
Constant	47.038	
Quiz	.472***	.468

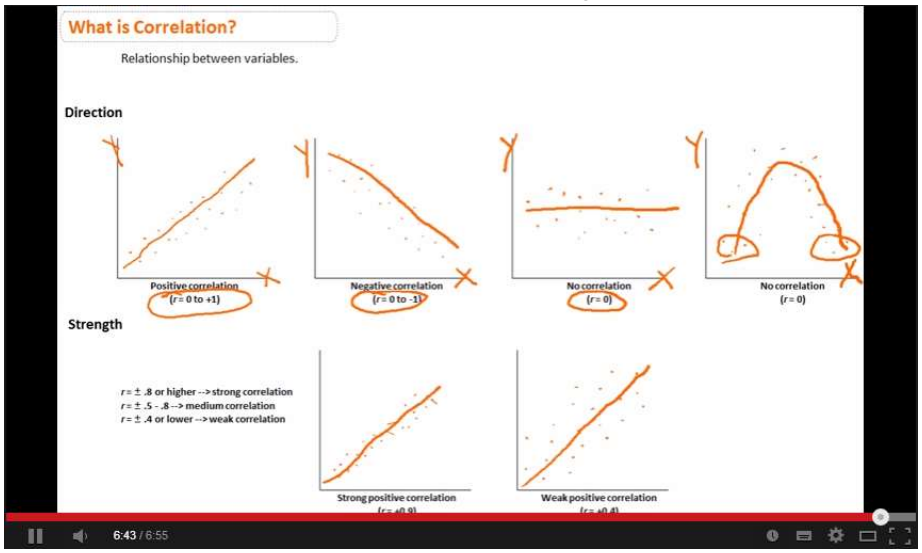
Notes: On regressions: Models using clustering to adjust the standard errors for the nonindependence of students within the 10 sections produced no differences in significance levels.
R^2 = .219. *** $p < .001$.

Table A3. Regression of Exam 2 Performance on Quiz and Exam 1 Scores

	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	32.791***	15.54***
Quiz	.648 (.588)***	.475 (.431)***
Exam 1		.367 (.335)***
R^2	.346	.434

Notes: Standardized beta in parentheses. On regressions: Models using clustering to adjust the standard errors for the nonindependence of students within the 10 sections produced no differences in significance levels.
***$p < .001$.

Finally, as a refresher on correlation, consider watching this Youtube video:



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ypgo4qUBt5o

Week 6 – Computer lab session

No tutorial this week, but there are computer lab sessions instead (100% attendance required; please check your schedule).

Week 7 – Wrapping up

This week, we will review anything that you still have questions about in preparation for your exam. Additionally, we will start working towards Research Methods II, and discuss some of the things that are ahead of us.

Week 8 – No tutorial (exam week)

There is no tutorial or lecture scheduled for this week, but there is an exam scheduled.

Assessment

Assignments and Deadlines

For Research Methods I, there are 2 graded assignments, both of which are individual assignments. The schedule below shows the assignments, their weighting, and the deadlines associated with them.

Assignment	**Weight**	**Deadline**, *and where to hand it in*
1. *Week 4:* **Formulating questions**	30%	*Safe Assignment & OSA*: Friday 2 March, 17:00.
3. *Week 8:* **Exam**	70%	*Week 7 (Exam Week):* Monday 26 March, 16:00-18:00, see your timetable for location.

Instructions for graded assignments

Assignment: 'Formulating questions' (30%)

Hand in: Safe Assignment online and a hardcopy at OSA (unless instructed otherwise by your tutor)
Weighting: 30% of your final grade for the course
Word count: 1200-1800 words, excluding bibliography and appendices (if any) - this is an indication; not a strict requirement

The assignment is to formulate a well-defined research question, and make a case for the academic/theoretical and/or social relevance of this question. On that basis, you should also consider which broad research methodology/methodologies would be suitable for this question (e.g. quantitative, qualitative, exploratory, confirmatory, etc.), and why (tutorial week 1/2). This includes a brief reflection on your 'paradigm', meaning which philosophical assumptions you have about reality and knowledge and how that impacts your research approach (tutorial week 2/3). Rest assured that your current knowledge about formulating research questions and research designs will be taken into account in the grading process. At the bottom is a list of different elements that you will be graded on specifically. For all elements, make sure that you use the literature and topics that we discussed during the lectures and tutorials, and the concepts you learned along the way.

A helpful resource / checklist for doing this assignment may be Table 3.2 in the Gray book (p.52), as well as the Della Porta paper from week 3. Chapter 3 of Gray, which has that table also describes these various aspects of a research design in more detail.

Any topic that you yourself find interesting can be the focal point of your paper, as long as you can come up with a proper way to formulate an interesting question. The suggested research question does **not** have to be feasible to answer within the project period (we will work on that during Research Methods 2), but it **does** have to be 'answerable' *in principle* – meaning that given enough resources and time we could reasonably find an empirical answer to this question. Keep in mind that the paper is **not** a literature review, but should propose an **empirical** (i.e. based on some form of data) research question. The elements that **need** to be present in the paper are the following:

- **Research question** (narrow enough to allow for an answer, but broad enough to be interesting).
    - Needs to be explicitly, and clearly formulated in the body of the text (with a question mark at the end).
    - If applicable, you may additionally define hypotheses and/or sub-questions.

- References to **earlier empirical work** on this or a similar topic, which should constitute a rough theoretical framework for your question. These references should be referred to in the body of the text, and you should engage with these studies (in other words, not just a list of publications, but a discussion on them, and how your hypothetical project adds to that).
- A clear outline of **why this is a relevant question**. Consider whether the following types of relevance are applicable to your question:
    - Theoretical (gaps in theory, confirming theory, etc.)
    - Empirical (gaps in knowledge about reality)
    - Social (benefits to society)
- Which broad research methodology / approach would suit this question? E.g. quantitative, qualitative, exploratory, confirmatory, inductive, etc.
- Make sure you also include a **philosophical reflection** (i.e. what is your paradigm?) on this type of project. E.g. interpretivist, post-positivist, etc.
- Please pay attention to proper layout and use proper headers in your text.
- Use proper APA references and style. Justified text is preferred.

TL;DR

Write:

1. Research question
2. Relevance & prior research
3. Broad methodology
4. Epistemology

In which the order typically is: Prior research & relevance → Research question → Epistemology → Methodology

Exam (70%)

What: Written exam; open & closed questions
When: The exam will take place during exam week, to be scheduled by OSA (check your timetable or see above)
Where: Scheduled by OSA (check your timetable, or see above)

The exam will cover all of the materials we covered in all of the lectures, tutorials (plus any learning goals), lab sessions, and readings (*only* the assigned chapters from the Gray book as well as all additional weekly readings). It will consist of a combination of open and closed questions. The idea is that the exam will be constructed in such a way that additional cramming of the materials leading up to the exam should **not** be necessary if you kept up with all of the tutorials, learning goals, readings, lab sessions, and lectures. *If you happen to miss one of those, make sure that you catch up through your class mates (or your tutor).* **Last year, 89% of student who attended the exam passed it on their first try.** The average grade was a 7.25 (median: 7.29, mode: 7.06, standard deviation: 1.32). Of the 11% who did not pass the exam on their first try, most of them passed the resit. The most common reason for people failing the exam in the first place was not answering all of the questions (or not attending at all). This is not an overly difficult exam, so please try not to stress too much about it (and that includes statistics)!

This is the distribution of grades last year in a histogram ($\bar{x}$ = 7.25, SD = 1.32):

Assessment details

Weighting

Your grades will be weighted. The following example explains how that works. Suppose that you receive an 8.0 for the assignment (30%), and a 7.6 for the exam (70%). This would mean that your final grade will be:

$$(\mathbf{8.0} * 0.3) + (\mathbf{7.6} * 0.7) = \underline{\mathbf{7.72}}$$

Final grades are rounded to one decimal, which in this example would mean that the actual final grade is a 7.7.

Passing or failing

Your final grade will be rounded off to one decimal. If that final grade is above 5.5, you pass the course. If it is below 5.5 even though you made a **fair attempt** (i.e. a genuine effort) to do all parts of the total assessment[4], **and** you meet the attendance requirement (see *Attendance*), you are eligible for a resit. Resits are scheduled during the resit week at the end of the semester. If your initial final grade is above 5.5, you are **not** eligible for a resit to improve your grade.

Not handing in assignments on time

If you did **not** hand in an assignment on time, the following happens:

1. Your grade is '0' for this assignment.
2. You can still pass the course in the following scenarios:
    a. You **still hand in the assignment** before the end of the course, to show a 'genuine effort' (the grade for the assignment remains 0, though), and if you get an average of 5.5 or higher from the other two assignments you pass the course.
    b. You **still hand in the assignment** before the end of the course, to show a 'genuine effort' (the grade for it remains 0, though), and if you get an average of below 5.5 you are eligible for a resit.
3. If you do **not** hand in the assignment at all, you automatically fail the course and you are not eligible for a resit.
4. **Note:** You may be requested to do an additional assignment, depending on the specific circumstances.

[4] An exception to the 'fair attempt' clause is of course possible if there are pressing reasons that prevented you to do an assessment, and you notified the course coordinator beforehand.

How to name your documents

Naming conventions

For any and all digital files you hand in (through Safe Assignment or otherwise) with your tutors or the coordinator you need to name your files according to a specific format. This will make it possible for your tutors and the coordinator to handle the large number of students and tutorial groups in this course efficiently and will ensure that your files don't get lost in the process.

Please name your files as follows:
"Course code - Tutorial group number - Your Name - Assignment.file_extension"

For example:
"SKI1004 - 09 - Jackie Chan - Assignment 1.docx"

File formats

For text, doc, docx, or pdf are preferred. Consult your tutor or the coordinator if you wish to use something else. When applicable, for images, png or jpg are preferred, and for film materials please use avi or mpg with a commonly used codec (or hand in a dvd). For datasets or any other more 'exotic' materials you might like to share, consult your tutor or the coordinator.

Where to hand in your assignments

An electronic copy through **Safe Assignment** (on Student Portal) **and** a hardcopy at the **Office of Student Affairs**. Both the digital and hardcopy version need to be submitted by the deadline. Safe Assignment will also automatically check whether parts of your paper were copied from another student's paper, a publication, or an internet source (see also *Plagiarism*).

If you are physically unable to hand in a hardcopy, you can send it to UCM by regular mail at the address below, or have someone else drop it off for you. The hardcopy must still be **at UCM by the deadline**.

Office of Student Affairs, University College Maastricht
P.O. Box 616
6200 MD
Maastricht, The Netherlands

Please note that if your assignment is not handed in both through Safe Assignment *and* as a hardcopy, this will sadly result in a 'zero' score for that particular assignment.

House Rules & Additional Information

Attendance

Students are expected to be present for all lectures as well as all tutorial group meetings. Attendance will not be formally registered at **lectures**, though, because this is logistically unfeasible, and more importantly because students are trusted to make their own proper judgment on how they approach their studies (and therefore hopefully will decide to come). The deal is that the lecturer will do his very best to make the lectures worth your time, and to make them enjoyable, and that you show up and participate as much as you can.

For **tutorials**, UCM's Academic Rules and Regulations are also binding for this course. This means that the minimum attendance requirement is 85%, and that tutors are required to take your attendance. If you miss more than 30% of the tutorial meetings (that's 2 meetings), you automatically fail the course. Basically, it boils down to this:

- If you miss 1 tutorial meeting with a *valid reason* → You can still pass the course.
- If you miss 2 tutorial meetings with a *valid reason* → You can apply for an additional assignment which makes you eligible to pass the course, but *only* if you have a valid reason for missing *both* of those tutorial meetings. Without this additional assignment, you fail the course.
- If you miss more than 2 tutorial meetings, or any without a valid reason → You fail the course.

The computer lab session is mandatory (100%). If you miss it with a valid reason, you should apply for an additional replacement assignment immediately after missing that meeting. This assignment is separate from any additional assignment you might need for the regular tutorials.

Laptops, phones, and other electronic devices

Use of any electronic devices (laptops, phones, tablets, etc.) are in principle not allowed during lectures and especially during tutorials, unless otherwise indicated by your tutor or after asking for and receiving permission to the contrary. Though in some cases such devices can certainly be beneficial to your learning, note taking, or gathering information, experience has shown that in many cases these devices are used for other purposes in class. If you would like to receive an exception to this rule, please ask your tutor and/or the coordinator.

Word count

Any assignment in this course needs to be within the word count set for that assignment. The word count margins are fairly broad in order to accommodate different styles of doing research and to give you some freedom to follow your own style of writing. There is no additional margin on top of the indicated word limit, and going under or over the word count will result in a penalty on your grade.

Writing Style

In this course you will have to produce several texts. Writing styles are essential tools in communicating ideas in academia, and text is the media of choice for the overwhelming majority of academic output. There is a degree of variation in terms of which style is commonly accepted as a 'good' style, however, and this is rooted in long histories of varying academic disciplines. While a chemist may write rather 'clinically' and in an 'objective' way, an anthropologist may write in a somewhat more 'verbose' style, and place him/herself into the text quite explicitly. These differences in style to a large extent also serve methodological purposes, which we will discuss in more detail during the course.

For this reason, you are encouraged to reflect upon your style of writing, from one assignment to the next. Also try to consider which information is (methodologically) relevant to mention in the text you are producing. You will see that for some assignments, you might feel that your text benefits from a more 'detached' and uncomplicated style, while in other assignments you might have to get a bit more descriptive and personal (this is not the same as 'informal', however!). If you can defend the choices you make in terms of writing style, and relate this to methodological aspects of your text, you are free to choose any style that you feel is best suited to communicate your findings and ideas. Regardless of the style you choose, though, a *formal* writing style is expected (see below).

There is a list of general guidelines for formal writing in '*Appendix A - Guidelines to formal writing*', at the end of this Course Manual. These are not universal commandments (in fact, this Course Manual will break many of these guidelines), but rather a list of common style issues that you can and should check your texts for, no matter which style you choose to adopt.

Layout

Similarly, please pay some attention to the layout of your documents. Use professional looking fonts (using comic sans will be punished), use page numbers, pay attention to section headers where appropriate, make effective use of paragraphs (line breaks and/or indents are acceptable), and know that the coordinator loves a text that is justified rather than aligned to the left (but this is not a formal requirement).

References

The exception to the above rule is when it comes to references. Academia is by its very nature a collective effort, and for that reason we need to build on each other's findings. This means that you will have to use existing materials (books, articles, films, images, etc.) in your own work, and refer to those materials properly. This also applies to 'primary sources' (we'll discuss this in the course). As a style manual for references, it is strongly recommended to use APA 6th, as you have been taught in the 'Introduction to Academic Skills' courses. You *may* use another style if you have good reasons for that, as long as you systematically stick to it, and as long as it is a commonly accepted style format in academia.

Here is a presentation on how to use APA 6th: http://j.mp/APA6th

If that's not enough background information, check your materials from 'Introduction to Academic Skills' and/or Google it. It can be found relatively easily online.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, as you probably know, means that you're copying someone else's work (this can be an online text, another student's work, or any other source that's not your own), and passing it on as your own. 'Self-plagiarism' is almost the same concept, but instead means that you're copy-pasting from your own earlier work. Neither of those things are acceptable, and in any case of (suspected) plagiarism, the Board of Examinations will review the situation according to UCM's rules and regulations. Also, plagiarism is a silly thing to do, because you won't learn as much as you would otherwise do. For more detailed information on this topic, see the UCM Student Handbook.

> **Note**: proper referral to existing literature and other sources is of course encouraged (required even), and is not plagiarism! Refer to the skills you have learned during your 'Introduction to Academic Skills' courses for how to refer properly. Using APA 6th Edition is preferred in this course (see also *Writing Style* above).

Software

SPSS

In this Research Methods I, we will have one computer lab session, in which we will explore the statistical program SPSS (formally called 'IBM SPSS Statistics'). You will gain a basic understanding of how this program works, what you can do with it, and how to operate it. In Research Methods II, we will delve a bit deeper into the program and perform some analyses with it. In the research methods project period at the end of the semester, some students will conduct an actual research project with the aid of SPSS depending on the type of research project they choose to do.

SPSS is installed on all computers at UCM, and you are encouraged to play around with the program a bit also before you have had your lab session in Research Methods I. Some students will find it easier to learn SPSS than others. How quickly you pick up any other computer program (Excel, or even special functions within Word, for example) is often a good indicator. The best way to learn and gain confidence is by helping each other out. Those who like tinkering with SPSS once they managed to go through the initial steps relatively quickly are encouraged to show their fellow students their way around the program as well. For another assignment, the roles will likely be reversed.

You can also install a copy of SPSS on your own laptop if you think that you will be using it a lot during your studies (this is not required for the course). The ICT service point – which is conveniently located within the UCM building – can help you get your hands on a copy. For students, a lot of software can be bought legally with a high educational discount via www.surfspot.nl, which also applies to SPSS.

Though it is recommended to use the UCM computers if you don't need a copy of SPSS of your own, there is also a free 14-day trial version of SPSS available at this website:
http://www-01.ibm.com/software/analytics/spss/products/statistics/downloads.html

Qualtrics

There are many online survey platforms available. Some of those have a limited free plan, but most serious contenders are paid options (some examples are SurveyMonkey, SurveyGizmo, and LimeSurvey). Qualtrics is one of the best systems for designing and circulating online surveys, and it allows you to download your datasets in a neat SPSS file format if you want to. It has a limited free plan, but Maastricht University now also has a paid license to this service. Students can register for this by contacting the IT department. Get in touch with the course coordinator if you need help with this. While easy to use, it is not recommended to use Google Docs/Forms or platforms such as Typeform to collect survey data. The reasons for this will be addressed during Research Methods 2 and Research Project, but in a nutshell, these platforms store data in a way that is usually inconvenient to use for proper statistical analysis without further manipulation.

Atlas.ti

For qualitative analysis, one program that is used a lot is 'Atlas.ti', and its latest version number is 7. If we have time in the course, and especially in the lab sessions, there will be a demonstration of how this program works. Unfortunately, this program is not installed on UCM / UM computers by default. However, if students intend to use this program for the project period at the end of the semester, a license for it is available for free from the ICT department.

Other software

During the course we will occasionally mention other software packages as well. Your tutor or lecturer will inform you about any software that you might need if you want/need to do a specific type of analysis, but here are some links if you're curious to find out on your own:

Name	What is it for?	Free / paid	Where to get it
***ORA**	Social Network Analysis	Free	http://www.casos.cs.cmu.edu/projects/ora/
f4 (Windows) **f5** (Mac)	Transcription software	Demo version, paid	http://www.audiotranskription.de/english
Kwalitan	Qualitative Analysis	Paid	http://www.kwalitan.nl/engels/index.html
MAXQDA	Qualitative Analysis	30 day free trial, after that paid	http://www.maxqda.com/downloads/demo
MLwiN	Multilevel modelling	30 day free trial, after that paid	http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cmm/software/mlwin/
Pajek	Social Network Analysis	Free	http://pajek.imfm.si/doku.php?id=download
Qualicoder (developed by UCM alumni)	Qualitative coding	Free	https://qualicoder.com/
R	Statistics	Free	http://www.r-project.org/
Stata	Statistics	Paid	http://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/student-pricing/ (student license) http://www.stata.com/customer-service/evaluate-stata/ (application for 30-day trial)
StOCNET (incl SIENA)	Social Network Analysis	Free	http://www.gmw.rug.nl/~stocnet/StOCNET.htm
UCINET	Social Network Analysis	60 day free trial, after that paid	https://sites.google.com/site/ucinetsoftware/downloads

Goodies & Glossary

On Student Portal, you will find two additional sections, which are called 'Goodies' and 'Glossary'. The former is a growing list of links to papers, newspaper clippings, visualizations, data, etc. that in some way or the other relate to interesting research. You are invited to submit your own links for this section as well, which will be carried over to students taking Research Methods in the years to come. The second section, called 'Glossary', is a list of concepts relating to research methods. These may or may not be discussed during the course, but in any case you can use this as a somewhat reliable source of definitions for terms that are still unclear to you.

Other Questions You May Have

I am assigned to tutor group X. Can I switch to tutor group Y?

No, unless you have a real academic scheduling conflict. Assignment of students to the tutor groups is done by the Office of Students Affairs, so you will have to go talk to them if you have a real scheduling conflict.

I missed a tutorial in group X. Can I make up for it in group Y?

No. Groups are usually filled to the maximum number of students, and the group process within tutorial groups is very important in achieving your teaching goals, as is your relationship to your tutor. In exceptional cases we may

deviate from this rule, but you will have to consult the course coordinator and the tutors involved about this in advance.

I didn't know that we had to do X as self-study in my tutor group, since I was absent last week for <valid reason>.

If you miss a tutor group meeting, it is your responsibility to obtain any information that you may have missed. If you are not prepared, you will not get attendance.

I have a different question, which is not in the Course Manual or on Student Portal

For any questions you still have, don't hesitate to get in touch with your tutor. If that doesn't help, ask the course coordinator. See *Contact information* for more information.

Contact information

For any questions that you may have, please get in touch with your tutor first (ask them about their office hours during the first meeting). If that doesn't help, feel free to contact the course coordinator, preferably before or after a lecture. Other than that, our doors are always open for you for anything that is urgent, and we're right here at UCM. When you are writing an email to anyone, **please put your tutorial group number in the subject line**.

Course coordinator

Jeroen Moes
Zwingelput 4 (UCM)
Room D 1.034
Tel. +31 (0)43 38 85456
Jeroen.Moes@MaastrichtUniversity.nl

> **For non-urgent issues, please make an appointment via email first. Remember to put your tutorial group number in the subject line.**

Appendix A - Guidelines to formal writing

These are 'Daniel's general guidelines to formal writing'. They are borrowed from the Course Manual for 'Introduction to Academic Skills II'. The footnotes were added by the coordinator for the Research Methods courses, however.

These guidelines are not hard-and-fast rules that you absolutely have to stick to in all situations, but as the term implies, they can act as a guide to further strengthen your writing. I have included the most common mistakes that people tend to make; the list is by no means exhaustive. [5]

1. Be careful what you are referring to
When writing about "one", do not switch to "he" or "him" in the next part of the sentence. When using "it", make sure that it refers back to something previously mentioned. Do vague terms like "they" actually refer to certain people? Check whether words like "that" or "this" follow logically from previous statements. Basically, make sure that the reader knows what or who you are talking about.

2. Do not use "but" in the beginning of sentence
Instead, try to use words like "however", "yet" or perhaps "although". When using "but" in the middle of a sentence, it is usually preceded by a comma.

3. Do not use "also" in the beginning of a sentence
Try to use words like "furthermore", "moreover" or "in addition" if you want to emphasise the link with the previous section. If the emphasis is not important, simply move the word "also" a bit further into the sentence.

4. Try to avoid contracted forms
Write out words like "can't", "won't", "don't" or even "that's" and "I'll" in full. This is largely a matter of style, but in formal writing these words sound far too colloquial.

5. Commas
Commas are your friends. They exist to help you structure your sentences and provide you with some breathing space. After words like "firstly", "however", "generally" and "moreover" (words that generally appear in the first part of the sentence), a comma usually follows. When writing longer sentences, make sure that the reader can follow what is going on. Commas help you to break down the sentence into understandable parts. In some cases, a full stop can actually be used instead of a comma, especially when the two parts of a sentence have little to do with each other. When a full stop serves as well as a comma, always try to use a full stop. If you want to use a stronger pause, but do not want to split up the sentence in two, use a semicolon.
6. Adverbs
Although adverbs can occur in many places in a sentence, try to put them as close to the verb they modify as is possible. Instead of writing "he understood the importance of this sentence clearly", try "he clearly understood the importance of this sentence".

[5] In case you are representing 'in vivo' quotes from respondents / informants, any language style is generally acceptable. This also applies if you are referring in quotations to other sources. We will discuss the use of quotes and what 'in vivo' means in more detail during this course.

7. To get

Simply try not to use this verb. In casual speech, it can perform many functions, but it has few uses in formal writing. "I got a car for my birthday" should be turned into "I received a car for my birthday". "He got better at spelling" should become "He became better at spelling".

8. Etcetera

Avoid using this unless you really have to. As a rule of thumb, use it only in summations of more than three items and even then you should exercise caution. If used carelessly, "etc." sounds like "and more stuff" or "whatever". If you can simply complete the list, do so. If there are too many items to list, at least mention three before resorting to "etc."

9. Avoid colloquial language

Try not to use phrases such as "I guess", "I think", "messed up" or "stuff" that you might use in normal, everyday English. Make sure your language is clear and clean. There is usually no need to say "I think" or "I guess", because the reader realises that what he or she is reading is the opinion of the author. Moreover, avoid slang and informal or vulgar terms.

10. Be economical

"I would like to think that I might be able to" could just as easily be rephrased as "I think I can". Avoid padding sentences with words that have no real meaning or that simply do not add anything. If you say "he was really acting very aggressively", the meaning can also be conveyed with a simple "he was aggressive" (or "he was very aggressive" if you feel the need to stress the point). As a matter of style you might like to make more complicated sentences, but consider whether these words really add anything. Especially avoid constructions like "It is… that (which)". For example: "It was the rising price of grain that ruined his business" can become "The rising price of grain ruined his business". Or even better: "Rising grain prices ruined his business".

11. Avoid "due to" and "because of"

This is weak: "Due to rising grain prices, his business failed." This is better: "The rising grain prices made his business fail". This is even better: "The rising grain prices destroyed his business". This is best: "The failed harvest destroyed his business". The last sentence actually explains the underlying cause, which means it is more informative.

12. Avoid excessive use of the passive form

An easy way to improve your style and clarity is to abandon excessive use of passive constructions. "The theme of loss is present throughout the work of Dante" can become "Dante incorporates the theme of loss throughout his work" to give it more force. "Environments that have been ruined by human greed" can become "environments that human greed has ruined". However, if the focus is on the object and not on the actor, it is sometimes better to use the passive form. "The machine was destroyed by the farmers" puts the focus on the machine, whereas "The farmers destroyed the machine" puts the focus on the farmers. In this case, using the passive form is more a matter of context than style.

13. Avoid "he/she"

If you find using the masculine pronoun offensive, consider simply using the feminine pronoun throughout a text. Alternatively, write "he or she" in full. Another approach is to use neutral plurals like "readers" or "people". In fact, try to avoid all use of the "/" symbol in texts. When a simple "and" or "or" can suffice, write it out in full.

14. Write out small numbers in full [6]

Opinions differ somewhat, but in general, you write the numbers from one to ten out in full. Do not use the numeric symbols "1" to "10". Some prefer that numbers up until nineteen should be written in full as well. For bigger, more complicated numbers such as "254" or "4.582" use numerals. However, if you have a big number that is nice and round, just write it out in full: "two million" or "a thousand" have more literary force than "2.000.000" or "1.000".

[6] Obviously, this does not apply to tables, graphs, or other such representations of information.