

Faculty of Economic, Social and Political Sciences



SOC2138 Methods of qualitative analysis in sociology II: epistemology and methodology

[30h] 4 credits

Teacher(s): Marie Verhoeven
Language: French
Level: Second cycle

Aims

- To know about the main epistemological and methodological currents in existence that underpin qualitative analysis in sociology, to situate them in relation to each other, and to understand the intricacies, potential and limitations.
- To be able to understand and criticise sociological texts that contain a qualitative analysis.
- To be able, on the basis of reading research reports and published research, to understand and analyse critically the methodological and epistemological framework in which qualitative research in social science takes place.
- To be capable of personally developing an approach to qualitative analysis on the basis of given quantitative material, and to conduct the whole of the research in a coherent and well-argued way at theoretic-epistemological and methodological levels.

Main themes

- A presentation of the main epistemological and methodological currents in existence, and which underpin qualitative analysis in sociology: ethnographic and ethno-sociological methodology; biographical methodology and life narratives; qualitative analyses of interviews; categorical, inductive, structural and hermeneutic methodology; and an introduction to content qualitative analysis software.
- This presentation will be made with the help of a reading schedule that will identify the foundations of these various methods: The status of the real and of the social world? The status of the actor and of the interviewee? The role of the researcher? A discourse-practice linkage? Does the approach have limitations?
- Reading sociological texts containing a qualitative analysis approach.
- Comparison with research reports and existing publications, and critical analysis of underlying approaches.
- Exercises in appropriation: personal and group work in analysing qualitative materials that have been collated personally, or else been provided + the presentation of a piece of work.

Content and teaching methods

The course will aim to enable students to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the various methodological and epistemological positions that underpin qualitative analysis in sociology, and to implement a selected qualitative method in a personal and well-argued way. To achieve this objective, the work will be marked by a number of "stages":

- 1) a presentation by the teacher of an overview of different methods and currents in existence, using a reading grid that will decode the main postulates (e.g. the relationship to social reality, the status of the researcher, the status of the actor, and the relationship between discourses and practice);
- 2) personal reading: students will be given a reading portfolio containing sociological texts on the main methods of qualitative analysis referred to see above;
- 3) personal and sub-group appropriation work: implementation of one or more methods presented on the basis of qualitative materials.

