**MRes Social Science Programme of Sessions - Wednesdays 9.00 - 10.30am B105.**

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| **The Contexts, Conjunctures and Frames for Social Research**  **Led by Paul Reynolds**  **20th September** | Social science research does not happen in a vacuum and the subjects of social scientific research need to be understood within wider social, cultural, political, economic, spatial and temporal (and other) arenas. These context and conjunctures are important to understanding the trends, developments and phenomena that the social scientists study. It is reflected in both the particular literature of the field of study and the intellectual ideas that have built our understanding of that field.  This session will involve a discussion about the importance of context and conjuncture, and the way in which we frame our approach to our research by developing our particular question and including or excluding different perspectives and fields of study. It raises a number of interesting questions:; How do we make decisions around how much and how little context we need to include in your research in order to produce digestible and effective research? How far is situating our research in context and conjuncture making research conform to orthodox understandings or recognising the conditions under which our chosen research subject emerges?; How do we both understand and take a critical approach to our field of research? Can be make universal statements or are all social phenomena only to be understood in particular contexts and conjunctures?  This session looks at the intellectual issues around framing your questions and the importance of knowing the wider field and making decisions about focus and framing in writing a thesis. |
| **The Uses and Role of Theory**  **Led by Paul Reynolds**  **4th October** | The framing of research questions, the focus of research, the development of arguments and evaluations and the interpretation of data are all, whether explicitly or indirectly, influenced by theory. Theories reflect a mixture of intellectual argument, analytical frameworks and ideological perspectives. Theories reflect world views, provide critical frameworks to be both tested by and to interpret research, and to base argumentations and claims upon. The realtionship between theories, research design and delivery and the eventual analysis and interpretation of research is underpinned by research. Theories are also amended, contested, reinforced and rejected by research.  This session will explore the relationship between theory and research. It will explore how different theoretical approaches and framings influence the development of research questions, strategies and interpretations, and different philosophical starting points lead to different research conclusions. |
| **The Practice of Social Research**  **Led by Victoria Foster**  **18th October** | The researcher trains to develop their question, make decisions about the methods they use and the sources of information they draw their data from, and develop their research design to yield meaningful data from which to develop findings. Data is collected, collated and then analysis takes place.  This is the practice of social research, and the central activities that constitute the research process. It is important that researchers understand both the sequence of practices and how they develop a coherent design that can then be operationalised by the researcher. The extent to which this design and operationalisation is done effectively will often determine the value and effectiveness of the research. This session will explore issues around the practice of social research, mapping the process and exploring the key components |
| **What does Social Research Find Out?: The Resources of Critique**  **Led by Paul Reynolds**  **1st November** | The assumption that social science, and the use of social science methods, produces knowledge underpins scientific methods, whether positivist or interpretivist. There are, however, critical perspectives that problematise the nature of the knowledge that is produced and the way in which that knowledge is produced and used. Whether reflecting the identity or world-view of the researcher, the assumptions of research design or the way in which the research process is conceptualised, critical perspectives open insight to what research does, what it finds out and for what purpose.  This session will explore how critical perspectives have raised critical questions in social research and led to key developments on who is researched, how they are researched, for what purpose and with what outcomes - ranging from emancipatory outcomes to condemnation of power relationships and the complexities underlying apparently visible and observable, researchable social problems. |
| **Facts, Evidence, Data**  **Led by Annabel Yale**  **15th November** | Most research produces information. It is the result our thinking, or our use of research methods. or our engagement with different communities or populations. The information generated us used to describe, to analyse, to evaluate and to argue. Yet the world is full of information. What is significant and what is not? How do we conceptualise this information? As information? As data? As evidence? As facts? And what is the difference between these different conceptualisations?  Since the information you collect and collate is a central part of your research, these sorts of questions are of some importance to you understanding both your own research and what research yields and in part is for when it produces knowledge. This session will look at this product and explore the questions it raises as to its status, meaning and distinctions. |
| **Evaluating, Analysing and Arguing Social Research**  **Led by (TBC)**  29th November | The product of our research may describe a trend, development or phenomena, or provide an analysis or evaluation, or make an argument, or a combination of those different activities. This is both an activity that is enjoyable - using your research and making a case or finding - and also difficult and challenging - since it involves making judgements and bring together knowledge and evidence in particular ways that represent your thinking.  This session will explore how evaluations, analyses and arguments are made and assessed. It will explore both the issues around evaluating, analysing and arguing and the means by which these different activities and their products are understood in their scope and limitations |
| **Select Bibliography** | Each session may carry additional and specific readings, but this select bibliography will give general guidance. Any electronic sources outside of what is in the library will be put in relevant folder in the PGR blackboard. Recommended texts are in bold. An additional and longer, more detailed, reading list will also be available.  Acker, J., Barry, K., & Esseveld, J. (1983, December). Objectivity and truth: Problems in doing feminist research. In *Women's Studies International Forum*(Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 423-435). Pergamon.  Babbie E (2010 – 13th and International Ed) *The Practice of Social Research* Canada: Wadsworth  Banks, M. (2001). *Visual Methods in Social Research*. London: Sage.  Burawoy, Michael (2004) “For Public Sociology”, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 70, No. 1, pp. 4-28  **Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods*,Third Edition. London: Sage.**  Byrne, A. and Lentin, R. (eds) (2000) *(Re)searching Women: Feminist Research Methodologies in the Social Sciences in Ireland* Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.  Creswell, J.W. (2009) ***Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*.** Thousand Oaks: Sage.  Creswell, J.W. (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*.Thousand Oaks: Sage.  **Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research*. London: Sage.**  David, M. and Sutton, C. (2011) *Social Research: An Introduction*.London: Sage.  De Vaus (2001) *Research Design in Social Research* London: Sage  European Commission (2010) *European Textbook on Ethics in Research* Belgium: European Commission  Grey, D.E. (2009). *Doing Research in the Real World*. Sage.  Hammond, M and Wellington, J (2013) *Research Methods: The Key Concepts*. Abingdon: Routledge.  **Law, John (2004) *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research.* Abingdon: Routledge**.  Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R.Zilber T. (1998) *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation (Applied Social Research Methods).* Thousand Oaks: Sage.  MacLure, M. (2013). Researching without representation? Language and materiality in post-qualitative methodology. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, *26*(6), 658-667.  Matthews, B. and Ross, L. (2010) *Research Methods: A Practical Guide for the Social Sciences.*  **May, T. (2011)** ***Social******Research: Issues,******Methods******and Process*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.**  Neuman, W.L. (2010) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Pearson.  **Oliver P (2010 2nd Ed) *The Students Guide to Research Ethics* Maidenhead: Open University/McGraw Hill**  Olsen, W. (2012) *Data Collection: Key Debates and Methods in Social Research* . London: Sage.  **Plummer, K. (2001) *Documents of Life 2: An Invitation to Critical Humanism*. London: Sage.**  Ramazanoglu C and Holland, J (2002) *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices.* London: Sage.  Reason, Peter (1998) 'Three approaches to participative inquiry' in Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds) *Strategies* *of Qualitative Inquiry* Thousand Oaks: Sage.  Ribbens, Jane and Edwards, Rosalind (eds) (1998) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research* London: Sage.  Riessman, Catherine Kohler (1993) *Narrative Analysis* Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage.  Robson, C. (2011) *Real World Research:* ***A Resource for Users of Social Research Methods in Applied Settings*.** Chichester: Wiley.  Smith, E. (2008). *Using Secondary Data in Educational and Social Research*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.  **Smith M (1998) *Social Science in Question* London: Sage**  Smyth, M and Williamson W (eds) (2004) *Researchers and their 'Subjects': Ethics, Power, Knowledge and Consent'* Bristol: Policy Press  Somekh, B. and Lewin, C.(eds) (2011) *Theory and Methods in Social Research*. London: Sage |