This course is intended to teach you basic research design and show you some of the research methods available to social scientists.

You will have to use such skills to write up your undergraduate dissertation in the last semester of your studies. Later, you will also need those skills for your Masters dissertation. Because writing skills are highly transferable, they will also be useful in your professional life to write policy papers and country reports.

**Approach**

- The course is pluralist: it contains a presentation of general research design as well as a wide range of methods and analytical strategies.
- The course is practical: its sessions answer questions of the form “if you want to write a dissertation on [topic] using [method], then you should do [steps].”
- The course is bilingual: it will be taught either in English or in French, depending on the session lecturer.

**Mechanics**

This course is composed of 12 main sessions and 3 guest lectures taught by a large team of permanent and guest ESPOL lecturers.

The final exam for this course will be a 90-minute quiz covering the entire course, at the exception of the guest lectures. Attendance to all sessions is compulsory.

The readings listed at the end of this syllabus, which are all optional, are meant to help you map the methodological literature that you will need to read for your research dissertations.

This course is running for the first time this semester. The syllabus is currently a work-in-progress, and will be updated throughout the semester.
Main sessions

1. **Introduction: Topics, Sources, Methods**
   
   By François Briatte
   
   Why this course, why we (teachers, researchers, students) all need research methods, why study many approaches, and how to get started in any subject area.

2. **Research Design, Research Questions and Literature Reviews**
   
   By Felix-Christopher von Nostitz
   
   What is a literature review, what is a conceptual framework, and why we need both to articulate facts and theory into a proper conceptual framework and research design.

3. **Case Studies and Comparison**
   
   By Sabine Weiland
   
   What do we call case study analysis, how to compare cases, and how to design a ‘small-N’ comparative analysis.

4. **Quantitative Methods and Statistics: Datasets and Models**
   
   By François Briatte
   
   What does it mean to collect a dataset, what datasets already exist, and how to produce informative statistics and visualizations from data.

5. **Mixed Methods for Studying Parties, Votes and Attitudes**
   
   By Giulia Sandri
   
   How to use surveys and other material to produce a ‘mixed-methods’ analysis; how to study (democratic) electoral politics with those methods, focusing on political parties, electoral results (votes) and political attitudes.
6. **Interviews and Participant Observation**

   By **Brendan Coolsaet**

   Introducing ethnography, the systematic study of people and cultures, its purpose, its usefulness and its limits, focusing mainly on how to conduct in-depth interviews and participant observation through fieldwork.

7. **Interviews and Documents in European Union Policy Analysis**

   By **Oriane Calligaro**

   An introduction to the specific challenges of the study of EU policies: how to identify the main actors, how to access and analyse official documents and grey literature, how to plan interviews.

8. **Archival Research and Document Analysis**

   By **Agatha Verdebout**

   Introduction to the notion of 'archive', their accessibility, their (relative) importance, and the special methodological precautions and challenges connected to their manipulation.

9. **Methods in Political Philosophy and Theory**

   By **Pierre-Yves Néron** and **Thierry Chopin**

   How to study philosophical or ideological arguments, using texts and contexts: the Cambridge School; what sets political theory and philosophy apart; Continental vs. analytical traditions; critical vs. normative approaches.

10. **Deconstruction and Discourse Theory**

    By **Janis Grzybowski**

    How to deconstruct texts or discourses so as to unravel the underlying politics weaved into their very structure, and thereby help students investigate the silent presuppositions behind statements of fact or value.
11. Discourse-based Analysis

What is discourse, and what are ‘discourse-based’ approaches? What are the relationships between discourse, language and knowledge? How does discourse relate to, and inform, the social and political realities we want to study?

By Philippe Bonditti

12. Wrap-up and Research Writing

By François Briatte

What this course has taught you, how to structure your written work in order to go through all the required steps. Points covered: problem statement formulation, supporting evidence, argumentation, and paper formatting.

Guest lectures

The following additional sessions will be delivered by guest and invited lecturers or professors who are currently teaching at ESPOL. The lectures, which are grounded in our guests’ own research, will offer applied case studies of the methods and analytical strategies presented in the main lectures.

1. Social History of Ideas, Collective Memories and Gender

By Sidonie Verhaeghe (CERAPS, University of Lille)

2. Studying Prisons, Deviance and Punishment

By Joël Charbit (CLERSÉ, University of Lille) and Alexia Venouil (CESDIP)

3. Applying Discourse Methods to Security Studies

By Falk Ostermann (Justus-Liebig-University of Giessen)
Readings

Handbooks


Session-specific readings

1. Introduction: Topics, Sources, Methods

Course handbooks: Coman et al., ch. 2 (“Les grandes options méthodologiques”) and 3 (“Les étapes de la construction d’une stratégie de recherche”); Hancké, ch. 1 (“Research in the Social Sciences”); Roux et Savarese, ch. 5.1 (Pina, “Produire des données d’enquête en science politique”); Surel 2015, ch. 3 (“Faire une recherche en science politique”), van Campenhoudt and Quivy, ch. 2 (“L’exploration”) and 5 (“L’observation”).


2. **Research Design, Research Questions and Literature Reviews**

**Course handbooks:** Gerring and Christenson, ch. 11 (“Reading and Reviewing”); Hancké, ch. 2 (“Constructing a Research Design”); della Porta and Keating, ch. 10 (Mair, “Concepts and Concept Formation”); Roux et Savarese, ch. 5.4 (Savarese, “Le statut de la théorie en science politique”).


3. **(a) Case Studies**

**Course handbooks:** Coman *et al.*, ch. 8 (“Le traçage de processus dans une étude de cas”); della Porta and Keating, ch. 11 (Vennesson, “Case Studies and Process Tracing: Theories and Practices”).


3. **(b) Comparison**

**Course handbooks:** della Porta and Keating, ch. 11 (della Porta, “Comparative Analysis: Case-Oriented versus Variable-Oriented Research”); Hancké, ch. 3 (“Constructing Case Studies and Comparisons”); Roux et Savarese, ch. 5.3 (Vigour, “La démarche comparative”).


4. **Quantitative Methods and Statistics: Datasets and Models**

**Course handbooks:** Coman *et al.*, ch. 2 (“Enquêtes et bases de données”); Hancké, ch. 4 (“Constructing Data”); della Porta and Keating, ch. 13 (Franklin, “Quantitative Analysis”);
Gerring and Christenson, Part 3 (several chapters, covering all basics of quantitative methods in roughly 100 pages).


5. (a) Mixed Methods

Course handbooks: Roux et Savarese, ch. 5.2 (Blanchard, “Qualitatif et quantitatif : la fin du malentendu?”).


5. (b) Studying Parties, Votes and Attitudes


6. Interviews and Participant Observation

Course handbooks: della Porta and Keating, ch. 15 (Bray, “Ethnographic Approaches”); Coman et al., ch. 6 (“Les entretiens”); and 9 (“L’observation empirique”).


7. Interviews and Documents in European Union Policy Analysis


8. Archival Research and Document Analysis


9. Methods in Political Philosophy and Theory


10. **Deconstruction and Discourse Theory**


11. **Discourse-based Analysis**

**Course handbooks:** Coman et al., ch. 7 (“L’analyse de discours et de contenu”).


12. **Wrap-up and Research Writing**

**Course handbooks:** Gerring and Christenson, ch. 14 (“Writing”); Hancké, ch. 5 (“Writing Up Your Research”).