

Meeting time and location	Day/Time	Location
Lecture 1	Monday 9:55 AM – 11:10 AM	Campus Center Room 004
Lecture 2	Wednesday 9:55 PM – 11:10 AM	Campus Center Room 004
Instructional time requirements are met by the scheduled meeting times.		

Faculty Details

Professor

Name

Romain Ferrali

Email

rferrali@nyu.edu

Workspace

A5-L01-1137

Office Hours

Monday, 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM (Zoom link available on Brightspace)

Course Description

This is an introductory research methods course intended for students with little or no prior knowledge and experience of qualitative and quantitative methods. The course addresses aspects of research useful for academic and professional investigation, including problem definition, framing research questions, formulating a hypothesis, choosing a research design, research ethics, and evaluating a variety of research methods. We will consider issues in the context of qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups, participant observation) and quantitative (e.g., surveys, experiments) research. In addition, students will be introduced to some approaches to analysis of quantitative and qualitative data (Please note that this course will not examine data analysis techniques in detail, as that content is covered in other courses). The main aim of this course is to equip students with the tools, imagination and independence to develop their own ideas and abilities for conducting research.

Credits: 4

Prerequisites / Corequisite: None

This course counts toward the following NYUAD degree requirements:

- Majors > Business, Organizations and Society > General Business Electives

Course Learning Outcomes and Link to [Program Learning Outcomes \(PLOs\)](#)

Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to	Linked to Major PLOs
1. Critically evaluate approaches to management research and the assumptions upon which they are based	BOS PLO3 High, PLO4 Medium
2. Explain key concepts in business research methods	BOS PLO3 High
3. Demonstrate an understanding of a range of data collection methods used in business research	BOS PLO2 High, PLO4 High
4. Evaluate methodological issues in academic articles	BOS PLO2 High
5. Describe and critically discuss ethical issues involved in social research	BOS PLO5 High
6. Collaborate and cooperate with peers in gaining practical experience of conducting research	BOS PLO6 High

Teaching and Learning Methodologies

In-class participation is essential and a critical part of this class for it stimulates learning. Students are therefore expected to complete the required readings **before** the session in order to play an active role in discussions and exercises. Papers marked with an asterisk (*) should be given particular attention.

Course Schedule

- Week 1:
 - Lecture 1: Course Introduction (Wednesday 1/21)
- Week 2:
 - Lecture 2: Introduction to Research Methods (Monday 1/26)
 - Reading list
 - Davis, G. F. (2015). What is management research actually good for? *Harvard Business Review*, 28 May, pp. 2-6.
 - Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. (2008). *The Craft of Research*, pp. 22–44.

- * Mensh, B., & Kording, K. P. (2017). "Ten simple rules for structuring papers." *PLOS Computational Biology*, 13(9), <https://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.1005619>
- Lecture 3: What is a Research Question? (Wednesday 1/28)
- Reading list
 - * Grant, A. (2019). "The Surprising Value of Obvious Insights." *MIT Sloan Management Review*.
 - Bennis, W. & O'Toole, J. (2005). "How business schools lost their way." *Harvard Business Review*, 83(5): 96-124.
 - * Sandberg, J., & Alvesson, M. (2011). "Ways of constructing research questions: gap-spotting or problematization?" *Organization*, 18(1), 23–44.
 - Barley, Stephen R. (2006). "When I Write My Masterpiece: Thoughts on What Makes a Paper Interesting." *The Academy of Management Journal*, 49(1), 16–20.
 - Bartunek, Jean M., et al. (2006). "What Makes Management Research Interesting, and Why Does It Matter?" *The Academy of Management Journal*, 49(1), 9–15.
- Week 3:
 - Lecture 4: Research Question Discussion (Monday 2/2)
 - Reading list
 - * Angrist, J., & Pischke, J. S. (2009). "Questions about questions." Pp. 3-9 in *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion*.
 - Lave, C. A., & March, J. G. (1993[1975]). "An introduction to speculation." Chapter 2 in *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*. New York: University Press of America.
 - Davis, M. S. (1971). "That's Interesting!: Towards a Phenomenology of Sociology and a Sociology of Phenomenology." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 1(2): 309–344. [Read pp. 309 - 326]
 - * Merton, R. K. (1987). "Three Fragments from a Sociologist's Notebooks: Establishing the Phenomenon, Specified Ignorance, and Strategic Research Materials." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 13(1): 1-29. [Read pp. 1 - 10]
 - Lecture 5: Theory and Theoretical Arguments I (Wednesday 2/4)
 - Reading list
 - McGuire, W. J. (1997). "Creative hypothesis generating in psychology: Some useful heuristics." *Annual Review of Psychology*, 48: 1-30. [Peruse the various heuristics]
 - Sutton, R. & B. M. Staw. (1995). "What Theory is Not." *Admin. Science Quarterly*, 40(3): 371-384.
 - * Elster, J. (2007). "Explanation." Chapter 1, pp. 9-30 in *Explaining social behavior: More nuts and bolts for the social sciences*. Cambridge University Press: New York.

- Hambrick, D. C. (2007). "The field of management's devotion to theory: Too much of a good thing?" *Academy of Management Journal*, 50, 1346-1352.
- Week 4:
 - Lecture 6: Theory and Theoretical Arguments II (Monday 2/9)
 - Reading list
 - Thaler, R. (1980). "Toward a positive theory of consumer choice." *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 1(1): 39-60.
 - Hedström, P. & K. Wennberg. (2017) "Causal mechanisms in organization and innovation studies." *Innovation*, 19:1, 91-102.
 - * Sparrowe, R. T., & Mayer, K. J. (2011). "Publishing in AMJ – Part 4: Grounding hypotheses." *Academy of Management Journal*, 54: 1098-1102.
 - Lecture 7: Quantitative Data Analysis I (Wednesday 2/11)
 - Reading list
 - * Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan, and Anthony Fowler (2021). *Thinking Clearly with Data: A Guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis*. University of Chicago Press. Chs. 1 & 2.
- Week 5:
 - Lecture 8: Quantitative Data Analysis II (Monday 2/16)
 - * Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan, and Anthony Fowler (2021). *Thinking Clearly with Data: A Guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis*. University of Chicago Press. Ch 5.
 - Lecture 9: Developing Numerical Narratives (Wednesday 2/18)
 - Reading list
 - * Healy, K. and J. Moody. (2018). "Data visualization in sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 40: 105 - 128.
 - Damodaran, A. (2017). Pp. 10 - 51 in *Narrative and Numbers: The Value of Stories in Business*. Columbia Business School Publishing: New York.
 - Greve, H. R. (2017). "From the Editor" *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 62(2), v – vi.
 - Greve, H. R. (2017). "Resources for improving evidence presentation." Blog post, at <https://asqblog.com/2017/11/29/asq-improving-evidence-presentation-resources-and-tools/>
 - * Healy, K. (2018). "Visualizing the baby boom." *Socius*, 4: 1-2.
- Week 6:
 - Lecture 10: Research Design (Monday 2/23)
 - Reading list
 - Merton, R. K. (1987). "Three Fragments from a Sociologist's Notebooks: Establishing the Phenomenon, Specified Ignorance, and Strategic Research Materials." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 13(1): 1-29. [Read pp. 11-19]

- Shadish, W.R., Cook, T. D., Campbell, D.T. (2002). Chapters 1-3, pp 1-31 in *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Wadworth Cengage Learning: Belmont, CA.
 - Zettermeyer, F. Module 4, video: “The Data Generating Process.” Coursera. [Watch 5:00 video]; at <https://www.coursera.org/learn/leadership-marketing>
 - Starbuck, W. (2016). “60th Anniversary Essay: How Journals Could Improve Research Practices in Social Science.” *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 61(2): 165-183. [Read pp. 171-173]
- Lecture 11: Research Design Choices (Wednesday 2/25)
- Reading list
 - * Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan, and Anthony Fowler (2021). *Thinking Clearly with Data: A Guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis*. University of Chicago Press. Ch 11.
- Week 7
 - ~~Lecture 12: Experimental methods (Monday 3/2)~~
 - Lecture 12: Quasi-experimental methods: differences in differences (Wednesday 3/4)
- Week 8
 - ~~Lecture 13: Quasi-experimental methods: instrumental variables and regression discontinuity (Monday 3/9)~~
- Spring Break – No classes
- Week 9:
 - Lecture 13: Quasi-experimental methods: instrumental variables and regression discontinuity (Monday 3/23)
 - Lecture 14: Midterm preparation (Wednesday 3/25)
- Week 10:
 - Lecture 15: **Midterm** (Monday 3/30)
 - Lecture 16: Experiments: lab, field, and natural (Wednesday 4/1)
- Week 11:
 - Lecture 17: Remaining threats to identification (Monday 4/6)
 - Lecture 18: Homework 4 preparation (Wednesday 4/8)
 - Lecture 19: Control variables (Saturday 4/11); **homework 4 due**
- Week 12:
 - Lecture 20: Survey Research (Monday 4/13)
 - Lecture 21: Mixed methods and Qualitative Research (Wednesday 4/15)
- Week 13: Mixed Methods and Computational Social Science
 - Lecture 22: Final project draft preparation (Monday 4/20)
 - Lecture 23: Art of craft (Wednesday 4/22); **Final project draft due**
 - Lecture 25: Ethics (Saturday 4/25)
- Week 14: Presentations
 - Lecture 25: Peer Review Presentations (Monday 4/27)
 - Lecture 26: Peer Review Presentations (Wednesday 4/29)
- Week 15:

- Lecture 27: Peer Review Presentations (Monday 5/4)
- Lecture 28: Wrap up (Wednesday 5/6) – Final Project Deadline

Course Assignment – Research Project

Below is an outline of the course assignments, each progressing towards the final deliverable. Each assignment should be submitted as a presentation or a PDF file addressing the key points below. We will discuss each assignment in more detail during class.

1. **Research Question (1 - 2 pages) [6%]:** State your research question, identify the relevant audience, and discuss the implications of satisfactorily (or unsatisfactorily) answering the question. Address the first two of Merton's "three fragments" – (i) identify what about the phenomenon has been established and (ii) specify outstanding theoretical ignorance about what causes the phenomenon. Due on Feb. 4, 9:55a.
2. **Theoretical Possibilities and Priors (2 - 3 pages) [6%]:** Describe the phenomenon of interest – and the ignorance surrounding it – as a research problem borne of our collective inability to adjudicate multiple theoretical explanations. Identify the most plausible explanations of the phenomenon and how they differ. Then, outline the fundamental hypotheses underlying your preferred explanation and what must be tested to support or falsify your argument and its alternatives. Due on Feb. 11, 9:55a.
3. **Numerical Narrative (1 - 2 pages + 3 explanatory pictures) [6%]:** Describe how an ideal data set could be used to construct a narrative based entirely on descriptive statistics and data visualizations. Focus on descriptive statistics that can establish the phenomenon (e.g., counts, rates, conditional probabilities, means, standard deviations), provide suggestive, prima facie, and conclusive evidence of your preferred explanation. Sketch three plots depicting (i) what you would consider suggestive evidence, (ii) prima facie evidence, and (iii) conclusive evidence for your argument. These can be photos of hand-drawn images (e.g., whiteboard sketches) or computer-generated graphs (e.g., X-Y scatter plots of simulated data). What are you expecting? How will it look? Due on Feb. 25, 9:55a.
4. **Ideal vs. Actual Research Design (1 - 2 pages) [6%]:** Describe the "ideal" research design for testing your argument in a way that can disentangle the explanations identified in the previous assignments. Then, discuss a potential research design that you could use to test your arguments and compare it to the "ideal" research design. Your discussion should mention the econometric method (randomized controlled experiment, regression discontinuity, difference in differences, instrumental variable) that you will use to make causal claims, with clear discussion of the treatment, outcome, and assumptions required by the method. Discuss the key threats to drawing credible inferences imposed by the necessity of settling for the "actual" research design in lieu of the "ideal." Finally, discuss approaches that you might use to counter these inferential threats.
5. **Final Project Draft (25 pages maximum) [15%]:** The final project integrates each of the first five assignments into a comprehensive document. Each constituent assignment should be updated based on instructor feedback and the natural progression of the idea

throughout the course. This draft is also submitted to another student for a written peer review report of no more than two pages before the final submission.

6. **Peer Review (2 pages maximum) [6%]:** Students must submit a peer review of another student's project presentation. The peer review consists of the following: (1) a restatement of the theoretical argument and the empirical evidence likely to support it; (2) 1-2 statements of the project's primary intellectual strengths; (3) a clear statement of the project's primary weakness; (4) suggestions for addressing the primary weakness; and (5) what evidence would lead the reviewer to change their mind about the primary weakness. We will discuss this assignment more in class. The peer review comments should be addressed before final submission of the final project.
7. **Final Project (10 - 15 slides) [6%]:** Students should modify their final project draft based on peer feedback and then submit the final version. Afterward, students should schedule a meeting with the instructor (in person or via Zoom) for additional feedback.

Participation and Expectations

To master the material, students must engage with the course, their classmates, and the instructor.

Participation quality matters much more than quantity. Carefully considered arguments based on facts that support their positions are valuable; even better is the specific identification of what it would take to change their positions (e.g., alternative assumptions, changes in empirical facts). This course will be most valuable and enjoyable if all students engage with the content and participate productively.

A significant portion of learning in this class transpires through dynamic discussions, tacit knowledge exchange, and the sharing of individual thought processes. Therefore, regular attendance is essential not only for individual understanding but also for the collective enrichment of the class.

To foster a productive learning environment, students must meet the following expectations:

- **Attendance:** Regular attendance is vital due to the interactive nature of this course. Many key concepts are explored through in-class discussions and collaborative activities that cannot be replicated outside the classroom. Students are allowed two excused absences—no questions asked. Any additional absence will result in a reduction of the final letter grade by one scale per missed class. For example, if a student's final grade is a B+ and they have missed one class beyond the two excused absences, their final grade will be reduced to a B.
- **Electronic Devices:** All electronic devices, including phones, should be switched off. Note-taking should be conducted using non-electronic devices only.

Grading

- Course Project - 50% [CLO1, CLO2, CLO3, CLO4, CLO5]
- Participation - 20% [CLO6]
- In Class Midterm - 25% [CLO1, CLO2, CLO3, CLO4]

Grading Scale

The following table outlines the grading scale:

Grade	Range
A	90-100
A-	87-89
B+	83-86
B	80-82
B-	77-79
C+	73-76
C	70-72
C-	67-69
D+	63-66
D	60-62
F	0-59

Use of AI Tools

Students are encouraged to use AI tools (such as ChatGPT and image generation tools) in this class; some assignments would benefit from their use. Learning to use AI is an emerging skill, and tutorials are provided in Brightspace about how to use these tools. Assistance is available during office hours or after class to help with these tools.

This course encourages students to explore the use of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) tools like ChatGPT for all assignments and assessments. Students should be thoughtful about when this tool is useful and should not use it if it is not appropriate for the case or circumstance. It is each student's responsibility to assess the validity and applicability of any GAI output that is submitted; they bear the final responsibility.

Students should be aware of the limits of ChatGPT. If they provide minimum-effort prompts, they will receive low-quality results. Refining prompts is necessary to achieve good outcomes, which will require effort. Do not trust everything it says. If it provides a number or fact, assume it is incorrect unless the student either knows the answer or can verify it with another source. Students will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics they understand.

Integrity: At NYU Abu Dhabi, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students, faculty, and staff take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others. In turn, these values create a campus climate that encourages the free exchange of ideas, promotes scholarly excellence through active and creative thought,

and allows community members to achieve and be recognized for achieving their highest potential.

Students should be aware that engaging in behaviors that violate the standards of academic integrity will be subject to review and may face the imposition of penalties in accordance with the procedures set out in the NYUAD policy: <https://students.nyuad.nyu.edu/campus-life/student-policies/community> standards-policies/academic-integrity/

NYU Moses Center for Student Accessibility: New York University is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and participation for students with disabilities. The center works with NYU students to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations that support equal access to a world-class education. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance. Disability-related information is never disclosed without student permission.

Find further information at:

<https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/students-withdisabilities.html>

Contact: mosescsd@nyu.edu

Mental Health Resources: As a university student, you may experience a range of issues that can interfere with your ability to perform academically or impact your daily functioning, such as: heightened stress; anxiety; difficulty concentrating; sleep disturbance; strained relationships; grief and loss; personal struggles. If you have any well-being or mental health concerns, please visit the Counseling Center on the ground floor of the campus center from 9am-5pm Sunday - Thursday, or schedule an appointment to meet with a counselor by calling: 02-628-8100, or emailing: nyuad.healthcenter@nyu.edu. If you require mental health support outside of these hours call NYU's Wellness Exchange hotline at 02-628-5555, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also utilize the Wellness Exchange mobile chat feature, details of which you can find on the student portal.