

Research in Human Geography MSc

Module descriptions

Theoretical Themes for Geographers (20 credits)

This module aims:

1. To provide a strong theoretical foundation for geographical research within the social sciences
2. To explore the use of social, cultural, political and economic theory in geographical texts
3. To provide a structured space for the close reading of original texts both in geography and in the wider social sciences.

Doing Human Geography (20 credits)

This module is designed to integrate theoretical perspectives and methodologies through the medium of guided student research projects. It is divided into two sections. The first part explores research strategies including approaches to project design and the development and presentation of a project proposal and then develops and reviews a range of research techniques that range from questionnaire design though to archival data. In part 2 each student develops their research project. Student-led workshops are held during weeks 4-6 that explore themes and issues identified by the students that come from their projects. Topics to be covered, for example, might include: fieldwork in practice, inside the interview process or gaining access. The final workshop considers the issue of writing and representation. This is followed by student presentations reflecting on the practice of research.

Social Research Methods I (20 credits)

Module aims:

This module introduces students to the principles and practice of data collection, collation and analysis. Teaching and learning exercises demonstrate the value of research skills in relation to both textual and numeric data. The module develops understanding of different stages of the research process. The importance of ethical practice in research development, collection, collation, analysis and dissemination is stressed throughout.

Social Research Methods II (20 credits)

The module builds on Social Research Methods I as students progress to a deeper level of understanding of social research in practice. Two large-scale studies (research materials, datasets) are employed to build research skills. Secondary research skills (using textual and numeric data) are explicitly explored as a base from which to conduct informed and appropriate data handling/analysis. An introduction to multivariate analysis will be provided, up to the level of multiple regression and analysis of variance. Techniques for analysing textual data will also be covered.

Resilience and Urban Living (20 credits)

The Resilience and Urban Living module provides a comprehensive overview of how individuals, groups, organisations and / or communities can cope with external stresses and disturbance as a result of rapid social, political, economic or environmental change. These changes include core societal challenges including demographic change, security and terrorism, climate change and sustainability.

Geopolitics and Globalisation (20 credits)

The process of globalization deeply affects the dynamics of political organization and interaction, both within states and between them. The aim of this module is to develop a critical understanding of the political-geographical dimension of the globalization process. It will study the ways in which globalization is transforming global spaces of political organization, but at the same time ask if there are enduring geopolitical patterns and tendencies which are not fundamentally reshaped by the globalism of the contemporary world.

The City and Modernity (20 credits)

Covers issues relating to the idea of the modern city as a planned environment. The course will trace three distinct phases in the development of the 'modern' city: 1) the development of a free humanist city, 2) the enlightenment introduction of 'reason' into the ways people thought about cities, and 3) the nineteenth century capitalization of the city.

Negotiating Environmental Controversies (20 credits)

This module examines the nature of environmental controversies in contemporary democratic societies and develops a theoretical as well as a practical understanding of the technical and participatory tools used to support environmental decision-making processes, and the skills required for facilitating environmental deliberation. The module is structured around the following critical questions/themes: How do environmental controversies come about? What are the processes by which environmental decisions are arrived at? What are the main approaches to environmental decision-support and how are they carried out? Who is involved in making decisions, and how are values and knowledges mobilized to underpin them? How can we reconcile conflicts between cultural, technical and economic forms of rationality, and the need for decision-making bodies to be accountable and responsible? And, ultimately, what are 'good' decisions and what constitutes 'good' environmental governance?