

RES100 Introduction to Research (J)

1st and 2nd quarters, Freshman

Instructor	ITO ISAMU
Style of Class	Lecture
Number of Credits	2
Day and Period	Tuesday, Period 4

Course Description

This course explains the key points in social research, with the aim of equipping students with a basic understanding of the role and significance of empirical research in the social sciences, the theory and methods of social research, and the ethics of research. The lectures deal with such matters as the significance and uses of social research, the history of social research, different types of social research, the ethics of social research, quantitative and qualitative research, how to undertake social research, methods and practices of social research (observation and interviews, using official statistics, etc., questionnaire surveys, approaches to sampling, producing questions and multiple-choice answers, analysis and interpretation).

Course Objectives

- Understand the significance and role of empirical research in the social sciences.
- Gain a fundamental understanding of approaches and principal methods in social research.
- Gain a fundamental understanding of the ethics of research.

Prerequisites

None in particular

Class Materials

Textbook: Hiramatsu Sadami, *Jirei de yomu shakai chosa nyumon* (Introduction to Social Research through Examples), Shinyosha.

Reference books:

Otani Shinsuke et al., *Shin shakaichosa eno apurochi* (New Approaches to Social Research), Minerva Shobo.

Tanioka Ichiro, *Deta wa uso o tsuku—kagakuteki na shakai chosa no hoho* (Data Lies: Scientific Methods in Social Research), Chikuma Shobo, etc.

Course Method

Classes are conducted in lecture format, but in order to avoid one-way teaching, all students will be required to submit a short memo on their thoughts in each class. Several students will be appointed to act as commentators in each class and required to prepare comments and questions on class content, followed by a question-and-answer session of 10-15 minutes.

Evaluation/Assessment

Grades will be determined by reference to four types of submissions from each student: (1) memos submitted in each class; (2) short report submitted in the class in which the student acts as commentator; (3) mid-term report; (4) final report.

Grading

Attitude to learning (1 and 2 above): 20%

Mid-term report (3): 30%

Final report (4): 50%

Course Schedule

Week 1: Orientation and introduction

Explanation of course structure, format, and grading methods

Introduction: What is social research; significance and uses of social research

Week 2: Types of social research

Classification of social research types by objectives, methods, and data; well-known examples of social research

Week 3: Quantitative research and qualitative research

Features and limitations of quantitative research methods and quantitative data, features and limitations of qualitative research methods and qualitative data, mutual complementarity of quantitative research/data and qualitative research/data

Week 4: How to undertake social research

Stages in social research: Planning, design, implementation, data tabulation, data analysis and interpretation, production and publication of research reports

Week 5: Social research methods (1)

Observation (participant observation, non-participant observation) and interviews (structured, semi-structured, unstructured); examples of actual research

Week 6: Social research methods (2)

Value of using official statistics, actual methods of use, points to note for users

Week 7: Social research methods (3)

Features and benefits of research using surveys (questionnaires); examples of use and points to note

Week 8: Public opinion surveys in practice (1)

Public opinion survey as the Classic example of a survey; the idea of sampling, various “errors” in surveys

Week 9: Public opinion surveys in practice (2)

Expression and ordering of questions and the problem of “leading”

Week 10: Public opinion surveys in practice (3)

Problems in creating answer formats and choices

Week 11: Public opinion surveys in practice (4)

How to read public opinion surveys: points to note when expressing and interpreting results

Week 12: Public opinion surveys in practice (5)

Public opinion surveys and contemporary society, public opinion surveys and “public opinion” in a media society

Week 13: History of social research

Origins of statistical research, development of social research in the modern and contemporary eras, brief history of social research in Japan

Week 14: Research ethics

Criteria for social research, respecting human rights in research, informed consent, preventing research misconduct

Week 15: Wrap-up and assignment

Recap and confirmation of the “most basic of basics” in research; explanation of assigned topic for final report

Preparation and Follow-up

- Preparation: study the applicable chapters in the textbook and reference materials (approx. 1 hour).
- Follow-up: Revise the class content and identify points requiring clarification (approx. 1 hour).