



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Research Methods - 62108

Last update 06-09-2015

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: law

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Keren Weinshall-Margel

Coordinator Email: Keren.weinshall@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: By appointment

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Keren Weinshall

Course/Module description:

This course is designed to provide students with basic knowledge and understanding of a variety of research methods and the development of research designs. Emphasis will be put on the theoretical and methodological components of legal research and on critical reading of empirical legal studies.

Course/Module aims:

The students will become acquainted with the research process, from building research questions to executing the research. They will be introduced to basic concepts regarding theory and research in general, the formation of research questions and hypotheses, the research design (while taking into account the participants, the research tools available and threats to the validity and reliability of the research design), the methods, especially quantitative and qualitative, used to examine the research questions.

An emphasis will be put on studying the research limitations of each methodology and how, due to these limitations, the methods should be used carefully. In addition we will learn how legal arguments are sometimes based on empirical research and how this research influences court rulings and legislation development.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- 1. Basic knowledge and understanding of a variety of legal research methods.*
- 2. the ability to develop research designs.*
- 3. the ability to link between the theoretical and methodological levels*
- 4. the ability to collect data*
- 5. the ability to critically read academic texts describing empirical studies*

Attendance requirements(%):

100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: The research methods will be studied throughout the semester during the process of writing an empirical mini research paper. Each student (or each pair of students) will choose a research question in the wide context of the Israeli Supreme Court's hearings or decisions.

The students will observe a relevant hearing, will collect the data using an encoding sheet we will create in class, as well as in a qualitative research method. The encoded data will be gathered and organized into one database which shall enable the students to answer the research question they chose. Alternatively the students can answer their research question by using qualitative observational methods.

Course/Module Content:

Introduction:

Session 1: Between law and science- why and how Research Methods become a mandatory course in law

Session 2: Basic terminology- research questions, hypothesis, variables and definitions.

Session 3: Measuring and measurements - validity (internal and external), credibility, choosing the research population, sampling and selection bias.

Session 4: Correlation versus causality- between reasonable doubt, probability and causal claims in scientific research.

Quantitative methods:

Session 5: Observational study vs experiment.

Session 6: Data collection- surveys, questionnaires, Quantitative content analysis.

Exercise- constructing a code book for Supreme Court hearings data-set.

Session 7: Data analysis in a nutshell

Qualitative methods:

Session 8: Differences between qualitative and quantitative research, and unique challenges for legal research.

Session 9: Interviews and ethnographic observations Exercise prior to the Supreme Court observation.

Classic methods in legal research:

Session 10: Comparative legal research.

Session 11: Legal history analysis.

Session 12: Doctrinal approach.

Session 13: Summary- about the empirical "reasonable person"; How can a research methods course help in developing (or refuting) legal arguments.

Required Reading:

Additional Reading Material:

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 0 %
Presentation 0 %
Participation in Tutorials 0 %
Project work 0 %
Assignments 10 %
Reports 0 %
Research project 90 %
Quizzes 0 %
Other 0 %

Additional information: