

Course title

C4A – Research Methods in Social Sciences

Instructors

Bejoy K Thomas (coordinator), Siddappa Setty, Shikha Lakhanpal

Objectives

The course will introduce and provide hands on training of the essential qualitative, quantitative and participatory methods used in social sciences for applied conservation, environment and development research. Emphasis will be placed on organizing and executing research projects and combining methods in field settings.

At the end of the course, the students should be able to

- a) independently develop appropriate methodological protocols to answer questions in applied research on conservation, environment and development.
- b) design, organize and execute field oriented academic research projects requiring a mix of disciplinary approaches and methods.
- c) critically assess social research methods and tools used in research projects and studies.

Prerequisites and approach

A broad understanding of different social science disciplines, particularly the conceptual foundations, is desirable. Experience in working in research projects would be an advantage. The course follows a learning by doing approach with a set of lectures in the beginning followed by independent group projects.

Credits and duration

1 credit (10 lecture hours + ~25 lab hours)

Grading

(a) Field project presentation (40%) and written submission (50%)

The students will be divided into groups of two. The groups will identify a short research problem worth investigating and undertake field research applying a set of methods in consultation with the course coordinator. This will be presented in the class and the comments received will be incorporated in the final written submission. It is expected that the groups will spend ~20 hours on the field project.

(b) Attendance and participation (10%)

Overview and topics

Module 1 - Foundations

1.1 Foundations of social research

1.2 Social research process

Module 2 - Sampling

2.1 Sampling in quantitative and qualitative research

Module 3 - Qualitative methods

3.1 Participant observation

3.2 Focus group discussion

Module 4 - Quantitative methods

4.1 Questionnaire surveys

Module 5 - Participatory methods

5.1 Rationale for participatory methods and overview of select methods

Text book and readings

- Helen Newing with others (2011), Conducting Research in Conservation: A Social Science Perspective (NEW) - course textbook

- H. Russell Bernard (2006) Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches - additional reading

- Chapter 1&2. Kitchin, R. and N. J. Tate (2000) Conducting research in human geography: theory, methodology and practice, Pearson: Prentice Hall (KIT)

- Chapter 5, Rossman, G. B. and S. F. Rallis (2012) Learning in the Field: An Introduction to Qualitative Research, SAGE (ROSS)

More readings and illustrations will be provided during the course.

| Session | Date & Time | Topics | Instructor | Readings |
|---|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| 1 | 10 January 10.00-11.50 | -Philosophical foundations -The social research process | BT | KIT Ch. 1&2 ROSS Ch. 5, 118-24 NEW Ch. 1 |
| 2 | 17 January 10.00-11.50 | - Quantitative and qualitative sampling techniques | BT | NEW Ch. 4 |
| 3 | 24 January 10.00-11.50 | - Questionnaire surveys | BT | NEW Ch. 7 |
| 4 | 31 January 10.00-11.50 | - Rationale for participatory methods - Select participatory tools | BT/SS | NEW Ch. 9&10 |
| 2 February Whole day (~5 hours) | | Application of participatory tools | SS | Demonstration and classroom exercise |
| 5 | 7 February 10.00-11.50 | - Participant observation - Focus group discussion | SL | NEW Ch. 5&6 |
| FIELD PROJECT 8 Feb- 22 Mar (~20 hours) | | | | |
| 23 March 10.00-13.00 | | Presentation of field project | All instructors | |
| 30 March Noon | | Submission of field project report | To BT on email as .doc file (bejoy.thomas@atree.org) | |
| 16 April | | Feedback to the groups and final results to the Academy | | |

BT-Bejoy Thomas, SS-Siddappa Setty, SL-Shikha Lakhanpal