

# Academic Tutoring - Foundations of Political and Social Sciences

Summer Module  
OLive-UP 2020

Seminar Leader: Alina-Sandra Cucu  
Email: cucualinasandra@gmail.com  
Course dates: 2 June to 21 August 2020  
Course Schedule: Self-study and individual consultations  
Office Hours: by appointment  
Credits: n/a  
Grading: Pass/Fail

## Course Description

The Academic Tutoring Summer Module course is a foundations course, ahead of further introduction in Module 1 and more advanced topics in Module 2. The course aims to build on strengths and address gaps in the skills required at OLive-UP. Students will have received a tailored Independent Study Program which they should tailor based on three hours a week of study, to develop key skills. The Summer Modules runs between 2 June and 21 August with additional consultations or classroom time (depending on the course). This makes a total of 12 weeks and 120 hours of study (plus additional consultations or classroom time).

This course provides an introduction to the logic of social sciences research. The central aim of the course is to get familiar with a particular way of understanding the world through the lenses of these disciplines and to gain a preliminary grasp of what social science research means in practice. Being a general introduction to a fundamental topic, the course draws mainly on the disciplinary common ground of disciplines like sociology, anthropology, gender studies, and political science, but it is also meant to expose the students to specific areas of interest.

This course has been designed in light of the Covid-19 online teaching conditions. All materials will be posted in the Google classroom. All meetings will take place online. Written assignments should be handed in via Google classroom.

## Learning Outcomes

- Gain confidence in reading and understanding academic texts progressing clearly to the level expected of a final year Bachelors students;
- Be able to confidently express arguments and opinions in written form on academic texts;
- Develop essay writing skills progressing clearly to the level expected of a final year Bachelors student.

## Class Description and Student Requirements

Students will be required to dedicate 3 hours per week to independent study. Guidance will be provided through 20-minute monthly individual consultations.

Students will be required to attend classes and to complete 3 key assignments over the duration of the Summer Module. These will be either 1.5 page response papers (or equivalent). Students will also receive shorter assignments tailored to individual progress and needs.

Class sessions will be a combination of lecturing, discussions on the lecture, and discussions of the required readings. Students are encouraged to actively participate in the class discussions and exercises. Students are kindly asked *not to engage in parallel conversations or chatting* and to *leave their camera on* during the online sessions. You can find the class schedule complete with session descriptions and readings at the end of this document.

Students will have to complete three assignments by the end of the summer. These assignments are meant to develop a wide range of skills, pertaining in broad terms to reading, supporting claims, identifying relevant academic literature, and writing. The three assignments are connected, so good work for the first one will make students' life easier for the next ones. Please start thinking about your assignments early on, so the tutor can clarify any misunderstandings and respond to any questions you might have.

### Assignment 1: mapping the field, building (essential) bibliographies, and joining intellectual dialogues

Students will construct two reference lists – one essential and one expanded – on a specific topic chosen in agreement with the tutor. The students are encouraged to choose a topic that will constitute the core of their review essay (Assignment 2).

Academic skills to acquire:

- Building essential and expanded academic bibliographies;
- Making decisions regarding the intellectual dialogues one wants to join (or not);
- Supporting these decisions by appropriate arguments;
- Deciding between “fundamental”, “up-to-date”, “fashionable” and “useful” literature.

### Assignment 2: review essay

Students will submit a review essay on a specific topic, which will bring together 3-6 books, articles, or chapters in edited volumes. They can use the reading lists associated with their individual study plan

as a starting point, but they are highly encouraged to use the skills acquired with the completion of the first assignment and identify other relevant bibliographical references for the essay.

Academic skills acquired:

- Constructing a good abstract;
- Clarity of arguments in writing;
- Extracting essential information from reading;
- Synthesizing ideas of multiple authors;
- Understanding the notion of “literature review” and its uses.

### Assignment 3: rewriting exercise

Based on the tutor’s detailed feedback, the students will rewrite the review essays, which will be resubmitted by the end of the summer module. The students will also be required to reply to the tutor’s comments on their review essay.

Academic skills acquired:

- Improving the students’ academic writing skills;
- Actively responding and addressing critical comments;
- Understanding the idea of “editing” and “polishing” an academic text.

### Deadlines for the assignments

- Assignment 1: June 21
- Assignment 2: July 21
- Assignment 3: August 21

### Office hours

Official individual consultations to monitor students’ progress with their individual study plans:

- June: week 22-28
- July: week 20-26
- August: week 17-21

Students are always encouraged to ask for the tutor’s support in the learning process, as well as for supplementary materials if needed. In addition to the 20-minute individual consultations offered by the program, the students can request an appointment with the tutor whenever they feel it is necessary for their progress. Together with the tutor, they will find a mutually convenient time for a meeting.

<h2>Session 1: Open up the world through social sciences</h2>
---

Date: Tuesday, June 2, 5.00 PM

In this session, we will gain a preliminary grasp of what social sciences are. We will try to recognize the different understandings of “the social” and of the realities circumscribed by notions like “society”, “community”, and “polity” and by different disciplinary fields.

## Objectives

- 1) To map the different definitions of “the social”;
- 2) To sketch the most fundamental theories of what holds the social world together;
- 3) To understand how different social sciences – sociology, anthropology, political science, international relations, gender studies, and cultural studies – relate to these definitions and theories;
- 4) To trace the trajectory of the separation between these disciplinary fields.

## Required readings

- Wolf, Eric – “Europe and the people without history” – Introduction: “The rise of social sciences”
- Mitchell, Timothy – Society, economy, and the state effect

## Optional readings

- Berger, Peter L., and Brigitte Berger. 1976. *Sociology: A biographical approach* – “The experience of society” (13-25); “Becoming a member of society” (56-79). London: Penguin Books.
- Durkheim, Emile. 1984. *The division of labour in society*. “Introduction” (1-10) Chapter 2-3 (31-87). London: MacMillan.
- Wolf, Eric. *Europe and the people without history*. Chapter 2 - “Modes of production”

Session 2: Studying the social (1): Questions and cases
---

Date: Tuesday, June 30, 5 PM

This session is a combination of lecturing and interactive exercises, which will dive into the fundamentals of social research. What is a research question in social sciences? What is a case? What is a good question and how do we choose a good case?

## Objectives

- 1) To learn how to formulate a research question from the perspective of different social disciplines.
- 2) To understand what a case is;
- 3) To be able to identify a good case for a specific research question.

## Required readings

- Ragin, Charles. 1992. "What is a case?", in *What is a case? Exploring the foundations of social inquiry*, edited by Charles C. Ragin and Howard S. Becker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-18.
- Ragin, Charles, and Linda Amoroso. 2011. Chapters 1-2, in *Constructing social research* London: Sage, 1-56.

### Optional readings

- Watts, Michael. 2006. "In search of the Holy Grail: Projects, proposals, and research design, but mostly about why writing a dissertation proposal is so difficult" , in *A handbook for social science field research: Essays & bibliographic sources on research design and methods*, edited by Ellen Perecman and Sara R. Curran. London: Sage, 175-196.
- Ragin, Charles. 1992. "Casing" and the process of social inquiry, in *What is a case? Exploring the foundations of social inquiry*, edited by Charles C. Ragin and Howard S. Becker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 217-226.
- Wolf, Eric. "They divide and subdivide, and call it anthropology, New York Times, Sunday, November 30, 1980.

## Session 3: Studying the social (2): From research questions to research objects

Date: July 28, 5.00 PM

In this class, we will discuss fundamental notions like data, variables, methods, and research objects. In simple terms, we will move from how to formulate a research question and how to choose a case to how to answer our research questions.

### Objectives

- 1) To understand the stages of a social research project;
- 2) To understand what "data" is;
- 3) To understand what a "variable" is;
- 4) To take the first steps in acquiring a "sociological imagination".

### Required readings

- Ragin, Charles, and Linda Amoroso. 2011. Chapter 3, in *Constructing social research* London: Sage, 57-78.
- Mills, C. Wright. [1959] 2000. "The promise", in *The sociological imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2-24.

- Nader, Laura. *Ethnography as theory*. 2011 | HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory 1 (1): 211–219.

#### Optional readings

- Mills, C. Wright. [1959] 2000. *The sociological imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bhabra, Gurinder K. 2007. Introduction and Chapters 1-3, in *Rethinking modernity: Postcolonialism and the sociological imagination*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1-82.
- Gluckman, Max. *The bridge*.

#### Attendance

You are expected to attend ALL consultations. In cases of absence caused by illness, you must inform your instructor and the Program Director in advance of the scheduled consultation via email. Students are expected to be proactive and make up for any work missed.

#### Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. You are expected to follow the university's code of academic integrity at all times throughout the course. Any work you submit must be your own original work. Make sure that you properly reference all the sources you use (e.g. books, journals, newspaper articles, websites, etc.). Cases of academic misconduct (e.g. cheating, plagiarism) in which you fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

#### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

As per Student Handbook guidelines, assignments that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Assignments that are more than 24 hours late may be rejected for grading, particularly if the explanation offered for the delay is not satisfactory. If a late assignment is accepted for grading, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade higher than C. Thereafter, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment.