

Methods

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About the Course

Scientific publications present the conclusions researchers draw on the basis of their research. In the empirical sciences, these conclusions are based on observations. Critical consumers of these studies (for example students, journalists, and scientists) will have to judge the plausibility of these conclusions.

Judging scientific conclusions involves determining whether or not the research methods that were used, justify these conclusions. This course provides the conceptual apparatus for systematic evaluation of the extent to which the methods justify the scientific claims.

Goals and contents

The course aims at achieving the following goals.

- You know the methodological foundations underlying three main types of empirical research: Experiment, Survey, and Case Study.
- You are able to judge the quality of research done by others, and this will provide you with the basic knowledge of developing your own empirical research.
- You are able to translate from quantitative research questions to quantitative data.
- You are able to understand basic quantitative information in research publications.

The course consists of two main parts. The first part is a general introduction to the characteristics of empirical research. Crucial concepts are: Causality, Reliability, and Validity. The first part also introduces the foundations of applied statistics.

The second part of the course builds on the first part by using the methodological concepts in relation to experimental, survey, and qualitative research. Advantages and disadvantages of these research strategies will be discussed, as well as how the methodological choices in each of these strategies relate to the conclusions that can be drawn on the basis of the study.

If you still have questions after consulting this manual, please contact Gerben Mulder: g.mulder@vu.nl

The section *Course Schedule* presents more detailed information.

Lectures and Question Hour

The lectures are each Monday and Tuesday (15:30). The lectures are on campus.

Please note that each Friday (11:00-12:00) you have the opportunity to ask questions about the contents of the book, the lectures and/or the assignments.

Book and other materials

The book used in this course is: :

Jackson, S.L. (2015). *Research methods. A modular approach (Third Edition)*. Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.

Because the book is an introduction to psychological research methods, additional materials will be used that are more representative of empirical (communication and linguistics) research done at Arts Faculties. These additional materials will be discussed in the seminars.

The following articles will be used.

- Broeder, P., Extra, G. & Maartens, J. (1998), Durban Language Survey, In: G. Extra & J. Maartens (Eds.). *Multilingualism in a multicultural context. Case studies on South Africa and Western Europe* (pp. 121-137). Tilburg: Tilburg University Press.
- Renkema, J., & Hoeken, H. (1998). The influence of negative newspaper publicity on corporate image in the Netherlands. *The journal of business communication*, 35, 521-535.
- West, C., & Zimmermann, D. (1976). Women's place in everyday talk: reflections on parent-child interactions. *Social Problems*, 24, 521-529.

Section Course Schedule and Exam

Contents contains information about the specific contents that will be discussed during the course.

Broeder et al. (1998) will be made available on Canvas.

Assignments

In Weeks 4, 5, and 6 you need to do an assignment. Answers to the questions in the assignment have to be submitted via Canvas (deadline: Tuesday 11:59 AM).

The answers will be marked complete/incomplete. All assignments have to be marked complete. For each incomplete assignment you will have to do an extra assignment.

Each assignment is prepared individually. Preparing the assignments will take between 2 and 4 hours per week. Note that the assignments are checked for plagiarism.

Exam

The exam is a 40 item multiple choice exam. Allotted time for the exam is 90 minutes. Passing the course requires a minimum grade of 5.5 (on a 1 to 10 scale). See section *Course Schedule and Exam Contents* for more information about the contents you need to study for the exam.

Course Schedule and Exam Contents

This section contains information about the contents you will need to study for the exam. This content includes not only the book, but also the lectures. The overview at the end of this section presents the course contents per week.

With respect to the lectures: all contents may appear in the exam, including subjects that do not appear in the book.

The exam will contain questions about the following chapters and modules:

- Chapter 1: Modules 1 and 2.
- Chapter 2: Module 3 (pp. 44-45).
- Chapter 3: Modules 5 and 6.
- Chapter 4: Modules 7 and 8.
- Chapter 5: Modules 9 and 10.
- Chapter 6: Modules 12, 13, and 14.
- Chapter 7: Module 15 (excluding calculations and formulas) and module 16 (**not**: pp. 247-254).
- Chapter 8: Module 17 and 18 (concepts only, no calculations or formulas).
- Chapter 9: Modules 19 and 20 (concepts only, no calculations or formulas).

The following table contains the course schedule.

| Week | Date | Subject | Prepare |
|------|---------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Mon. 06 | General Introduction | Module 1 |
| | Tue. 07 | Research Methods | Module 2 |
| 2 | Mon. 13 | Variables | Module 5 |
| | Tue. 14 | Reliability and Validity | Module 6 |
| 3 | Mon. 20 | Survey Research | Module 8 |
| | | Correlational Research | Module 9 |
| | Tue. 21 | Intro. Statistics (I) | Modules 15 and 16 |
| 4 | Mon. 27 | Intro. Statistics (II) | Module 17 |
| | Tue. 28 | Discussion Assignment One | |
| 5 | Mon. 06 | Qualitative Research | Module 7 |
| | Tue. 07 | Discussion Assignment Two | |
| 6 | Mon. 13 | Experimental Research | Modules 10, 12 and 14 |
| | Tue. 14 | Discussion Assignment Three | |