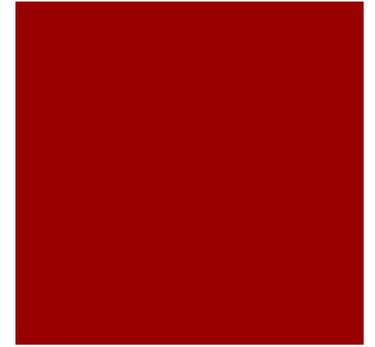




Introduction to Research

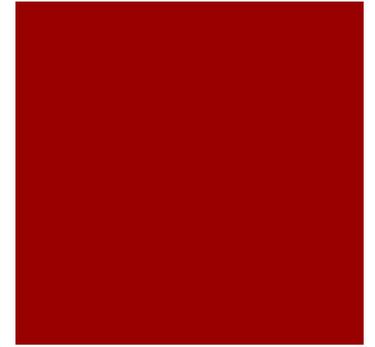
Dr. Christopher K. Lamont
University of Groningen

Overview



- In this lecture I will:
 - Set out key terms that will help us make sense of diverse research traditions in the humanities and social sciences
 - Introduce “research questions” and “research design”
- This will help you to assign/carry out question-based research essays, guide undergraduate and postgraduate research projects

What is Research?



■ What is research?

- Students have access to vast and growing bodies of knowledge (online news, social media, blogs, discussion forums)
 - But... scholarly research (whether in the humanities or social sciences) is a specific kind of knowledge
- Research is: “the search for knowledge” (Pole and Lampard)
 - But... How do we distinguish scholarly work from other forms of writing? “anything goes” or “methods”

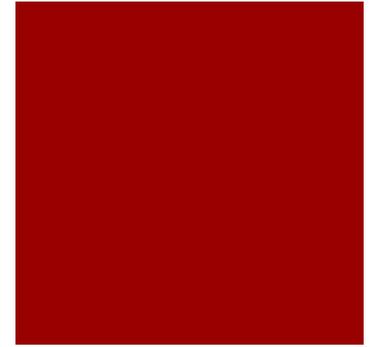
What is Research?

■ Question-based Research

- “research in which the researcher poses a question that typically attempts to explain an uncertain relationship between variables (empirical research) or that problematizes our understandings of an existing variable (interpretive)” (Lamont 2015, p. 31)

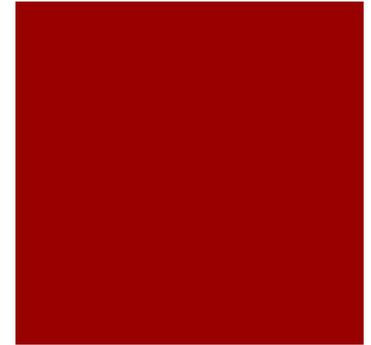


Key Terms



- **Methodology:** means through which we acquire knowledge
 - **Research Methods**
 - *NOT* – a practical guide to the “truth”
 - *Research Methods are making transparent the choices you make in the process of research. Your students should justify these steps.*

Key Terms



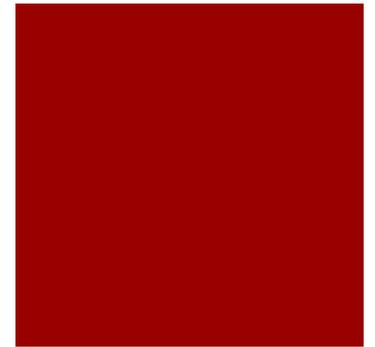
- **Epistemology:** the study of knowledge, how knowledge is produced
 - Why should we be aware of this? Why should our students?
 - *Scientific methods and social processes*
 - Postivism, empiricism
 - Explaining the relationship between variables
 - Causal inference – understanding causality
 - e.g. language acquisition
 - *Post-positivism, interpretivism*
 - Understanding the ontology (study of being) of taken for granted concepts
 - Contests causal inference in the social world

Science and Research

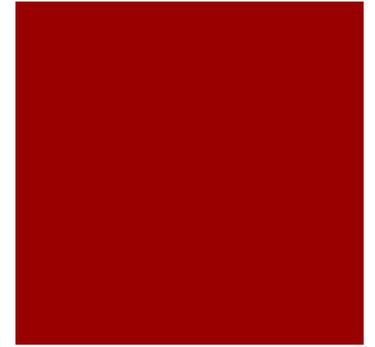
- Natural Sciences
 - Asking about the weather?



Science and Research



What about the Social world?



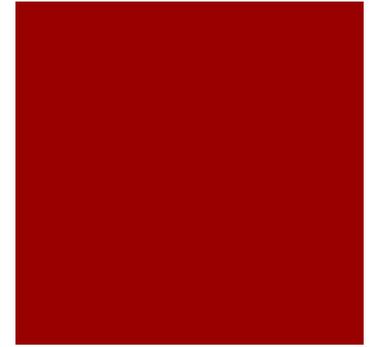
- Study of literature, study of translation, study of social sciences
- We make causal claims in our research, methods allows us to be transparent about research choices
 - Qualitative Research designs
 - Quantitative Research designs
 - Mixed Methods Research designs

Research Design

- Moving your students from topics of interest to research questions
- Research questions will then frame how you approach research design
 - **Topic of Interest:** 'Arab Spring' revolutions
 - **Research Question:** What factors explain the Tunisian revolution of 2011?

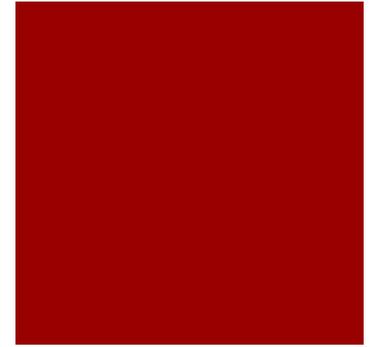


Research Design



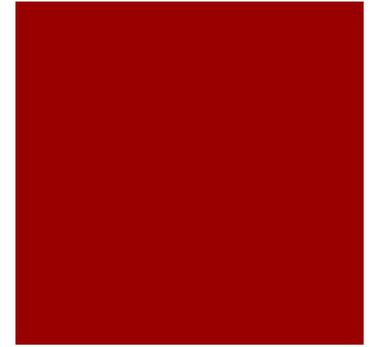
- Dependent and Independent Variables
 - **Dependent Variables:** The object that requires explanation or the particular outcome you wish to explain
 - **Independent Variables:** Something that is conjectured to explain our cause a particular outcome
 - **Example:**
 - What role did social media play in the mobilization of protests during the Tunisian revolution?
 - What is the dependent variable?
 - What is the independent variable?

Research Design



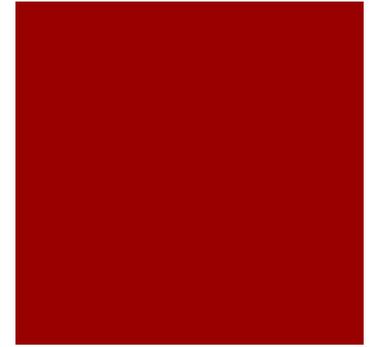
- The research process
 1. Select a topic that is of interest to you
 - a. Encourage students to brainstorm topics, this can be done in groups
 - b. Or, students can select from a list of topics prepared by lecturer
 2. Formulate the research question
 - a. What is the dependent variable, independent variable?
 3. Contextualize the research in existing literature
 - a. Literature review

Research Design



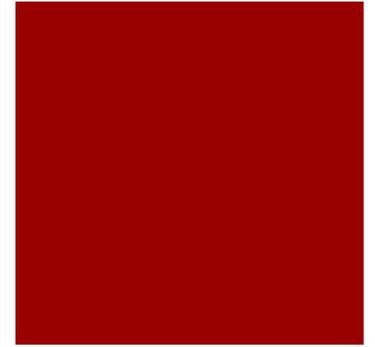
- The research process (continued)
 4. Ethical considerations before starting research?
 - a. Does your institution have an ethics review board to review interaction with human subjects?
 5. Data collection
 - a. Looking for data?
 - b. Primary v. Secondary sources
 6. Writing up

Research Design



- The research question and research design
 - Students will draw some form of proposition of a relationship between variables in their research question
 - This proposition defines **theory** (positive)
 - Theories are general statements that describe and explain the causes or effects of classes of phenomena. They are composed of causal laws or hypotheses, explanations, and antecedent conditions (Van Evera 1997, pp. 7-8)
 - Theories can be empirically tested

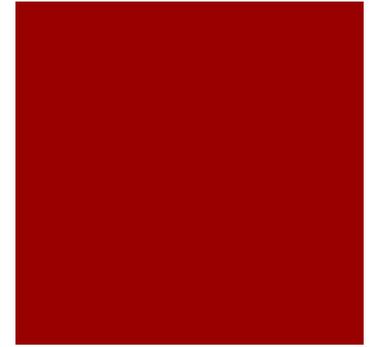
Research Design



■ Theory testing

- **Hypotheses:** A statement that makes a claim as to a relationship between two or more variables
- Hypotheses are falsifiable
- Means to test: large n; small n
- Large n – quantitative research
- Small n – qualitative research
 - Case Study

Research Design



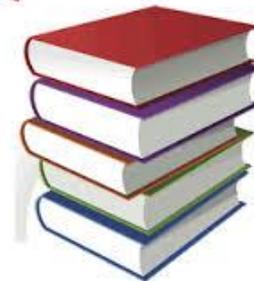
- When thinking about theory testing research designs we need a strong understanding of existing literature
- **Literature Review**
 - How do we search scholarly literature?
 - What is the difference among sources?
 - Peer-Reviewed Scholarly Journals
 - **Keyword Searches**

Research Design

- Resources for searching the literature

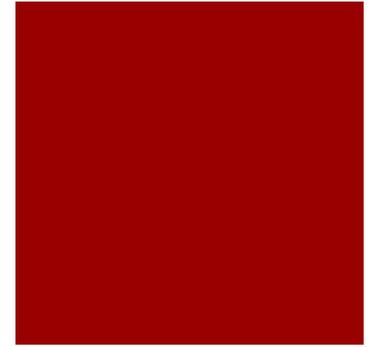


INFORMATION SERVICES



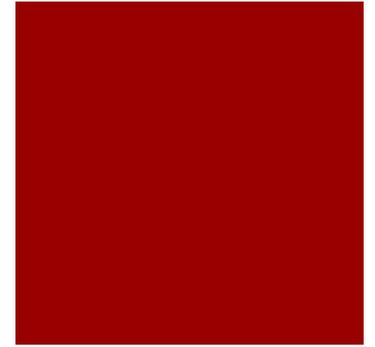
Research Design

- Literature Review Key Points
 - Situate Research in existing debates
 - Explore existing answers to research question
- But it is not
 - A summary of existing literature
 - Strawman argumentation – simplistic constructions of other authors arguments



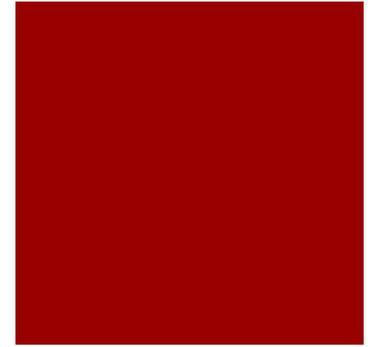
Research Design

- Research Format
 - Introduction
 - Literature Review
 - Research Question
 - Methodology
 - Case Study/Presentation of Data and Data Analysis
 - Conclusions



Research Design

- Strategies for Research Design
- Different forms of case studies to maximize causal inference
- Quantitative research design to identify strong correlations, posit causal relationships
- The the next sessions we will explore these strategies in greater depth



Summary

- What is research?
 - Key Terms
- What is question-based research?
- Introduction to Research Design

