



# Research in Sicily

## COURSE DETAILS

**Course Designator and Number: SCLY 3895**

**Number of Credits: 4**

**Language of Instruction: English**

**Contact Hours: 25 instructional hours, 20 hours with their research mentor, and 120 hours of independent research**

**Instructor: On-Site Faculty**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an intensive research program offered to undergraduate students interested in furthering their knowledge on migration, asylum, and human rights in Europe and willing to take part in a comparative research experience through field-based learning. The course engages students through an interactive learning approach which takes place in Sicily, as one of the most crucial locations to directly observe, live, and experience migration challenges in the Mediterranean, as well as get the real sense of what managing migration “crises” practically means. Moreover, it offers the chance to develop comparative research designs with other countries, regions, or critical southern borders elsewhere (e.g., US-Mexico border; Myanmar-Thailand border, etc.).

Building on this background, this research program aims to introduce undergraduate students to some of the main research methods that are used to explain and do research on migration, asylum, and human rights in the Mediterranean. As there are many ways to do research on these topics, methodologies here included are not intended to be exhaustive. The program delves into the methodology and the research process and offers students the opportunity to learn some of the

analytical methods and data collection techniques adopted to investigate migrants and asylum seekers, as well as to implement comparative research designs. Moreover, the course focuses on the ethical challenges which arise for researchers engaged in the study of migration and conducting fieldwork with migrants, including the vulnerability of the research subjects, the issue of transparency, the kind of language adopted, the potential unintended negative consequences for vulnerable actors, and the delicate relationship between the research and the migrant.

Overall, the course aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice, giving students some guidance to understand, learn and experience some of the main appropriate research approaches, methodological and data-collection techniques in relation to the many aspects of migration. Moreover, students will have the possibility to shape their own questions and ensuing analysis, taking advantage of resources in Sicily as well as, possibly, analyzing data and sources in the US and implement a comparative research approach.

Note that the *Migration, Human Rights, & the Media* course is a co-curricular course to this one. Any students taking this research course will also need to take the *Migration, Human Rights, & the Media* course to gain the relevant contextual knowledge of this complex topic.

## Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Reflect on the issues of migration, asylum and human rights in the Mediterranean in a critical way and develop comparative analyses with other countries or regions
- Conduct field research;
- Be acquainted with Social Sciences methodology
- Be aware of ethical challenges when conducting sensitive research
- Have a comprehensive view of some of the main research and data collection models and techniques to explain and study migration, as well as the main advantages, pitfalls and limitations of each method
- Conduct research in coordination with peers and in focus groups
- Conduct structured and unstructured interviews
- Develop and present a research design
- Learn the main research, analytical, and methodological approaches, including how to collect and analyze data

## Methodology

The didactic approach is an interactive learning approach, taking place through a series of lectures, guest seminars, research mentoring sessions, and roundtables. The students will engage with sources from different international organizations, including the Siracusa International Institute for Criminal Justice and Human Rights (S.I.I.) and NGOs operating on the southern European border, in Sicily, and in North Africa. Moreover, interviews will take place with European researchers, practitioners, experts, institutional actors, and front-line operators, mainly based in Sicily, as one of the main locations in Europe where the challenges related to migration unfold. This gives students the possibility to conduct original research and take advantage of fieldwork in Sicily. The course allows students to wear the lenses of the researcher, equipping them with the appropriate research tools to experience in a direct and pragmatic way the content-based knowledge. More specifically, the course is delivered combining the following elements:

a) *Methodology classes.* Students are introduced to research and learn what research design is in social sciences, as well as what are the main research, analytical, and methodological approaches, including data-collection and data-analysis tools in the domain of migration. These classes follow a “zooming-in” didactic method. They first start by introducing research design, research questions, theoretical approaches, research methodology, and comparative case study analyses in general terms, the use of (structured, semi-structured, unstructured) interviews as a relevant qualitative method, and a dedicated lab on “how to write down a questionnaire.” Then, they “zoom” on migration by exploring the most appropriate methodological tools for researching migration. Laboratories, data collection exercises, and work groups are organized.

b) *Interaction with the “border community.”* Through round tables and interview sessions with key experts “on the ground,” students will be able to collect first-hand data by interacting with the “border community” in terms of institutional stakeholders, NGOs, experts, international organizations, and civil society associations operating in Siracusa and at the Sicilian border. This includes potential interviews with *Emergency*, in Siracusa, *Italian Red Cross* or *Medicines sans Frontieres* in Siracusa or Catania, *Accoglierete*, *Chiesa Valdese*, *Case Aylan*, and *Centro Astalli* in Siracusa or Catania. Moreover, through partnerships with research institutions such as the S.I.I. students will have the chance to access key databases through a variety of sources for their respective research projects.

c) *Independent research.* Students will be dedicated to the completion of a research project, ideally conducted in small groups based on the selection of topics and assigned a specialized research mentor. Students will think about potential research questions and themes as they develop their final research puzzle. Research mentoring will be provided also through key “check-points” moments to assist the student with the definition of the research topic and questions, to assess data collection, and to provide feedback before final delivery.

## Required Readings/Materials

- King, G., Keohane, R.O. and Verba, S. (1994), *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1; pp.43-51.
- White, P. (2009) *Developing Research Questions: a Guide for Social Sciences*, Palgrave MacMillan. pp. 33-58.
- Frank Laczko and Christine Aghazarm (2009) *Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the evidence*, IOM, Chapter 2-3.
- M.L. McAuliffe and F. Laczko (2013) *Migrant Smuggling Data and Research: A global review of the emerging evidence base*, IOM, chapter 1.
- Ann Singleton (1999) Combining quantitative and qualitative research methods in the study of international migration, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 2:2, 151-157.
- Iole Fontana (2019) The implementation of Italian asylum policy and the recognition of protection in times of crisis: between external and internal constraints, *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 11:4, 429-445.
- Greg Guest, Emily Namey, Jamilah Taylor, Natalie Eley & Kevin McKenna (2017) Comparing focus groups and individual interviews: findings from a randomized study, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 20:6, 693-708.
- Tara Brian and Frank Laczko (2014) *Fatal Journeys, Tracking Lives Lost during Migration*. IOM. Chapter 1.
- Luis Sánchez-Ayala (2012) Interviewing techniques for migrant minority groups, *Handbook of Research Method in Migration*, Edward Elgar Pub: 117-136.
- Jørgen Carling (2012) Collecting, analysing and presenting migration histories, *Handbook of Research Method in Migration*, Edward Elgar Pub: 137-161.
- Bridget Anderson, Ben Rogaly and Martin Ruhs (2012) Chasing ghosts: researching illegality in migrant labour markets, *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, Edward Elgar Pub: 396-410.
- Connie Oxford (2012) Using qualitative research methods in migration studies: a case study of asylum seekers fleeing gender-based persecution, *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, Edward Elgar Pub: 411-429.
- Ilse van Liempt and Veronika Bilger (2012) Ethical challenges in research with vulnerable migrants, *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, Edward Elgar Pub: 451-466.

# Grading

## Grading Rubric

Letter grade	Score or percentage	Description
A	93-100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90-92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87-89	
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C	73-76	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	
D	60-66	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.
F	0-59	

## Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Percentage of grade</b>
Attendance and class participation	10%
Method lab assignments	25%
Formulation of the research question(s)	10%
Literature review	10%
Methodology and development of the empirical analysis	25%
Overall structure of the project	5%
Final presentation	15%
<b>Overall grade</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Assessment Details

#### *Attendance and class participation*

The course requires students to attend classes, as well as to participate in class discussions, seminars, interviews and study visits. Students should read the assigned material and be actively engaged in terms of critical reflection. Students should participate in the Method-Labs and carry out and deliver the weekly assignments.

#### *Method lab assignments*

Students should participate actively in the Method-Labs scheduled in the syllabus and carry out and deliver the weekly assignments.

#### *Research project*

Students will be assessed throughout the development of their research project in terms of analytical structure and expository writing, adequate processing and accuracy of data collected/compiled from primary and secondary sources, critical analysis, development of clear perspective and research outlooks, as well as final presentation and overarching dedication to the learning process. During classes, they will be guided on the different aspects of the project: research design phase and formulation of the research question; literature review; methodology and development of the analysis.

# COURSE CONTENT

## Unit 1

### **Across the Mediterranean: Data & Methods on Flows (1.1)**

The first module introduces research design and methods, focusing on research questions and the structure of a research project. In line with the corresponding modules of the parallel *Migration, Human Rights & the Media* course, the first unit of this Research Course is devoted to the exploration of the key research methodologies and data-collection tools that allow the exploration of data on arrivals, missing and dead migrants, measurement of smuggling phenomena, and potential methodological limits. Moreover, it introduces comparative methods and comparative research design.

- General overview of the course and of the main topics; presentation of the required assignments
- What is research design?

## Unit 2

### **Across the Mediterranean: Data & Methods on Flows (1.2)**

- How to do research: research questions, methods, and structure
- How to develop comparative research
- Migrations as a “research object”: navigating conceptual, methodological, and ethical challenges

#### **Method-Lab: How to DYRP!**

- Develop your own Research Project (DYRP). Students are invited to reflect on their potential research project, its structure, as well as on a set of potential research questions.

#### **Readings:**

- King, G., Keohane, R.O. and Verba, S. (1994), *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1; pp.43-51.
- White, P. (2009) *Developing Research Questions: a Guide for Social Sciences*, Palgrave MacMillan. pp. 33-58
- Duvell, F. Triandafyllidou, A. and Vollmer, B. 2009. Ethical issues in irregular migration research in Europe.



## Unit 3

### Across the Mediterranean: Data & Methods on Flows (1.3)

- How to collect data on migration
- Data collection tools to explore data on arrivals, missing and dead migrants, measurement of smuggling phenomena, and potential methodological limits
- Students are organised in groups to work on data collection in view of the next Method-Lab.

#### Readings:

- Tara Brian and Frank Laczko (2014) Fatal Journeys, Tracking Lives Lost during Migration. IOM. Chapter 1.
- Frank Laczko and Christine Aghazarm (2009) Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the evidence, IOM, Chapter 2-3.
- M.L. McAuliffe and F. Laczko (2013) Migrant Smuggling Data and Research: A global review of the emerging evidence base, IOM, chapter 1.

**Dataset:** UNHCR; IOM

## Unit 4

### Across the Mediterranean: Data & Methods on Flows (1.4)

#### Method-Lab: Surfing the data between routes, deaths, and journeys

- Comparative data collection on migrants' routes and arrivals in different world regions

## Unit 5

### Across the Mediterranean: Data & Methods on Flows (1.5)

- How to conduct qualitative (structured, unstructured, semi-structured) interviews
- Focus groups, migrant histories, and surveys
- **Method-Lab: first steps to draft your own questionnaire**

#### Readings:

- Greg Guest, Emily Namey, Jamilah Taylor, Natalie Eley & Kevin McKenna (2017) Comparing focus groups and individual interviews: findings from a randomized study, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 20:6, 693-708.
- Luis Sánchez-Ayala (2012) Interviewing techniques for migrant minority groups, *Handbook of Research Method in Migration*, Edward Elgar Pub: 117-136.
- Jørgen Carling (2012) Collecting, analysing and presenting migration histories, *Handbook of Research Method in Migration*, Edward Elgar Pub: 137-161.

## Unit 6

### At the EU/State External Border: Data & Comparative Analyses (2.1)

This module focuses on how to study, build, and analyse asylum databases and statistics (EUROSTAT, US Immigration Statistics etc.) including the rates of recognition and rejection of protection in certain geographical areas. Moreover, it allows students to interact with the “border community” through interviews and interactive sessions.

- Research in practice: Visit to the Siracusa International Institute and introduction to their research activity

## Unit 7

### At the EU/State External Border: Data & Comparative Analyses (2.2)

- Roundtable/interview session “Travelling across the sea: routes, rescue activities and alternative solutions”: Actors involved from the border community: Sea Eye (NGO active in Search and Rescue Operations in the Mediterranean); Mediterranean Hope and Chiesa Valdese (active in the implementation of humanitarian corridors)
- Students have the chance to interact with the border community and to ask their own questions

## Unit 8

### At the EU/State External Border: Data & Comparative Analyses (2.3)

- How to study asylum: main databases and comparative data collection
- Acceptance and rejection rates
- Students are organised in groups to work on data collection in view of the next Method-Lab

#### Readings:

- Iole Fontana (2019) The implementation of Italian asylum policy and the recognition of protection in times of crisis: between external and internal constraints, *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 11:4, 429-445.

**Datasets:** EUROSTAT, US Immigration Statistics

## Unit 9

### At the EU/State External Border: Data & Comparative Analyses (2.4)

#### Method-Lab: Asylum between protection and rejection

- Laboratory on comparative data collection on asylum data

## Unit 10

### At the EU/State External Border: Data & Comparative Analyses (2.5)

- Roundtable/interview session “Migrants and Asylum-seekers at the Italian border: perspectives from the ground.” Actors involved from the border community: EMERGENCY; International Red Cross; Medicines sans Frontieres.
- Students have the chance to interact with the border community and to ask their own questions

## Unit 11

### Across, Within, & Beyond the EU/State Border: Integration & Media Framing (3.1)

This module introduces mixed methods methodology in migration studies, as well as ethical challenges in migration research. Moreover, it explores the methodology to study migrants' Integration, including integration indexes, as well as content analysis of major English/US newspapers and political debates in order to understand the “framing” of—and by—different actors and categories.

- Mixed methods in migration
- Guest seminar by researcher and former EASO official Dr. Marcello Carammia

**Readings:**

- Ann Singleton (1999) Combining quantitative and qualitative research methods in the study of international migration, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 2:2, 151-157.
- Connie Oxford (2012) Using qualitative research methods in migration studies: a case study of asylum seekers fleeing gender-based persecution, *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, Edward Elgar Pub: 411-429.

## Unit 12

### Across, Within, & Beyond the EU/State Border: Integration & Media Framing (3.2)

- Ethical challenges when studying and collecting data on migration

**Readings:**

- Ilse van Liempt and Veronika Bilger (2012) Ethical challenges in research with vulnerable migrants, *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, Edward Elgar Pub: 451-466.

**Discussion:** Students are invited to reflect on ethical challenges and main requirements to protect the vulnerability of migrants when conducting research

## Unit 13

### Across, Within, & Beyond the EU/State Border: Integration & Media Framing (3.3)

- Studying integration
- Integration indexes and main methodological challenges

**Readings:**

- Bridget Anderson, Ben Rogaly and Martin Ruhs (2012) Chasing ghosts: researching illegality in migrant labour markets, *Handbook of Research Methods in Migration*, Edward Elgar Pub: 396-410.

**Datasets:** Comparing different integration indexes

## Unit 14

### Across, Within, & Beyond the EU/State Border: Integration & Media Framing (3.4)

- Implementing focus groups: Meeting and interaction with refugees through the associations Case Aylan; Centro Astalli and AccogliereTe either in Siracusa or Catania

## Unit 15

### Across, Within, & Beyond the EU/State Border: Integration & Media Framing (3.5)

- How to study media framing: methodological considerations
- Content analysis

#### **Method-Lab: content analysis of major English/US newspapers**

- Students work in groups to explore different framings of migration

## POLICIES

### Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

### University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

## **Scholastic Dishonesty**

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

## **Student Conduct**

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.