

INDUSTRIAL & ECONOMIC SOCIOLOGY 3 SOCIOLOGY 3

2025: TERM 3

SOCIAL RESEARCH



Lecturers:

Tarryn Alexander (t.alexander@ru.ac.za)

Kanyiso Ntikinca (k.ntikinca@ru.ac.za)

INTRODUCTION

This social research module is intended to build on the understanding and knowledge of research you gained in your second year as sociology students. We aim to equip you with a comprehensive understanding of both philosophical and practical approaches to research, including research design, data analysis, and research ethics. The module will provide a foundation for more advanced training in social research at the Honours level for those of you who will study further. The module will be textbook based. Additionally, supplementary and prescribed journal articles and book chapters will be periodically uploaded to the RUconnected page. It is your responsibility to engage with the module site regularly to download prescribed readings.

The structure of the module comprises two sections. The first section (weeks 1-3) contextualises key concepts in the philosophy of science, and the second section (weeks 4-6) covers research design and practice. *Section One on the Philosophy of Science* will be presented by Tarryn Alexander (t.alexander@ru.ac.za), and Section Two on *Research Methods and Design* will be presented by Kanyiso Ntikinca (k.ntikinca@ru.ac.za). Together, the two sections are aimed at demystifying important paradigms, frameworks, and techniques essential for developing core competencies as future researchers in the social sciences and humanities. data analysis and reporting, and will prepare you to engage with information used in policy debates in the public domain, or train further as social scientists.

The lectures for this module will take place in the Arts Major lecture venue. The weekly lecture schedule is as follows:

Monday: No Lecture.

Tuesday: 8:40 – 9:25 am

Wednesday: 9:35 – 10:20am

Thursday: 10:30 – 11:15am

Friday: 11:25 – 12:10 am *and* 12:20 – 1:05 pm (**double period**)

SECTION ONE: PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE (WEEKS 1-3)

7 – 25 JULY

The first section introduces you to the philosophy of science in more depth than you encountered in the second year. We begin with the distinction between *ontology* (the study of being; what kinds of things exist?) and *epistemology* (the study of knowledge; philosophical claims about how the world is known to us). This leads us to consider three core research paradigms: neo-positivism, interpretivism, and critical realism. You will be taught how each of the three research paradigms is associated with distinct orientations toward research logic, reasoning, and design. We conclude the section by outlining key ethical considerations, including basic procedural ethics (as outlined in the Rhodes University policy) and the power dynamics between the researcher and the researched. For this section, you need to gain an understanding of the ontological and epistemological assumptions and orientations of the neo-positivist, interpretivist and critical realist research paradigms. In addition, ethics in social research should be understood as an expansive concept encompassing both technical and relational considerations.

Readings for Section One

The following textbooks will be used in this module:

1. Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. (2001). *The practice of social research*. Cape Town: Oxford Press.
2. Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Sarantakos, S. (2012). *Social research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thematic Areas in Section One Outlined:

1. Introduction to methodology and the philosophy of science
2. The significance of epistemological and ontological positioning
3. The neo-positivist paradigm
4. The interpretivist paradigm
5. The critical realist paradigm
6. Ethics in social research: power, positionality, and accountability in the research encounter

Consultations with the Lecturer for Section One

If you are unsure about any of the material or just want to check that you are on the right track, you are welcome to set up a consultation. Email Tarryn Alexander to make an appointment.

SECTION TWO: RESEARCH METHODS (WEEKS 4-6)

28 JULY–15 AUGUST

The second section of the module will introduce you to the study of research methodology in sociological research. This section will take place over three weeks, where three key themes will be unpacked. In the first week (of this section), we will be examining some of the key introductory aspects (and steps) of the social research process. These include: the nature and process of social research; designing research; planning a research project and formulating research questions; and a review of existing literature in the selected area of research. In the second week (of this section), we will be learning about the quantitative research paradigm and its accompanying methods. In the third and final week (of this section), we will be unpacking the qualitative research paradigm and its accompanying methods. By the end of this section of the module, you should have gained a holistic understanding of the key methods involved in sociological research.

Readings for Section Two

Below are core texts that are crucial for section two of the module. Key chapters will be outlined and communicated to the students every week.

Babbie, E. (2016). *The practice of social research*. Boston (MA): Cengage Learning.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lune, H. and Berg, B.L. (2017). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. New York: Pearson.

Neuman, W.L. (2007). *Basics of Social Research*. London: Pearson Education, Inc.

Thematic Areas in Section Two

Week 4: Research Methods – Part One

- The nature and process of social research
- Designing research
 - Planning a research project and formulating research questions
- Review of literature

Week 5: Research Methods – Part Two

- The nature of quantitative research
- Sampling in quantitative research
- Quantitative data collection
- Quantitative data analysis
- Quantitative data analysis

Week 6: Research Methods – Part Three

- The nature of qualitative research
- Sampling in qualitative research
- Ethnography and participant observation
- Interviewing in qualitative research, focus groups, and language
- Documents as sources of data: Qualitative data analysis

Consultations with the Lecturer for Section Two

If you are unsure about any of the material or just want to check that you are on the right track, you are welcome to set up a consultation. Simply email Kanyiso Ntकिनca to make an appointment.

ASSESSMENT FOR THE MODULE

Assessment for this module will consist of two class assessments and an examination. The examination constitutes 60% of the overall mark for the module, and the class mark

constitutes 40%. There will be two assessments for the class mark component of this module: two tests. They are equal in value; in other words, they each constitute 50% of your class mark.

Term Test 1

This test will be focused on the material covered in weeks 1-3.

Test date: Friday, 25 July

Time: 6 pm – 7:30 pm

Venue: Barratt Lecture Theatre 1

Term Test 2

This test will be focused on the material covered in weeks 4-6.

Test date: Friday, 15 August

Time: 11:25 am to 1 pm

Venue: Arts Major

November examination

The examination date will be given in the end-of-year examination timetable.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

If you fail to write one of the scheduled class tests without a valid reason that would necessitate a Leave of Absence (LOA) certificate, you will put your Duly Performed (DP) certificate in jeopardy. LOA forms are available in the Department – please consult with the departmental administrator Mrs Sakata (noluvuyo.sakata@ru.ac.za) in this regard. An application for an LOA must be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation (doctor's note, letter from a warden, letter from a psychologist, etc.). You must find out if your application has been approved, as the granting of an LOA by the Head of Department is not automatic (see the *Sociology Handbook* on RUConnected for details).

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