Department of Geography and Environment

# INTRODUCTION TO GEOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

Autumn and Winter Term | 2024-25

## COURSE OUTLINE

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| COURSE CODE: | GY140 | ASSESSMENT: | 50% | RESEARCH PROPOSAL |
| COURSE VALUE: | FULL UNIT | | 40% | RESEARCH PROJECT |
| COURSE MANAGER: | DR LAURA ANTONA | | 10% | PROBLEM SET |

## COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS

The main objective of this course is to introduce students to the production of geographical and environmental knowledge and to prepare them to become producers of such knowledge themselves. It provides students with a sound understanding of both the conceptual foundations and real-world applications of a variety of methodological approaches for conducting research. To appreciate why, how, and to what ends geographers conduct research on the social and spatial dimensions of human activity, the research process is examined from beginning to end: selecting a topic; performing a literature review; designing a project; collecting and analysing data; and communicating results.

The process of producing knowledge about geography and the environment is also examined from a number of different perspectives: examining case studies of written work; engaging with internationally renowned researchers; discussing the rationale for choosing a methodological approach; practicing the application of individual methods; and designing and executing a piece of independent research. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are discussed in detail and fieldwork exercises give students the opportunity to apply various methods from the course in their own research.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion, students will have the ability to:

1. understand what research is and how knowledge of geography and environment is produced
2. understand the relationship between theory and method in geography
3. grasp the conceptual foundations and real-world applications of key methods
4. situate quantitative and qualitative research methods within broader academic debates
5. evaluate the methodological dimensions of existing research
6. engage with research currently being conducted within the department
7. identify links between research products and the research process
8. produce a research design proposal for an independent geographic research project

## COURSE FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

The course will be organised around lectures which will be followed by classes. The classes will be interactive and involve group discussions and activities – so please be prepared to participate. Each week has associated key readings which students are expected to have read before classes. These are not listed in order of importance so each should be treated as fundamental to the course. Further readings have also been provided; engaging with at least some of these is highly recommended. Students should bring all readings and any notes they may wish to consult to their classes.

Although participation is not accounted for in the overall assessment, all students will be strongly encouraged to play an active role in lectures and classes. Laptop computers will be allowed, but their use for academic purposes will be strictly monitored. Students should bring with them to class all readings and any notes they may wish to consult.

In the first three weeks of the course, we will talk broadly about what geographic research is, the relationship between method and theory, and at the ethics and politics of research. The next 7 weeks are dedicated to engaging with a select group of academics from the Department of Geography and Environment, who will each discuss their own research contributions and methodological approaches. We will end the Autumn Term by drawing on these lectures to discuss how we can design geographical research. The Winter Term then offers a practical introduction to quantitative and qualitative research methods, with five weeks dedicated to each respectively.

**Lectures are at 10-11am on Thursdays (in PAR.1.02 in the AT, and CKK.LG.03 in the WT)**. Classes are on Tuesdays or Wednesdays. *For exact timings and room allocations, please see your personal timetables and find out which group you are assigned to.*

**To note: There is no class in week 1**. Because the classes come before the lectures in the week, you will go over the material from the week before in every class – see the timetable below for clarification.

AUTUMN TERM

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| Week 1 | **Introduction to Geographical Research**<br>Lecture: Dr Laura Antona, **NO CLASS** |
| Week 2 | **Theory and Method in Geographic Research**<br>Lecture: Dr Laura Antona, Class: Zo Mapukata (on Intro to Geographical Research) |
| Week 3 | **The Ethics and Politics of Research**<br>Lecture: Dr Laura Antona, Class: Zo Mapukata (on Theory and Method) |
| Week 4 | **Geographical Research in the Flesh: Dr Richard Perkins**<br>Lecture: Dr Richard Perkins, Class: Zo Mapukata (on The Ethics and Politics of Research) |
| Week 5 | **Geographical Research in the Flesh: Professor Hyun Bang Shin**<br>Lecture: Professor Hyun Bang Shin, Class: Zo Mapukata (discussing Dr Perkins's work) |
| Week 6 | *Reading Week* |
| Week 7 | **Geographical Research in the Flesh: Professor Gareth Jones**<br>Lecture: Professor Gareth Jones, Class: Zo Mapukata (discussing Prof Shin's work) |
| Week 8 | **Geographical Research in the Flesh: Professor Henry Overman**<br>Lecture: Professor Henry Overman, Class: Zo Mapukata (discussing Prof Jones's work) |
| Week 9 | **Geographical Research in the Flesh: Dr Ryan Centner**<br>Lecture: Dr Ryan Centner, Class: Zo Mapukata (discussing Prof Overman's work) |
| Week 10 | **Geographical Research in the Flesh: Professor Claire Mercer**<br>Lecture: Professor Claire Mercer, Class: Zo Mapukata (discussing Dr Centner's work) |
| Week 11 | **Geographical Research in the Flesh: Dr Laura Antona & AT Summary**<br>Lecture: Dr Laura Antona, Class: Zo Mapukata (discussing Prof Mercer's work) |

WINTER TERM

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|---|---|
| Week 1 | **Designing Geographic Research**<br>Lecture: Dr Laura Antona, Class: Zo Mapukata (discussing Dr Antona's work and AT Summary) |
| Week 2 | **Qualitative Research Methods: Fieldwork for Geographers**<br>Lecture: Dr Laura Antona, Class: Zo Mapukata (on Designing Geographic Research) |
| Week 3 | **Qualitative Research Methods: Alternative Data Gathering Techniques**<br>Lecture: Dr Laura Antona, Class: Zo Mapukata (on Fieldwork for Geographers) |
| Week 4 | **Qualitative Research Methods: Analysis, Generalisation and Communication**<br>Lecture: Dr Laura Antona, Class: Zo Mapukata (on Alternative Data Gathering Techniques) |
| Week 5 | **Qualitative Research Methods: Summative Workshop**<br>Lecture: Dr Laura Antona, Class: Zo Mapukata (on Analysis, Generalisation and Communication) |
| Week 6 | *Reading Week* |
| Week 7 | **Quantitative Research Methods: Introduction to Quantitative Data**<br>Lecture: Dr Filippo Boeri, NO CLASS Class |
| Week 8 | **Quantitative Research Methods: Centre, Spread, Populations and Samples**<br>Lecture: Dr Filippo Boeri, Class: Till Meissner (on Intro to Quant Data) |
| Week 9 | **Quantitative Research Methods: Randomness and the Normal Distribution**<br>Lecture: Dr Filippo Boeri, Class: Till Meissner (on Centre, Spread, Populations and Samples) |
| Week 10 | **Quantitative Research Methods: Interval Estimates and Hypothesis Testing**<br>Lecture: Dr Filippo Boeri, Class: Till Meissner ( on Randomness and the Normal Distribution ) |
| Week 11 | **Quantitative Research Methods: Relationship between Variables**<br>Lecture: Dr Filippo Boeri, Class: Till Meissner (on Interval Estimates and Hypothesis Testing), plus an additional recap session! |

CONTACTING COURSE STAFF

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| **Key Course Lecturers:** | Dr Laura Antona (she/her)<br>l.f.antona@lse.ac.uk | (AT weeks 1-3 and 11, WT weeks 1-5) |
| | Dr Fillipo Boeri (he/him)<br>F.Boeri@lse.ac.uk | (WT weeks 7-11) |
| **Class Teachers:** | Zo Mapukata (they/them/he/she)<br>S.P.Mapukata@lse.ac.uk | (AT weeks 1-11, WT weeks 1-5) |
| | Till Meissner (he/him)<br>T.A.Meissner@lse.ac.uk | (WT weeks 7-11) |

** Please use StudentHub to book office hours with any GY140 teaching staff.*

## ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

GY140 consists of both formative and summative assignments. Formative assignments are optional (though strongly recommended for you to complete) and are intended to help you in working towards your summative assignments. The summative components are required and contribute to the final grade for the course.

### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Students will be given the opportunity to complete three formative assignments during the course of the year:



1. Group Presentation – Summarising the Research Approach/Design in an Academic Paper: to be completed during the AT (weeks 4-11) – 5-7-minute presentation summarising one of the courses key readings.



2. Essay - Reflections on an Interview with an Academic: due: 27th January 2025, by 12pm – 1,500 words, individual submission.



3. Group Problem Set/Report: due: 27th March 2025, by 12pm

### SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

There are three summative assessments associated with this course:



1. 50% course grade: Independent Research Proposal – DEADLINE: 19th March 2025, by 12pm



2. 40% course grade: Research Project – DEADLINE: 2nd May 2025, by 12pm



3. 10% course grade: Problem Set – DEADLINE: 2nd May 2025, by 12pm

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Comprehensive details about the formative and summative assignments can be found on the course Moodle page in the document titled: 'Detailed Assessment Overview'.