

26 June 2023

## **STV 4031 – Advanced Field Research for Political Science - Course Evaluation Report** by Professor Jana Krause

This elective specialized methods course was newly developed in the context of the teaching methods reform in the department (2021-2022). The course is meant for MA students who consider conducting field research for their master's thesis. The course covers both qualitative and quantitative field research methods, ranging from classic interviewing, observation, and archival work to survey research and experimental methods. It discusses field research methods within positivist as well as interpretivist research designs and introduces students to different steps in research design and analysis. The course teaches students the basic practical steps of organizing a successful (short) field research trip. Finally, it covers the ethics of conducting student field research, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable population groups and conflict zones, to ensure that students conduct safe research based on a project proposal that has received feedback from a research ethics perspective.

The course was designed and convened by Jana Krause and offered for the first time in the Spring 2023 semester during the third blok. Apart from Krause, Melanie Sauter, Imrana Buba, Leonor Toscano, and Anne-Kathrin Kreft offered lectures in this course. Six students attended and finished the course. For the final exam, students prepared one final paper of maximum 4,000 words on challenges associated with the operationalization of field research-based methods for a future research project (MA thesis). Final grades included A (2), B (1), and C (3).

Course meetings were dynamic, and the combination of lectures and seminar discussion worked well. Students came from the Political Science and the PECOS program. Some had previously conducted short field research.

### **Student Feedback**

During the final course meeting, Krause made time for an extensive feedback session and students were very forthcoming with their comments. Overall, students were very happy with the course and comments were very positive. They emphasized that they had learnt a lot and that 'everyone got something out of the course'. By the end of the course, all students had chosen their MA thesis topic. Because the draft final papers, which were supposed to be based on the MA thesis topic, had to be discussed in a seminar meeting, all students felt that they had already received substantial feedback and good suggestions for their topic.

Students appreciated the quality of the lectures and seminar discussions and the mix of teachers in the course. They also found the encouragement to choose their thesis topic early helpful for the course and their own study program.

Although only six students took the course, they said that many of their peers they had spoken to would have liked to take the course if they had better understood what it was about. That the course was advertised as a specialist method elective and entitled 'Advanced Field Research' had apparently scared some students. They suggested that the course should be advertised as one elective among others, that it would be of interest also to students who are unsure about conducting any field research, and that the title should simply be 'Field Research in Political Science'.

Despite the low turnout, students advised that the course should remain scheduled for the Spring term because this would allow those students who wanted to go on field research enough time to organize their trips after the course. Students also found it helpful to have their topic idea settled by the end of the course.

### **Course Convener Recommendations**

The course title should be changed to 'Field Research in Political Science'.

The course should remain scheduled in the Spring 2024 semester.

The course should be advertised as an elective, not just for students who want to specifically focus on methods.

The course currently has a final paper as the only graded exam. The draft final paper needs to be presented in a seminar session. Given that the paper needs to specifically present and discuss a field research-based research design and its ethics implications, I don't think that ChatGPT is a problem for this exam.