

Empirical Research in the Moral Sciences: Quantitative Methods (A006796)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 7.0

Study time 210 h

Course offerings in academic year 2026-2027

A (Year)

Dutch

Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Provoost, Veerle

LW01

lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

[Bachelor of Arts in Moral Sciences](#)

crdts

7

offering

A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Research in moral science, moral experience, moral judgements, moral attitudes, discourse analysis, Theory of Planned Behaviour, systematic review, experiment, attitude scales, survey, questionnaire construction, quantitative research, experiment, SPSS, statistics, data-analysis, Qualtrics, tables and graphs

Position of the course

This course deepens students' knowledge and skills related to the use of research methods used in the social sciences and how these methods can be used in the domain of moral sciences. The course deals mainly with quantitative research methods and gives an introduction to questionnaire construction for survey research (in particular for research relating to moral attitudes) and methods for data analysis (we will use the quantitative data-analysis software program SPSS). In addition to learning to collect quantitative data responsibly for moral scientific research, students also learn to critically assess the quality and usability of existing data. For the latter point, students will, among other things, carry out an assignment in which they evaluate the use of empirical data for moral argumentation or judgments in the work of journalists.

Contents

Methodology section (3,5 lessons) :

- Methods for moral judgment research (descriptive quantitative research and experiments)
- Methods for constructing moral judgment tests, in particular methods for designing attitude scales
- Systematic reviews: method and added value
- Research ethics for studies involving participants

SPSS (3 lessons):

- exercises at using SPSS: univariate and bivariate descriptive statistics (crosstabs, correlation tabs), linear regression analysis, ANOVA.

Survey assignment (4,5 lessons):

- Under supervision, small groups will work on a survey throughout the semester. Students will go through the entire process of conducting a quantitative study from formulating the research question, through the construction of the questionnaire, collecting and cleaning the data, to the analysis and the presentation of the study for the teachers and peer group.

Critical assessment of a journalist's work (media article)

- Assessing a media article: each student finds and assesses a media article in

which at least one moral claim is made and for which empirical data is used. The assessment is based on criteria explained in class. Students pitch their assessment (possibly in small groups).

Initial competences

- The methodology part builds on the course 'Filosofische vaardigheden en methodiek I (Academic skills and methodology; A000074)'. The students are supposed to have acquired the final objectives of this course.
- The SPSS exercises are based on the final objectives of 'Statistics' (first year course). The students are required to have succeeded for the exam of this course or to have acquired the final objectives in an alternative way.

Final competences

- 1 The student is familiar with quantitative empirical research methods for answering empirical moral scientific research questions.
- 2 The student has insight in, and is able to work with research ethics rules relating to research with participants.
- 3 The student is able to choose the correct technique to analyse data in SPSS and to formulate and interpret the results in a correct and complete way.
- 4 The student is able to choose a suitable research method for a research question in moral science.
- 5 The student is able to set up and conduct a descriptive, quantitative study (including the construction of a questionnaire) and to report the results of the study for peers.
- 6 The student is able to use digital methods to collect and manage research objects in a structured way.
- 7 The student is able to design a data model that structures relations between characteristics of research objects and operationalise this model in the form of a database.
- 8 The student has insight in the principles of digital methods of data analysis and is able to apply them for data analyses.
- 9 The student has insight in the principles of digital methods for visualisation and is able to use them to conduct analyses and/or present research results.
- 10 The student has insight in and is able to explain the value of systematic reviews.
- 11 The student has insight into the quality criteria for correctly selecting, presenting, and applying empirical insights within the framework of a normative claim. The student can also use these criteria to assess a written account of the work of others.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Group work, Seminar, Lecture, Independent work, Peer teaching

Extra information on the teaching methods

- Lectures (8h)
- Lectures : plenary exercises (8h)
- Research Project (7h)
- Independent work (at home): make a research proposal, making assignments (reading, processing, discussing papers, evaluating a media article) (alone or in group) (6u)
- Microteaching (4h): students propose their proposals for research questions and the construction of their questionnaires to each other, students and teachers give feedback
- Lectures/demonstrations (10h): instructions in using SPSS and guest lecture where a researcher illustrates his/her research experiences
- Seminar computer work (bring your own device) (12h) combined with independent work: exercises SPSS

There will be ample opportunity for (online) guidance and support, both individual as well as in small groups.

Classes are not recorded. Students who missed classes due to acceptable reasons

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are welcome to discuss the content and any linked assignments with the teachers.

Study material

Type: Handouts

Name: Collection of methodological papers, examples of studies, slides, online resources, exercises and instructions.

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : intensive

Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : regularly

Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

References

ALLEA (2023) Europese Gedragscode voor Wetenschappelijke Integriteit: 2023

Herziene Uitgave (Nederlands). Berlijn. DOI 10.26356/ECOC-Dutch

Cotterill, S., Powell, R., Rhodes, S., Brown, B., Roberts, J., Tang, M. Y., &

Wilkinson, J. (2019). The impact of social norms interventions on clinical behaviour change among health workers: protocol for a systematic review and meta-analysis.

Systematic Reviews, 8(1), 176.

Ethische Code voor onderzoek met participanten of persoonsgegevens (UGent, 2026)

Godin, G., Sheeran, P., Conner, M., Germain, M., Blondeau, D., Gagné, C., ... &

Naccache, H. (2005). Factors explaining the intention to give blood among the general population. *Vox sanguinis*, 89(3), 140-149.

Greenhalgh, T. M., & Dijkstra, P. (2024). *How to read a paper: the basics of evidence-based healthcare*. John Wiley & Sons.

Hyde, M. K., Knowles, S. R., & White, K. M. (2013). Donating blood and organs: using an extended theory of planned behavior perspective to identify similarities and differences in individual motivations to donate. *Health education research*, 28(6), 1092-1104.

Hyde, M. K., & White, K. M. (2009). To be a donor or not to be? Applying an extended theory of planned behavior to predict posthumous organ donation intentions. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 39(4), 880-900.

Mertz, M., Strech, D., & Kahrass, H. (2017). What methods do reviews of normative ethics literature use for search, selection, analysis, and synthesis? In-depth results from a systematic review of reviews. *Systematic Reviews*, 6(1), 261.

Oluka, O. C., Nie, S., & Sun, Y. (2014). Quality assessment of TPB-based questionnaires: a systematic review. *PloS one*, 9(4), e94419.

Course content-related study coaching

Group feedback, Individual feedback for exercises, personal contact is possible after making an appointment.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Skills test, Participation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

Written examination and skills test SPSS in the computer class and exercises during the semester.

Written examination Methodology

Project Survey (process and interim reports as well as end result) : evaluation on the basis of submitted documents (both drafts and final versions): research

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question, questionnaire, raw and cleaned data file, presentation material
Assessment of a media article (preparation text and presentation)
A minimum of 50% for each of the four parts is necessary to pass. Apart from that, participation is also taken into account.
Students are responsible for the accuracy of their work. Responsible use of AI should be discussed with the teacher before the actual use any type of generative AI and all use of generative AI should be documented in a research journal, including the prompts used and the results that were generated as well as if and how the student integrated any of this outcome in their work.

Calculation of the examination mark

Periodical (40%):

- PC-test SPSS (20% of total score)
- Written examination methodology (20%)

Non-periodical (60%):

- Preparations and exercises SPSS (10%)
- Research project: survey (30%)
- Participation (10%)
- Assessment of the media article (10%)

If a student obtains less than 50% for one component (periodical or non-periodical), they can no longer pass the course unit as a whole. If the total score does turn out to be a mark of ten or more out of twenty, this is reduced to the highest fail mark (9/20).

Facilities for Working Students

Students are advised to contact the teachers for information about the possibilities. Attendance is required for most classes but in specific cases alternatives can be negotiated.

1. Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance, a task is imposed in substitution; the student will receive obligatory course literature and SPSS exercises.
2. Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year
3. Feedback can be given during an appointment during or after office hours

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy

Classes are not recorded. Students who missed classes due to acceptable reasons are welcome to discuss the content and any linked assignments with the teachers.