# Methods of Social Research (including a Social Statistics Workshop)

## Prof. Marco Caselli; Prof. Cristina Pasqualini; Prof. Maria Chiara Zanarotti

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

Module 1: Quantitative techniques

This module aims to provide students with basic skills for the realisation, understanding and evaluation of sociological empirical research, with a particular focus on standardised surveying techniques (quantitative), especially studies based on questionnaires.

Module 2: Qualitative techniques

The aim of the module is to teach students the main techniques of non-standardised (qualitative) social research by presenting various specific studies and exercises in the field.

Module 3: Social Statistics Workshop

The aim of the module is to teach students the statistical foundations for studying phenomena in a social, political and economic setting. In particular, it will present the main tools used in the descriptive analysis of data, both in terms of methodology and from an applied perspective. The course will pursue this objective by introducing the main techniques for statistical processing based on examples (using Excel) as a tool through which students can understand the methods used.

*Knowledge and understanding*

At the end of the Module 1, students will have mastered the specific terminology of social research.

At the end of Module 2, students will be able to recognise and use the various qualitative social research techniques (the ethnographic approach, individual and group interviews), based on knowledge of their underlying paradigms.

At the end of the third module, students will be able to interpret and critically comment on descriptive analyses of statistical data.

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding*

By the end of the course, students will be able to plan a social research project based on questionnaires, and conduct all steps as far as collecting data in the field (research design, building the detection tool, sampling and fieldwork aspects).

At the end of the Module 2, students will be able to design and manage all phases of a qualitative study (research design, sampling, building the detection tools, fieldwork aspects, analysing results and writing up the output)

By the end of the Module 3, students will be able to independently analyse descriptive statistics, whether univariate or bivariate, using IT tools.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Module 1 (semester 1): *Quantitative techniques* (Prof. Marco Caselli)

*Introduction to social research*

*Standardised research*

– research design;

– constructing the questionnaire;

– sampling and detection.

Module 2 (semester 2): *Qualitative techniques* (Prof. Cristina Pasqualini)

*From paradigms to techniques*

*Non-standardised research*

– research design;

– sampling and detection;

– analysing results and writing up the output

*Qualitative techniques*

– the ethnographic approach;

– semi-structured interviews;

– non-directive interviews (life stories and life histories);

– focus groups.

Module 3 (semester 2): *Social statistics workshop* (Prof. Maria Chiara Zanarotti)

– frequency and quantity distributions and their graphic representation; graphs for historical series and for regional series;

– univariate analyses: the main indexes of position (mode, median, arithmetic mean, harmonic mean, geometric mean, power means and percentiles) and variation (variance and standard deviation, Gini heterogeneity index); standardisation;

– bivariate analysis: joint probability distribution, statistical independence and measuring connection using chi-squared distribution.

***READING LIST***

For Module 1

M. Caselli, *Indagare col questionario. Introduzione alla ricerca sociale di tipo standard,* Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2005 (except chap. 9).

For Module 2

R. Bichi, *L’intervista biografica. Una proposta metodologica,* Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2002 (students must study the entire text)).

G. Gobo, *Descrivere il mondo. Teoria e pratica del metodo etnografico in sociologia,* Carocci, Rome, 2016 (students must study chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7).

S. Corrao, *Il focus group,* FrancoAngeli, Milan, 2013 (students must study chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4).

Details of additional course material will be provided during the course and made available to students on the Blackboard platform, under "*Materiali*".

Module 3

Slide and lecture notes

One of the following volumes:

F. Borazzo-P. Perchiunno, *Analisi Statistiche con Excel*, Pearson education, Milan, 2007 (students must study chapters 1, 2, 4 (except paragraph 4.7) and 5 as far as 5.3.1).

F. Mecatti, *Statistica di base*, McGraw-Hill, Milano, 2010 (students must study chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (only 6.1), 7 (except 7.4), 8 (only 8.1 and 8.2), 9 and 10 (except 10.4 and 10.5).

B. Pacini-M. Raggi, *Statistica per l’analisi operativa dei dati*, Carocci Editore, 2006 (students must study chaps. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and paragraph 9.1).

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures (for all modules).

Module 3 will also include sessions in the IT labs in order to process data using Excel.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Module 1

Students will be assessed by means of an oral exam on the text on the reading list with no distinction between attending and non-attending students. Students will be assessed on the relevance and accuracy of the answers they provide, with a particular focus on the correct definition of the concepts studied and their appropriate use. More generally, subject-specific terminology will also serve as an important assessment criterion.

Module 2

Students will be assessed by means of an oral exam on all the texts on the syllabus and on the material provided by the lecturer on Blackboard under “*Materiali*”. Students will be assessed on the relevance and accuracy of the answers they provide as well as on the quality of the specialist language they use and their ability to grasp problems, critically explain concepts and make examples and connections.

Module 3

Attending and non-attending students will be examined differently.

Attending students: a written test with closed questions (16 questions, 2 marks per question) designed to verify understanding of the methodological instruments learned. Marks will also be awarded for the presentation of group tasks in class that demonstrate an ability to process data and an understanding of the results found, as well as the ability to communicate them. This presentation is worth up to three marks.

Non attending students: written exam based on close-ended questions aimed at testing the knowledge of the acquired methodological tools.

For both types of exam (attending and non attending students): open book test using a calculator.

The final mark will be based on the arithmetic average of the marks achieved in each of the three exams. Students may choose the order in which they take the exams for the three modules. More information on the exams will be provided by the lecturers at the beginning of lectures or, for students who cannot attend lectures, during appointments.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

For Module 1: as it is introductory in nature, Module 1 has no specific prerequisites in terms of content. Students may write their theses for Prof. Marco Caselli in either Italian, English or French; notifications and communications on course, exams and office hours (e.g. postponement or cancellation) can be found on the lecturer's webpage via the Università Cattolica website.

For Module 2: being workshop-based in format, the course will also include practical exercises and group tasks. Attendance is therefore strongly recommended. Updated syllabus, reading list, instructions and other documents will be shared on Blackboard as the course progresses. Blackboard will also be used to communicate changes in schedule, information on exams, any changes to the syllabus etc. All students are therefore invited to register on the course Blackboard page and check it regularly.

For Module 3: there are no prerequisites for the part. The part of the course that takes place in the IT lab will involve the participation of a specialist in Excel for data analysis. Lecture slides and other course materials will be available on the Blackboard platform, which will also be used to communicate with students. Other notifications and communications on course, exams and office hours (e.g. postponement or cancellation) can be found on the lecturer's webpage via the Università Cattolica website.

In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching and assessment will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.