



Faculty of Social Sciences

## **SIMM31, Social Sciences: Methods for Research in the Social Sciences, 15 credits**

*Social Sciences: Methods for Research in the Social Sciences, 15  
högskolepoäng*

**Second Cycle / Avancerad nivå**

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### **Details of approval**

The syllabus is an old version, approved by Graduate School Board on 2011-12-12 and was valid from 2012-01-23, spring semester 2012.

### **General Information**

The course is offered as an interdisciplinary single subject course in Social Science at the second-cycle level and as an optional course within the Master of Science Programmes.

*Language of instruction:* English

*Main field of studies*

*Depth of study relative to the degree requirements*

Sociology

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Human Geography

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Social Work

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Political Science

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Education

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Development Studies

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Social Anthropology

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Media and Communication Studies

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Sociology of Law

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Gender Studies

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

## Learning outcomes

### Knowledge and understanding

On the completion of the course the student shall

- Demonstrate an extensive knowledge of the wide range of research methods that can be used in the Social Sciences including their theoretical foundations.
- Comprehend the importance of selecting appropriate methods for varying types of research questions.
- Understand the importance of adapting the presentation of research results to the chosen audience, research question, and methodology.

### Competence and skills

On completion of the course, the student shall independently and with proficiency

- Translate abstract ideas with bases in theoretical frameworks into precise empirically observable measures, based in the formulation of viable research questions
- Critically assess the utility and appropriateness of diverse methods and techniques for the study of different research issues in the Social Sciences.
- Evaluate the quality of information that is used to support claims about social issues such as archive materials, survey data, participant observation, historical documents, legal and bureaucratic texts and experimental studies.
- Produce, analyse and present research information using a varying set of methodologies.

### Judgement and approach

On the completion of the course, the student shall

- Demonstrate an ability to make assessments in relation to the appropriateness of selected methodology informed by relevant disciplinary, social and ethical issues as well as demonstrate an awareness of ethical aspects of research and development work.
- Demonstrate insights in the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual researcher for how the research is carried out and how the results may be used.

## Course content

The course aims at providing a comprehensive understanding of the diverse research methods used in the Social Sciences and the necessary practical skills required for their application. Major emphasis is placed on the formulation of research questions, the research process and research design. Information literacy goals are addressed, such as evaluating the appropriateness, reliability and accuracy of different types of information sources. Familiarity with sources of available data is also developed through generating new data as well as through interpreting empirical information within a specific theoretical framework.

The course stresses to increase student's understanding of the interrelationship between quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches in relation to their validity i.e. their capacity to provide understanding and/or answer to a specific research question.

During the course students will for example be trained to prepare detailed schedules/structures for interviews, develop subject consent procedures, use open coding schemes to develop a coding frame and identify concepts in collected data as well as using statistical tools to assess collected empirical material.

## Course design

The course is based on a student centered pedagogical foundation. The emphasis of the course is on a series of practical research tasks performed in groups of students. The research tasks are based on a predefined theme and students are formulating research questions, selecting a methodology and conducting a series of studies which will cover both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The course is web-based and uses a combination of web-based teaching resources providing platforms for the research tasks. By using web-based research platforms, the groups are able to jointly compile larger amounts of information and thus emulate a situation closer to a real research project.

The student centered pedagogical foundation and the research tasks performed in groups also contributes to a common learning environment and allows for a specific focus on inter-personal dynamics within web-based communication systems and social networks. This requires students to develop their ability to identify personal needs for further knowledge and in doing so responsibly meet their personal learning processes.

The course is divided into several segments including; introduction, research projects, and close. It runs along a progression line where challenges become harder as the course develops.

To the students assistance the course has teachers following the learning process all the way. Teaching assistants may also be used to provide support during the projects. As a particular reference support system the course has a specialists' panel of senior researchers providing insights on methodological problems revealed during the performance of the course projects. This panel is available to the students at specific times during the course.

## Assessment

Assessment is based on:

- Written individual assignments on specific issues and/ or critical reflections on the course literature and cases.
- Tasks where students in research groups develop and solve a specific research question, as well as presenting the results and work process.
- Evaluation of other student groups performed research tasks.

In connection with the course students are offered a regular examination, a re-examination and one additional re-examination. Within one year after the course ends, students are offered a minimum of two additional re-examinations. There beyond more examinations are offered but in accordance with current course content.

*Subcourses that are part of this course can be found in an appendix at the end of this document.*

## **Grades**

Marking scale: Fail, E, D, C, B, A.

The grades awarded are A, B, C, D, E or Fail. The highest grade is A and the lowest passing grade is E. The grade for a non-passing result is Fail.

The student's performance is assessed with reference to the learning outcomes of the course. For the grade of E the student must show acceptable results. For the grade of D the student must show satisfactory results. For the grade of C the student must show good results. For the grade of B the student must show very good results. For the grade of A the student must show excellent results. For the grade of Fail the student must have shown unacceptable results.

At the start of the course students are informed about the learning outcomes stated in the syllabus and about the grading scale and how it is applied in the course.

## **Entry requirements**

To be eligible for the course the student must have 150 credits including a graded thesis for the degree of Bachelor or a completed major in the Social Sciences, or another equivalent subject.

In addition, the students must have a minimum average grade in their Bachelor's studies equivalent to 3.0 out of 4 in cumulated grade point average (CGPA), C in the ECTS grading scale, and B in the American grading scale. For students with Swedish undergraduate studies the minimum requirement is G.

English 6/ English B (advanced) proficiency, or the equivalent.

## **Further information**

The course was adopted by the Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences on November 17, 2011, and the syllabus was approved by the Committee for International Programmes on December 12, 2011.

The syllabus is valid from the spring semester 2012.

The course cannot be included in a degree together with SIMM21 Methods for Research in the Social Sciences 15 credits.

The course cannot be included in a degree together with SIM402 Research Methods in Social Sciences 15 credits, SIMM02 Research Methods in Social Sciences 15 credits, SIMM12 Research Methods in Social Sciences 15 credits or SIMM22 Research Methods in Social Sciences 15 credits.

## Subcourses in SIMM31, Social Sciences: Methods for Research in the Social Sciences

Applies from V12

1101 Methods for Research in Social Sciences, 15,0 hp  
Grading scale: Fail, E, D, C, B, A