

Research and Academic Writing Workshop

Syllabus for the academic year 2026-2027

Faculty of Political Science and Sociology, Master in Nationalism Studies

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Class: Wednesday 15:30-17:30 (2 hours synchronic online), 1 hour diachronic

Office hours: by appointment (online)

Moodle page: <https://cvdof.ucm.es/moodle/course/view.php?id=21106>

Description

The Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (pictured below) is a masterpiece of modern architecture. Designed in the 1970s by star architects Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers and Gianfranco Franchini, it is famous throughout the world for its 'inside-out' design, whereby all structural and technical elements of the building, usually hidden behind walls, are not only shown, but also highlighted through a colour code that signals the function of each element. You might be wondering what all this has to do with this course? This course follows the same logic behind the design of the Centre Georges Pompidou. Throughout the semester we will build together the structure and technical elements of your research work, hopefully your master's dissertation. In other words, we will not focus on the content of your texts (or not too much), but on all those structural and methodological considerations that are sometimes hidden from view in a published piece of research. Although the course focuses on methodology, being it part of a master's degree in nationalism studies, nationalism, as a general topic, will still be a constant reference of our discussions.



The Centre Georges Pompidou as a metaphor of this course.

Organisation and general instructions

At the beginning of the semester each of you will choose a topic to work upon during the rest of the class. I strongly advise you to select a topic relevant to your master's dissertation. Each week we will address an element of the research and writing process through readings, class discussions and practical exercises. In this way, you will progressively build up the intellectual and methodological scaffolding of your research work, which you will present before the rest of the class at the end of the course.

Each class will be divided in three components of roughly one hour: two will be taught online synchronically, i.e. you will have to attend them at the specified day and time; one will be diachronic, i.e. you will carry it out autonomously outside class hours.

The first synchronic component consists in the discussion of class readings. The readings are compulsory and active participation in the debate is part of the final evaluation. The second component lies in different types of group work over the topic of the previous week that we will do together in class. The third component coincides with the weekly assignments that you will do on your own diachronically. More specifically, each of you will have to write a short text (about 500 words) in which you will reflect upon the topics discussed in class and their application to your own research, or to some excerpts of published works that I will select. The specific assignment will be given at the end of each synchronic class and will be posted on Moodle. You will complete these exercises on your own and you will submit them by the following Monday at the latest. To make an example, on Wednesday 7 October we will address the topic of 'logics of inquiry'. By the following Monday, 12 October, you will have to send your reflections on how the considerations made in class apply to your personal work. Some of these weekly assignments might then be discussed in class. This means that we might review critically each other's works. Hence, being open to accept criticism and formulating it in a constructive way are key requirements, and learning goals, of this course.

By the end of the semester, you will gather all the building blocks that you need to write a coherent research report. You will have to submit this report to me by 15 January 2027. In one of the last two classes (9 or 16 December) you will present your work in progress to the rest of the class. In addition to the short weekly assignments and the final research report, you will have to submit a literature review (more info below).

All readings are available at the Moodle page of the course, accessible through the following link: <https://cvdof.ucm.es/moodle/course/view.php?id=21106>).

Evaluation Criteria

1. Attendance and participation (30%) ➔ This requirement entails attendance of synchronic classes and submission of the relevant assignments. To get your credits you have to attend at least 10 classes out of 13 and submit at least 7 assignments out of 10. Exceptions are possible for medical reasons or professional overlapping commitments, but should always be discussed with me, preferably in advance. You will receive feedback on the weekly assignments but not a specific grade for each of them. The grade of this component of the evaluation will be a general one considering all the aspects of your attendance and participation.
2. Literature review (30%) ➔ In class two, we will address the topic of formulating a research question and writing a literature review. You will then have six weeks to submit your literature review. This should be between 1,600 and 2,000 words long (footnotes/references excluded) and be submitted on 15 November 2026. Further instructions on how to write the literature review will be given in class.
3. Research report and presentation (40%) ➔ The research report should present in a synthetic, coherent and easily readable way all the different elements of your research work that we will discuss in class throughout the semester. The length should be between 5,000 and 7,000 words (references included). The submission deadline is 15 January 2027. You will present your work in progress on 9 or 16 December. The calendar of the presentations will be communicated in October. The grade will be a single one for the written report and the presentation, but you will receive feedback on both individually.

All assignments have to be submitted to me via email at edalle@ucm.es. Unjustified late submissions will incur the following penalties: literature review and research report: 0.5 points per day; weekly assignments: it will be counted as non-submitted.

In order to get your credits, you will need to obtain at least 5/10 as the average grade of the different assignments and at least 4/10 in the research report.

A final clarification: this is not, strictly speaking, a writing workshop or a methods class. This means that we will not focus on style, although we will discuss how to structure a research paper and how to use the reference system. Similarly, we will not go in depth into specific methods. The workshop will rather provide an overview of different types of methods, with special emphasis on those that are more useful in the study of nationalism. More broadly, the focus of the workshop will be on the different phases of the research process and how to incorporate them into an academic work.

Note on the use of AI tools

Within the framework of this course, students may use AI tools to edit and translate text, but not to generate text from scratch or from fragmentary inputs. As finding sources is a key skill to be developed during this course, students may use AI to gather sources but must primarily search them on their own and use AI only as a complementary tool. Similarly, since we will have plenty of discussions and brainstorming sessions in class, students may use AI for brainstorming only as a complement to these discussions and to their own personal reflections on their own work. In case of suspicious improper use of AI in the preparation of any of the assignments, I reserve myself the possibility to validate their evaluation after an online individual discussion with the student(s) concerned to test their knowledge of the work submitted.

Sessions and readings

1. Introduction - 23.9.2026

This introductory class will present the overall content of the course, its functioning and the evaluation criteria. We will then have a brief discussion about the relationship between truth and the research process. We will end with a few considerations on how to choose a research topic that we will further develop in the next class.

Only optional readings for this class:

- Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), The reflexivity of modernity, pp. 36-45
- Patrick McNeill and Steve Chapman, *Research Methods*, 3rd ed (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), Science and values, pp. 172-87
- Nicholas Walliman and Bousmaha Baiche, *Your Research Project: A Step-by-Step Guide for the First-Time Researcher* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2001), Research and the research problem, pp. 7-23 (ignore the exercises)

2. Research questions and literature review - 30.9.2026

In this session, we will discuss how to formulate a research question. We will see what a relevant question is and based on which criteria we can say that a specific piece of research is innovative. All this will naturally lead us to discuss how to write a literature review, as a preliminary step in the research process and the identification of your question.

Required readings:

- Mats Alvesson and Jörgen Sandberg, *Constructing Research Questions: Doing Interesting Research* (London: SAGE, 2013), The context of constructing and formulating research question, pp. 10-23

- Diana Ridley, *The Literature Review: A Step-by-Step Guide for Students*, 2nd edition, (London: Sage Publications, 2012), Structuring the literature review, pp. 98-117

Optional readings:

- Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *'They Say / I Say': The Moves That Matter in Persuasive Writing*, Third Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), So what? Who cares? Saying why it matters, pp. 92-101
- Diana Ridley, *The Literature Review: A Step-by-Step Guide for Students*, 2nd edition, (London: Sage Publications, 2012), The multiple purposes of a literature review, pp. 23-40.
- Massimiliano Tarozzi, 'How Does My Research Question Come About? The Impact of Funding Agencies in Formulating Research Questions', *Qualitative Report* 18 (23 December 2013), pp. 1-11.
- Any of the review articles on *The State of Nationalism. An International Review*: <https://stateofnationalism.eu/>

3. Logics of inquiry - 07.10.2026

Research questions can be approached from different perspectives. These usually entail different logics of inquiry. In this class we will focus on four logics: deductive, inductive, retroductive and abductive. We will further discuss how these logics shape different disciplinary approaches in the social sciences and humanities. We will conclude with some considerations on interdisciplinarity and how to engage with it.

Required readings:

- Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), Strategies for answering research questions, pp. 85-127.

Optional readings:

- Uriel Abulof, 'Normative Concepts Analysis: Unpacking the Language of Legitimation', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 18, no. 1 (2015), pp. 73-89.
- Hayden V. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), The burden of history, pp. 27-50
- Craig Calhoun and Diana Rhoten, 'Integrating the Social Sciences: Theoretical Knowledge, Methodological Tools, and Practical Application', in *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Robert Frodeman, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 103-18
- Jessica K. Graybill and Vivek Shandas, 'Doctoral Student and Early Career Academic Perspectives', in *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Robert Frodeman, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 404-18

4. Concepts, sources and units of analysis - 14.10.2026

Three key building blocks of the research process are the identification and formulation of the main concepts that drive your analysis, the sources or data of your inquiry, and the actors or units that you want to examine. In this class, we will discuss how to formulate, and if needed operationalise, the concepts that lie at the core of your work. We will do the same with your objects of examination, be they individuals, classes, enterprises, country cases,

networks or something different altogether. We will finally discuss how to select your sources and/or to generate your data.

Required readings:

- Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), Concepts, theories, hypotheses and models, pp. 110-122
- Sigmund Grønmo, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (London: SAGE, 2019), Finding sources and data, pp. 129-48

Optional readings:

- Patricia Clavin, 'Time, Manner, Place: Writing Modern European History in Global, Transnational and International Contexts', *European History Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2010), pp. 624-40
- Nicholas Walliman and Bousmaha Baiche, *Your Research Project: A Step-by-Step Guide for the First-Time Researcher* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2001), Concepts and theory, pp. 70-87, and The nature and role of data + quantitative and qualitative data, pp. 196-204

5. Methods: general discussion – 21.10.2026

In the academic sphere, methods is a buzzword. What do we mean by the word methods? What are the main distinctions between different classes of methods? This session will answer these and other questions by providing a bird-eye view of the concept of methods and the main features of the most important categories of methods: qualitative, quantitative and mixed. The optional readings offer some examples of different methodologies (both quantitative and qualitative) applied to the study of ethnicity and nationalism.

Required readings:

- Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), Methods for answering research questions, pp. 199-229

Optional readings:

- Eleanor Knott, 'Generating Data: Studying Identity Politics from a Bottom-Up Approach in Crimea and Moldova', *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures* 29, no. 2 (2015): 467-86
- Ivan Serrano, 'Just a Matter of Identity? Support for Independence in Catalonia', *Regional & Federal Studies* 23, no. 5 (2013): 523-45
- Maarten Van Ginderachter, 'How to Gauge Banal Nationalism and National Indifference in the Past: Proletarian Tweets in Belgium's Belle Époque', *Nations and Nationalism* 24, no. 3 (2018): 579-93.
- Andreas Wimmer, *Nation Building: Why Some Countries Come Together While Others Fall Apart* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1-45.

6. Methods for the Study of Nationalism – 28.10.2026

This class will offer a panoramic view of methods commonly used in the study of nationalism, among others. More specifically, we will explore content/discourse analysis, participant observation, process tracing, quantitative text analysis and social network analysis. We will also spend some time on historical research.

Required readings (one of the following depending on your interests):

- Ruth Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 7-48
- Eleanor Knott, 'Generating Data: Studying Identity Politics from a Bottom-Up Approach in Crimea and Moldova', *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures* 29, no. 2 (2015): 467-86
- Henry E Hale, *The Foundations of Ethnic Politics: Separatism of States and Nations in Eurasia and the World* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 119-139
- Stephanie Dornschneider and Jennifer Todd, 'Everyday Sentiment among Unionists and Nationalists in a Northern Irish Town', *Irish Political Studies* 36, no. 2 (2021): 185-213
- Caterina Froio and Bharath Ganesh, 'The Transnationalisation of Far Right Discourse on Twitter: Issues and Actors That Cross Borders in Western European Democracies', *European Societies* 21, no. 4 (2019): 513-39
- Hayden V. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), The burden of history, pp. 27-50

7. Reading Week – 04.11.2026 – NO CLASS THIS WEEK!

To give you some more time to work on your literature review (which is one of the formal assignments of this course), there will be no class this week. **Do not forget to submit your review by 15 November.**

8. Theories and explanation – 11.11.2026

'Why' is one of the most abused words among researchers. This class will inquire into why we use theories, what causation means and what are the main pitfalls along the steep and slippery path towards showing causation.

Required readings:

- Martyn Hammersley, *The Limits of Social Science: Causal Explanation and Value Relevance* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2016), Chapter 2, pp. 44-60.
- John D. Brewer, 'Theory', in *The A-Z of Social Research: A Dictionary of Key Social Science Research Concepts*, ed. Robert L. Miller and John D. Brewer (London: SAGE, 2003), pp. 324-326.
- Chris Anderson, 'The End of Theory: The Data Deluge Makes the Scientific Method Obsolete', *Wired*, 23 June 2008, 2 pp.

Optional readings:

- Sondra N. Barringer, Scott R. Eliason, and Erin Leahey, 'A History of Causal Analysis in the Social Sciences', in *Handbook of Causal Analysis for Social Research*, ed. Stephen L. Morgan, *Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2013), pp. 9-26

- Giovanni Capoccia and R. Daniel Kelemen, 'The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism', *World Politics* 59, no. 3 (2007), pp. 341-69
- John Gerring, 'Causation: A Unified Framework for the Social Sciences', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17, no. 2 (2005), pp. 163-98
- James Mahoney, 'Path Dependence in Historical Sociology', *Theory and Society* 29, no. 4 (2000): 507-48

SUBMIT YOUR LITERATURE REVIEW BY 15 NOVEMBER!

9. Comparisons and Connections – 18.11.2026

The comparative method is one of the oldest and most common in the social sciences and humanities. It is often suitable for the study of ethnicity and nationalism. That is why we will devote a session to go a little deeper into this specific methodology that can be fruitfully applied across the disciplines of anthropology, history, political science and sociology. We will also consider alternative approaches that go beyond comparisons by including the study of connections and cross-border processes, notably transnational history.

Required readings:

- Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), Case-oriented comparative method, pp. 34-52.
- Saunier, P.-Y. (2006). Going transnational? News from down under, *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung*, 31(2), pp. 118-131.

Optional readings:

- Charles C. Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 2014), The variable-oriented approach, pp. 53-68
- Philipp Ther, 'Beyond the Nation: The Relational Basis of a Comparative History of Germany and Europe', *Central European History* 36, no. 1 (2003), pp. 45-73
- Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984), Comparing, Individualizing Comparisons and Universalizing Comparisons, pp. 60-115
- Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, 'Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity', *History and Theory* 45, no. 1 (2006), pp. 30-50

10. Drafting a research work in the social sciences and the humanities – 25.11.2026

Drafting a research paper is not as straightforward as one would think. Even if you have all the ingredients lined up, changes in the way you 'mix' them can lead to very different results. This class will discuss how to structure your piece of research, how to put down your ideas and how much of writing is actually re-writing and re-writing and...It will also be an occasion to discuss a tedious, but key element of an academic work: the reference system. The optional readings offer amusing insights into the politics of footnoting.

Required readings:

- Gordon Taylor, *A Student's Guide to Writing: How to Plan and Write Successful Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Introductions, Middles and Endings, pp. 91-144

Optional readings:

- Joseph Bensman, 'The Aesthetics and Politics of Footnoting', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 1, no. 3 (1988), pp. 443-70
- Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997)
- Paul Stiff, "'A Footnote Kicks Him': How Books Make Readers Work", *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 28 (1997): 65-73

11. Methodological debates in nationalism studies – 02.12.2026

After spending most of the semester addressing theoretical and methodological questions about research design and academic writing in abstract terms, in this class we will discuss some concrete methodological debates in the field of ethnicity and nationalism. The precise content of the class will be decided in October depending on the interests of students. The class might also involve the intervention of a guest speaker.

12. Research report presentations – 09.12.2026

This class will be devoted to the presentations of your research reports (still in progress). You will have 10-15 minutes to present and we will leave 5-10 minutes for questions from the public (depending on the number of students who have to present). The calendar of the presentations will be published in October.

13. Research report presentations and recap – 16.12.2026

This session will be partially devoted to finish the presentations of the research reports, if needed. In the remainder of the class, I will do a quick recap of the overall course and answer questions from the students.

SUBMIT YOUR RESEARCH REPORT BY 15 JANUARY 2027!

General literature

- Alvesson, Mats, and Jörgen Sandberg. *Constructing Research Questions: Doing Interesting Research*. London: SAGE, 2013.
- Blaikie, Norman. *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation*. Cambridge: Polity, 2000.
- Brubaker, Rogers. *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Brubaker, Rogers. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Brubaker, Rogers. *Grounds for Difference*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- Brubaker, Rogers, and Frederick Cooper. 'Beyond "Identity"'. *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1-47.
- Brubaker, Rogers, Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox, and Liana Grancea. *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Brubaker, Rogers, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov. 'Ethnicity as Cognition'. *Theory and Society* 33, no. 1 (2004): 31-64.
- Capoccia, Giovanni, and R. Daniel Kelemen. 'The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactuals in Historical Institutionalism'. *World Politics* 59, no. 3 (2007): 341-69.
- Clavin, Patricia. 'Defining Transnationalism'. *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 4 (2005): 421-39.
- Clavin, Patricia. 'Time, Manner, Place: Writing Modern European History in Global, Transnational and International Contexts'. *European History Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2010): 624-40.
- Conrad, Sebastian. *What Is Global History?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.
- Eco, Umberto. *How to Write a Thesis*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2015.
- Frodeman, Robert, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Gerring, John. 'Causation: A Unified Framework for the Social Sciences'. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17, no. 2 (2005): 163-98.
- Ginderachter, Maarten Van, and Jon E Fox, eds. *National Indifference and the History of Nationalism in Modern Europe*. London; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2018.
- Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *'They Say / I Say': The Moves That Matter in Persuasive Writing*. Third Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014.
- Grafton, Anthony. *The Footnote: A Curious History*. London: Faber and Faber, 1997.
- Grønmo, Sigmund. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London: SAGE, 2019.
- Hearn, Jonathan, and Marco Antonsich. 'Theoretical and Methodological Considerations for the Study of Banal and Everyday Nationalism'. *Nations and Nationalism* 24, no. 3 (2018): 594-605.
- Knott, Eleanor. 'Generating Data: Studying Identity Politics from a Bottom-Up Approach in Crimea and Moldova'. *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures* 29, no. 2 (2015): 467-86.

Leavy, Patricia, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Patricia Leavy, 424–56. Oxford University Press, 2020.

Mahoney, James. 'Path Dependence in Historical Sociology'. *Theory and Society* 29, no. 4 (2000): 507–48.

McNeill, Patrick, and Steve Chapman. *Research methods*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006.

Morck, Randall, and Bernard Yeung. 'Economics, History, and Causation'. *Business History Review* 85, no. 1 (2011): 39–63.

Ragin, Charles C. *The Comparative Method: Moving beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Rev. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

Ridley, Diana. *The literature review: a step-by-step guide for students*. 2nd edition. London: Sage Publications, 2012.

Taylor, Gordon. *A Student's Guide to Writing: How to Plan and Write Successful Essays*. New ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Tilly, Charles. *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984.

Walliman, Nicholas, and Bousmaha Baiche. *Your research project: a step-by-step guide for the first-time researcher*. London: Sage, 2001.

Werner, Michael, and Bénédicte Zimmermann. 'Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity'. *History and Theory* 45, no. 1 (2006): 30–50.

White, Hayden V. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

Wimmer, Andreas, and Nina Glick Schiller. 'Methodological Nationalism and beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences'. *Global Networks* 2, no. 4 (2002): 301–34.

Wodak, Ruth, Rudolf De Cillia, Martin Reisigl, and Karin Liebhart. *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Second edition. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.