Advanced Methods. Beyond Limits of Survey Sociology.

I. The general description of the course

The course is addressed, firstly, to students writing an MA based on empirical, non-survey research and, secondly, to students interested in non-survey methods of sociological research at above-elementary level.

The course consists of:

- a very brief recapitulation of general methodological problems concerning all sociological methods;
- an overview of problems involving in methods employing already existing data like statistics, documents or data used in content analysis;
- an overview of observation, field research and case study;
- an overview of interviewing strategies;
- an overview of the variety of action research and experimentation.

The main objective of the course is

- to help students writing an empirical MA to deal with their problems, to be aware of limitations but also strong sides of methods they use in collecting and analyzing their data.

The course is also aimed to improve:

- students’ understanding of methodological problems involving in all empirical research, in all methods, using all types of data, especially in qualitative methods;
- students’ knowledge of chosen methods, their possibilities and limitations, their methodological peculiarities.

The course consists of twelve two-hours meetings (or eleven longer meetings) of seminar-like character.

The way of working will be as interactive as possible: I expect students

- will do presentations of items from the reading list (readings are important although articles usually have a character of examples, illustrations and chapters from textbooks have an auxiliary character),
- will present their research designs, talk about their problems and difficulties, present pieces of analyses and results, and the rest will try to help in solving problems, overcoming difficulties, criticizing etc.

II. Requirements

Beside active participation, the course will be examined by submitting an assignment of c. 3000 words. The paper can be based (1) either upon a presentation of a method of qualitative research: its methodological assumptions, conditions of its application, a chosen, real example of the method or (2) upon a presentation of student’s own research design with its problems and difficulties.

Examples of possible themes are listed below:
1. Accessibility of Statistics Data - legal regulation and social practice in ... [a country].
2. Content Analysis: its methodological assumptions and applications.
3. Content Analysis in Research on Historical Textbooks.
4. Content Analysis in Research on political parties programmes.
5. Observation: its rules and applications.
6. Different Roles of a Researcher in Observation - practical and ethical problems.
8. Interviewing Strategies: types of interviews and its applications.
9. Standardized and In-depth Interviews in Research on National Stereotypes.
10. Interviewing in Sensitive Topics - the example of Russian neo-Nazi.
12. FGI: assumptions - problems - applications.
13. PAR: assumptions - problems - applications.
14. Touraine's Sociological Intervention as PAR.
17. The problem of sampling in qualitative research.

So, the paper may be quite general (e.g. Content Analysis: its methodological assumptions and applications or The problem of sampling in qualitative research) or rather specific (Content Analysis in Research on Historical Textbooks or Interviewing in Sensitive Topics - the example of Russian neo-Nazi). A student is allowed to articulate his/her title by himself/herself (but it is recommended to consult it with me).

III. Themes of classes and readings

0. Information – Organization – Introduction

I recommend four textbooks although during the course we will not read and comment on it systematically. Two, already known to you, are more elementary. The third is – in spite of the title – not a handbook, but rather a collection of essays on qualitative research (on the advanced level), the fourth is – conformance to the title – the practical handbook (quite useful).


The role of theory. Relations between theory and research design. The role of empirical data.
Debating in science - an example.

Attention: for the first meeting students are expected to read two first articles (Clark & Lipset’s and Hout, Brooks & Manza’s - two other are optional)!

The Discussion Are Social Classes Dying?

Validity and reliability of statistics. “Ecological error”. Interpretations and examples.


3. Content Analysis.


The broader context of mass communication research. Variety of methods. Examples.


5. Observation and Field Research.
The role of observation as a method. Types of observation. Examples.

2. Barker E., Brahmins Don't Eat Mushrooms. Participant Observation and the New Religions. Manuscript
4. Moczydłowski P., O sposobach wgląd u w sekrety stosunków międzyludzkich. “Kultura i
spoleczestwo, 1990 nr 1 - to be referred.
5. Kamiński M.M., Subkultura aresztów śledczych. „Studia Socjologiczne,” 1993 nr 3-4 - to be referred.


The interview as social interaction. Types of interviews. Applications of interviews.

4. Inglehart R., From Class-Based to Value-Based Politics. Ibidem, pp. 266-283. - to be referred.

9. New Interviewing Strategies. Focus Group Interview & CATI
New needs and possibilities of research - new types of interviews and applications.

2. The Focus Interview ... In: Bailey K.D., Methods of Social Research. New York: The Free

    Assumptions - methods of ”intervening” - data and analyzing - the example. Action research.


    The logic of experimentation. Types of experiments. Interpretations. Evaluation research.