

**Department of Sociology  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
South Asian University**

**Research Methods  
(MA Compulsory Course)**

**Total Credits: 04**

**Objectives of the course**

Social research is a vast and contested terrain. In this course we will focus on the logic and practice of major approaches to contemporary social research. This course mainly focuses on qualitative methods, but there will be occasions when the quantitative approach will be discussed. It is expected that at the end of the semester, students will be able to develop their own research project to the areas of their interest, understand general principals of contemporary social research practices, and critically evaluate sociological research reports, journals, and books.

**Unit I: Introduction**

In the introduction section, we will review the basic process of social research. In particular we will focus on framing research questions and choosing appropriate research designs. This unit will also examine the relationship between epistemology, theory, methodology, and methods.

**Readings**

Babbie, Earl. 2007. *The Practice of Social Research (11th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth [Chapter I, II and III].

Collins, Randall. 1989. "Sociology: Proscience or Antiscience?" *American Sociological Review* 54:124-139.

Creswell, J.W. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. [Chapter I and II]

Crotty, Michael. 1998. *Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. Thousand Oaks: Sage [Chapter I]

Maxwell, J. A. 2005. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications [Chapter I and II]

**Unit II: Quantitative Research**

In this section, we will begin with the (post)positivism paradigm in the social sciences and then review the notion of scientific methods and debate surrounding it. We then focus on the logic of quantitative research in sociology. The key concepts we review in this unit are: variables, measurement, hypothesis, casualty, reliability, and validity.

### **Readings**

Babbie, Earl. 2007. *The Practice of Social Research (11th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth [Selected Chapters]

Creswell, J.W. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Schuman, Howard. 2002 (summer). "Sense and Nonsense about Surveys." *Contexts*: 40-47.

### **Unit III: Qualitative Research**

Unit III provides an introduction to social constructionism and interpretivism. Our focus in this unit will be meaning and interpretation, which generally inform qualitative research. We will thus chiefly focus on designing, conducting, and analyzing qualitative research projects.

### **Readings**

Babbie, Earl. 2007. *The Practice of Social Research (11th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth.

Berg, B.L. and H. Lune. 2004. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. MA: Pearson [Selected Chapters]

Corbin, J. M. and A. Strauss. 1990. "Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria." *Qualitative Sociology* 13:3-21.

LaRossa, Ralph. 2005. "Grounded Theory Methods and Qualitative Family Research." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67:837-857.

Marvasti, A. B. 2004. *Qualitative research in sociology*. London: Sage Publications Ltd [Selected Chapters].

Maxwell, J. A. 2005. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications [Selected Chapters]

### **Unit IV: Ethics, Values, and Writing Research Reports**

Doing research and writing research reports might appear as a straight forward process, but we will see that they have their own complexities. In this final unit, we will review the art and politics of doing research and writing research reports.

### **Readings**

Babbie, Earl. 2007. *The Practice of Social Research (11th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth [Selected Chapters].

Becker, H.S. 2007. *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press [Selected Chapters].

Denzin, N. K. 1994. "The art and politics of interpretation." Pp. 500-515 in *Handbook of qualitative research*, edited by E. G. a. Y. S. L. Guba. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

May, Rab and M Pattillo-McCoy. 2000. "Do you see what I see? Examining a collaborative ethnography." *Qualitative Inquiry* 6 (1):65-87.

Peshkin, A. 1988. "In Search of Subjectivity One's Own." *Educational Researcher* 17:17-21.

Tittle, Charles R. 2004. "The Arrogance of Public Sociology." *Social Forces*. 82(4):1639-1643

Richardson, L. 1994. "Writing: A method of inquiry." Pp. 923-948 in *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, edited by N. D. Y. S. Lincoln. London: Sage