



Social Work PhD programme

seminars
2024-2025



Seminars	Dates
PhD colloquium	Friday September 27 (full day 9h15-17h15) Friday February 28 (full day 9h15-17h15)
Starting a PhD thesis: entering the PhD process	Thursday September 19 (full day 9h15-17h15) Friday January 31 2025 (full day 9h15-17h15)
Social work research methods: developing a PhD project	Friday September 20 (full day 9h15-17h15) Friday October 4 (9h15-12h45) Friday October 18 (13h45-17h15) Friday November 1 (13h45-17h15) Friday November 15 (13h45-17h15)
Social Work Theories: epistemologies, classics and current issues	Thursday November 7 & Friday November 8 2024 (full days 9h15-17h15), Thursday December 5 & Friday December 6 2024 (full days 9h15-17h15)
Making Sense of Data: An introduction to quantitative reasoning in social sciences	Friday October 18 2024 (9h15-12h45) Friday November 1 (9h15-12h45) Friday November 15 (9h15-12h45) Friday November 29 (full day 9h15-17h15) Friday December 13 (full day 9h15-17h15)
Colloquium on Academic Writing	Friday February 28 2025 (full day 9h15-17h15) Thursday March 13 & Friday March 14 2025 (full days 9h15-17h15) Friday May 9 2025 (9h15-12h15)
Social Work Theories: decolonizing social work	From Monday February 10 to Friday February 14 2025 (full week)



Seminars	Dates
<p>Introduction to survey (experiment) methods in social science research</p>	<p>Friday February 21 2025 (9h15-12h45) Friday March 7 2025 (9h15-12h45) Friday March 21 2025 (9h15-12h45) Friday April 4th 2025 (9h15-12h45) Friday May 16 2025 (full day 9h15-17h15) Friday May 23 2025 (9h15-12h45)</p>
<p>Qualitative and mixed methods in social work & social sciences</p>	<p>Friday February 21 2025 (13h45-17h15) Friday March 7 2025 (13h45-17h15) Friday March 21 2025 (13h45-17h15) Friday April 4th 2025 (13h45-17h15) Friday May 2 2025 (full day 9h15-17h15) Friday May 23 2025 (13h45-17h15)</p>



Starting a PhD & entering the PhD process (1.5 ECTS)

Teaching periods

Thursday 19 September 2024 ;
Friday 31 January 2025; 9h15 – 17h15

Teaching team

Barbara Waldis, ITTS, UniNE
Isabelle Skakni, Head of Researcher Career Development, HES-SO
Michaela Slotwinski, ITTS, UniNE
Swetha Rao Dhananka, HETS FR, HES-SO

Venue

University of Neuchâtel, Ave. du 1er Mars, 26, room B29

Content of the seminar

This seminar is compulsory for all doctoral students of the ITTS at the beginning of their PhD process. Starting a PhD project requires the sharpening of diverse professional and scientific skills. Beyond the development of a precise research question and a literature review, it implies managing the planning of a project and its long-term administration, the consideration of the social and financial environment, as well as the organization of daily scientific work. During the PhD process it implies the refinement of practice in scientific writing, the development of a scientific network, the presentation of the PhD work in progress at conferences and the development of publication strategies.

This doctoral seminar consists of a first day with the planning and the organization of a PhD thesis (Barbara Waldis, ITTS, UniNE) and the different stages of the PhD experience (Isabelle Skakni, Head of Researcher Career Development, HES-SO). The second day, at the beginning of the spring semester, you will present a first version of your PhD project (Barbara Waldis, Michaela Slotwinski, ITTS; Swetha Rao Dhananka, HETS FR).

Form of teaching

Workshop, discussions, elaboration and presentation of texts

Form of evaluation

Internal evaluation: Presentation and discussion of the first version of your PhD project (31 January 2025).

Learning outcomes

At the end of this seminar, you will be able to:

- Articulate the conceptual framework of your PhD at the ITTS
- Clearly define the goals of your PhD process, including outlining a strategic plan for achieving these goals and exploring potential career paths that align with your research and professional aspirations
- Present and critically discuss your PhD project

Transferable skills

At the end of this seminar, you will be able to:

- Prepare a plan for a scientific research project
- Present and defend a research project

Documentation & literature

All the documentation will be available on Moodle on the first day of the seminar.



Social work research methods: developing a PhD project (3ECTS)

Barbara Waldis ITTS UniNE, Swetha Rao Dhananka SW HEFR, Sara Cotelli Kureth ICLF, UniNE

Teaching periods

Friday 20 September, Friday 04 October: full day (09h15-17h15)

Friday 18 October, Friday 01 November, Friday 15 November: pm (13h30-17h15)

Teaching team

Barbara Waldis, ITTS, UniNE; Swetha Rao Dhananka, UAS, SW, Fribourg;

Sara Cotelli Kureth, ILCF, UniNE; Marta Marques, Assistant ITTS, UniNE

Venue

Room C43, main building, Ave. 1^{er} mars 26, University of Neuchâtel

Content of the seminar

How to elaborate a PhD project? This is the first key question of this class. How to grasp the gaps in the existing literature on a specific topic? How to consider social work practice relating to the PhD subject? How to formulate a research problem and research goals? Which methodology allows best to find answers to the research questions? How about different techniques for scientific work (e.g. literature review, using AI-tools)? What is specific for social work in terms of participation and research ethics? The seminar proposes inputs, application of different working tools, communities of practice, and presentation of PhD students and their PhD project. As much as possible PhD students should work and progress on their own project. The seminar is divided into the following parts:

B Waldis (20 September, 4 October am; 18 October pm): The specificity of social work research as an action science asks for a disciplinary bound reflection and it does entail theoretical, conceptual, empirical and professional orientation for the PhD project. As social work builds upon egalitarian collaboration with users and their perspectives, ethical questions of participation are key for research.

B. Waldis / M. Marques (20 September pm): Together with all the existing electronic means and programs, literature research becomes a highly complex and delicate issue. A (systematic) literature review and the state of the art for the PhD project are intrinsically connected with the formulation of the research questions and influence significantly the quality of the research design.

S Rao Dhananka (4 October & 15 November pm): Special attention is given to the question of internal cohesion, the research design. The aim of this part is to equip the PhD students with methodological knowledge, patterns of thought and concrete application to elaborate their own research design for their PhD study. Research design is the “glue” that holds the theoretical and empirical parts of the research together. It structures the research, builds its coherence and presents a roadmap for its execution. It is an arrangement of conditions that allows to control the variance and to conceive data collection and analysis in a manner that presents a logical basis for countless decisions with adequate feasibility and procedure.

S. Cotelli Kureth (1 November): For academic writing it is important to understand how generative AI tools work. If not used critically, AI tools can be detrimental to learning. In order to enhance critical thinking and analytical skills, it is crucial to be transparent about the strengths, purpose and limitations of AI. It does not replace human thinking, but should not be banned. The goal is to develop a culture of trust and academic integrity.



Form of teaching

Presentations, discussions, groupwork, guided reflection to directly apply lessons to your own project

Form of evaluation

Internal evaluation: Critical readings & assessing, discussions, presentations, Presentation and discussion of first PhD project version, Friday 31 January 2025, submission deadline for the project Friday 17 January 2025

General learning outcomes

At the end of this seminar, the participants will be able to:

- Construct a comprehensive literature research
- Write a literature review
- Formulate research problems and questions
- Select an appropriate empirical field and research method aligned with the research question
- Use generative AI tools while adhering to academic integrity standards and ethical use.
- Develop a preliminary comprehensive research design for the PhD project

Transferable skills

At the end of this seminar, the participants will be able to:

- Integrate theoretical frameworks with empirical research design in a coherent manner.
- Choose an empirical field and research methods aligned with the research question

Pre-condition

Registration as a PhD student at the ITTS

Documentation & literature

All the documentation will be available on Moodle.

Date	Topic
Friday, 20 September, am, B. Waldis	Social work research & literature research
Friday, 20 September, pm, B. Waldis, M. Marques	Systematic literature review, tools for literature research
Friday, 4 October, am B. Waldis	Nexus literature review & problem formulation
Friday, 4 October, pm, S. Rao Dhananka	Research Design I
Friday, 18 October, pm B. Waldis	Ethics and Participation in social work research
Friday 1 November, pm, S. Cotelli Kureth	AI tools for academic writing
Friday, 15 November, pm, S. Rao Dhananka	Research design II

Social Work Theories: epistemologies, classics and current issues (3 ECTS)

Teaching periods

Thursday 7 November & Friday 8 November (9h15-17h15)

Thursday 5 December & Friday 6 December (9h15-17h15)

Teaching team

Barbara Waldis, Professor ITTS, UniNE
& according to each day's programme

Venue

University of Neuchâtel, Rue Breguet 2, room 2.310 (7 & 8 November), Ave. du 1er mars, 26, room B29 (5 & 6 December)

Content of the seminar

Social Work can be considered an action-oriented discipline. Yet the meaning and the implementation of this affirmation needs to be questioned as they depend on traditions of specific, language and approach based scientific communities and on historical as well as socio- and geopolitical positions. The scope of the seminar is to look at this affirmation about social work as from different disciplinary perspectives.

Starting with the anthropological lens on social work as an action-oriented discipline, based on the concept of situated knowledge, the participants will receive inputs by experts, read, present and discuss key texts on current, innovative social work theory; compare epistemological positions of social work founder texts (Canada, France, Germany, Switzerland, UK and USA), on some major disciplinary traditions (community studies, social pedagogy, social welfare, social work) and current innovative orientations (critical social work, global social work, ecological social work).

For academic and professional reasons, it is crucial be able to argue how social action is entangled with professional practice of intervention and of research in social work. Based on major works of social work theories, the least we can affirm is that knowledge is situated, entangled in a power structured field. For the constitution of a scientific community we need to stipulate that understanding different positions is a possible endeavour.

- How do current positions of social work as a scientific discipline conceive of social work as an action science, be it in Anglo-Saxon, French or German scientific communities?
- How do they differ and what historical, disciplinary reasons can be given for it?
- How do the different scholars and social work practitioners create the link between research field and object, social work interventions, beneficiaries and scientific knowledge and discovery?
- Where do different social work perspectives set the focus, on social problems, on concepts, on methods, on political or scientific contexts?

Form of evaluation

Internal evaluation. Read, summarize and critically assess at least six theoretical key texts, present your results at least on three occasions during the seminar.



Learning outcomes

At the end of this seminar, the participants will be able to:

- Critically analyze foundational texts in social work theory;
- explain the development of social work theory from an internationally and comparative perspective;
- Present the societal context of social work theory development in Switzerland;
- Present various schools of thought in social work, pertaining to social work as an action science;
- Argue the relevance of theoretical approaches and concepts to professional practice.

Transferable skills

At the end of this seminar, the participants will be able to:

- Apply the concept of situated knowledge when dealing with theories;
- Include the societal context in theory development;
- Argue the relevance of a theoretical approach for a specific research question.

Documentation & literature

All the documentation will be available on Moodle.

Making Sense of Data: An Introduction to Quantitative Reasoning in Social Sciences (3 ECTS)

Teaching periods

Fridays 18.10.24, 01.11.24 & 15.11.24 (9h15-12h45); Fridays 29.11.24 & 13.12.24 (full day – 9h15-17h15)

Venue

Room C43, Main Building of the University of Neuchâtel, Avenue du 1er mars, 26

Teaching team

Michaela Slotwinski, Professor ITTS, UniNE, & teaching assistant

Content of the lecture

Being able to clearly and critically think about quantitative information is key in a data-driven age. Quantitative reasoning and the ability to critically assess quantitative claims are essential skills not only in traditional data-driven areas.

This course is explicitly designed as an introductory course for students not familiar with quantitative methods and reasoning. It does not require any prior knowledge in this area, and is therefore not suited for students with more extensive prior experience.

The course is designed to introduce students to and help them become familiar with tools of quantitative data analysis for the social sciences, providing a starting point from which they can decide to pursue more advanced courses. It follows an intuitive understanding of quantitative methods and becomes formal or technical only where absolutely necessary.

The introductory course has three primary aims: First, the course will lower barriers to reading and understanding quantitative studies and empower students to consider conducting quantitative analyses themselves. Second, students will be introduced to statistical models that researchers and policymakers use to answer social, political, and economic questions. Third, the course will equip students with an initial foundation to use one or more of the discussed techniques in their thesis or dissertation.

Form of evaluation

50% will be based on homework during the semester, 50% will be based on a final take-home assessment (issued on 13 December 2024, due 17 December (noon) 2024) (Examen Intermédiaire).

Learning goals

By the end of the course, students should be able to understand the quantitative tools employed in political, social, and economic research; read and understand quantitative studies; perform basic data analysis using the statistical software STATA and interpret the results; and effectively employ introductory quantitative methods in their dissertation research and subsequent careers.

Transferable skills

- Critically evaluate research methodology
- Adopt proper technical language when reading, analyzing, and presenting quantitative research.
- Acquire basic skills to quantitatively analyze social phenomena.
- Acquire basic coding skills.

Pre-condition and registration

This course does not require any prior knowledge in this area.

Documentation & literature

All the documentation will be available on Moodle.



Colloquium on academic writing (3 ECTS)

Teaching periods

Friday February 28 2025, Thursday March 13 & Friday March 14: full days (9h15-17h15); May 9: 9h15-12h45

Venue

Room B29, Avenue 1er mars, 26, University of Neuchâtel

Teaching team

Emmanuelle Reuter, Prof. of Innovation Management, UniNE

Content of the seminar

The purpose of the seminar is to increase skills in writing scientific research and for scholarly publication in leading academic journals. It focuses on key elements of journal papers/ research proposals, reviewing and responding to reviews, crafting the introduction, and framing the contribution of the paper/ research proposal.

Tentative structure of the course

Day 1 (8 teaching periods of 45min.)

Input: What it takes to get published in leading academic journals

Participants make brief presentations of paper/ research proposals

Input: Key elements of a journal paper

Participants analyze the elements of model papers

Input: Providing good reviews

Participants analyze the elements of peers' papers and craft a review

Input: Key elements of a research proposal

Participants analyze peers' research proposals and craft a review

Day 2 (8 teaching periods of 45min.)

Input: Responding to reviews

Participants present feedback received and response strategy

Input: Crafting the introduction

Participants outline revised introductions

Peer feedback on revised introductions

Input: Why revisions get rejected (e.g. input by journal editor)

Participants make brief presentations of revised papers/ research proposals

Peer feedback on revised papers/ research proposals

Day 3 (8 teaching periods of 45min.)

Input: Framing the contribution

Peer feedback on contribution

Input: Structure, form and style

Peer feedback on structure, form and style

Input: Crafting the discussion

Participants outline revised discussion

Peer feedback on discussion

Day 4 (4 teaching periods of 45min.)

Input: Expert peer reviews, revision, submission, etc.

Peer feedback session on working paper/ proposal

Form of teaching

This course relies on an “active learning” approach. While the course comprises theory input, a major part of this course invites students to become active in the construction of their learning process as they work on refining their working papers or research proposals/ ideas.

Form of evaluation

Internal evaluation, based on the work of the students: presentation of a paper/ research project; peer-review on a paper/ research project of a colleague; presentation of received feedback and response strategies; final revision of manuscript before submission (in particular: introduction and discussion).

Learning goals

- Analyze a scientific paper
- Conceptualize an academic paper/ research proposal
- Write an introduction for an academic paper
- Write the discussion for an academic paper
- Present an academic paper/ research proposal
- Review academic papers/ research proposals of peers

Transferable skills

- Conceptualize academic research
- Present academic research
- Review academic papers
- Responding to reviews

Pre-condition and registration

Precedence will be given to students who are enrolled in a Ph.D. program in the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Neuchâtel; Master students who are enrolled in the Master in International Business Development (MScIBD), Master of Science in Innovation (MScInno), Master of Science in Finance (MScF) programs of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Neuchâtel and who craft a research-oriented Master thesis and/ or who aspire entering a doctoral program.

Students need to submit an extended (min. 1-3-page) abstract of a working paper, research proposal or research idea prior to participating in class. This forms the basis for in-class writing workshops. The abstract may be structured along the following elements: real world problem, theoretical lens, shortcoming in the literature, research question, central argument, contribution.

Documentation & literature

There will be no required reading material for the seminar. However, relevant literature will be made available to students (e.g. Anne S. Huff. 1998. Writing for Scholarly Publication. Sage; Joireman, and Van Lange. 2015. How to publish high-quality research. American Psychological Association.).

Social Work Theories: decolonizing social work (3 ECTS)

Teaching periods

From Monday 10 February to Friday 14 February 2025

Venue

University of Helsinki, Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, Helsinki Finland

Teaching team

Barbara Waldis, Professor ITTS, UniNE

Kris Clarke, Social Work Professor, University of Helsinki

Content of the seminar

The term “decolonizing” is used broadly, still it bears a fundamental, historically rooted critique of power relations in all social work dimensions and in terms of advocacy. Seen in this light, the term is suitable for critically discussing the contradiction that any current social work context deals with: geopolitical (post-)colonial entanglements including mobility, migration and flight, the national legal framework for social work based on social policy, the power structures in organisations and the power relations in connection with the user of social work services.

The seminar sets out from the international definition of social work with the premises of social change for more social justice and the consideration of different types of knowledge and deals with chances, challenges and risks of "decolonizing social work" in the dimensions named above.

The participants will read and critically assess relevant texts in advance, apply it to examples linked to their (professional) context in Switzerland and present these reflections within a Finnish university context of social work. The seminar then turns to further relevant theoretical topical discussions with Kris Clarke as a leading expert for decolonizing social work. The seminar further includes visits of salient social work institutions regarding the issues of decolonizing social work and leads therefore to an international comparison about the indirect colonial entanglements of Western states like Finland and Switzerland.

Form of evaluation

Internal evaluation. Read, assess, present and discuss theoretical concepts applied to examples

Learning outcomes

At the end of this seminar, the participants will be able to:

- Explain the theoretical concept of decolonizing social work with relevant dimensions
- Argue the importance of a decolonizing social work perspective for a specific practice field
- Apply the principles of decolonizing social work features to analyse an example within a specific societal context in Switzerland

Transferable skills

At the end of this seminar, the participants will be able to:

- Explain a theoretically founded perspective of a key concept
- Argue the relevance of a key concept within a given dimension of a discipline
- Apply a theoretical professional model to a given societal context

Pre-condition and registration

Registration as a PhD student at ITTS or as a future PhD student of the ITTS. Registration at messagerie.itts@unine.ch until September 15.

Documentation & literature

All the documentation will be available on Moodle.



Introduction to Survey (Experiment) Methods in Social Science Research (3 ECTS)

Teaching periods

Fridays 21.02.25, 07.03.25, 21.03.2025, 04.04.2025, 23.05.25 (9h15-12h45); Friday 16.05.2025 (full day – 9h15-17h15)

Venue

Room B29, Main Building of the University of Neuchâtel, Avenue du 1er mars, 26

Teaching team

Michaela Slotwinski, Professor ITTS, UniNE

Content of the lecture

Survey methods are a cornerstone of quantitative research in the social sciences, offering valuable insights into human behavior, attitudes, and social trends. As experiments become more prevalent, they complement surveys by enabling researchers to test causal relationships and enhance our understanding of complex social phenomena. This course offers a hands-on introduction to both topics.

This course is designed for PhD (and Master) students interested in mastering survey methods and experimental techniques in quantitative social science research. The course will cover essential topics such as basic experimental design, survey experiments, questionnaire construction, sampling strategies, and the empirical analysis of survey data and experiments. Through practical exercises and real-world examples, students will gain the skills needed to design their own research studies and to critically evaluate academic publications that utilize these methods.

Form of evaluation

The examination will take place during the semester (Examen Intermédiaire).

Presentation:

During the semester, students will develop their own survey experimental design (related to their research) and present it to the group. The design, presentation, slides and performance in the Q&A session will be graded.

Project:

The project is a (research) report of approximately 10 to 15 pages, including tables and figures, reporting the data analysis of a given research question and data set. The report and the submitted code files (do-files) will be graded.

Grades will be composed of students participation during the lectures (10%), the design presentation (50%) and the submitted project (40%).

Learning goals

By the end of the course, students will be able to understand and critically assess academic publications that use survey and experimental methodologies. They will also be equipped with the foundational skills needed to develop and implement their own study designs.



Transferable skills

- Critically evaluate survey and experimental methodology
- Adopt proper technical language when reading, analysing, and presenting survey-based research
- Acquire basic skills to implement survey (experiments)
- Acquire basic coding skills.
- Acquire presentation skills.

Pre-condition and registration

This course requires prior experience with quantitative methods in the social sciences. Participants should have at least passed the 'Making Sense of Data' course offered in the fall or demonstrate an equivalent level of knowledge. Registered PhD students (at ITTS and others); registered Master students, notified future PhD student of the ITTS. Registration at messagerie.itts@unine.ch until January 31st 2025.

Documentation & literature

All the documentation will be available on Moodle.

Qualitative and mixed methods in social work & social sciences (3 ECTS)

Teaching periods Spring semester 2025

Friday PM, 13h45-17h15: February 21st; March 7th; March 21st; April 4th; May 23rd;
Friday FD, 9h15-17h15: May 2nd

Venue

B29, Avenue du 1er mars, 26, University of Neuchâtel

Teaching team

Barbara Waldis, Professor ITTS, UniNE
Ophélie Bidet, responsable pédagogique ITTS, UniNE

Content of the seminar

Social Work research methods are part of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in social sciences and they draw from anthropology, arts, economy, geography, history, management, pedagogy, politics, psychology and sociology. Yet, they distinguish themselves by the specific orientation of the discipline through indigenous knowledge, user-orientation, participation, advocacy, and the general orientation of the discipline given by the ethics of social justice. In a first phase, the seminar will focus on qualitative method of data collection and data analysis. The seminar will have a strong practical dimension, as it will use data collected by interviews of an ongoing research. This existing data will be used as material to test and apply transcription, anonymization, coding and analyzing methods. Atlas.ti software will also be presented and tested, for transcribing and coding the interviews.

Regarding participative research methods, Trish Hafford-Letchfield, Professor at Social Work Department of University of Glasgow will give a conference on the topic of maximizing inclusion and participation in research. It will be followed by a text-based discussion.

In a second phase, the seminar will focus on mixed methods research design. A selection of literature about mixed methods will be read and presented by participants, followed by discussions. The existing data, the presentations and articles will be the starting point for the building of a research design using mixed methods. As final assignment each participant will elaborate and present her or his own suggestion of a mixed method research design on her or his PhD topic.

Form of teaching

Reading, summarizing, group work, presentations, discussions, peer evaluation

Form of evaluation

Internal evaluation. Readings, summarizing, discussing texts, presentation and discussion of the research design for a possible research project.

Learning outcomes

At the end of this seminar, the participants will be able to:

- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the major qualitative and mixed research methodologies in social work
- Argue for selecting a relevant methodological approach in selected research texts



- Formulate consistent methodological research frame work for a social work research project
- Articulate the discussed social work research methodologies within the field of social sciences

Transferable skills

At the end of this seminar, the participants will be able to:

- Analyze methodological research texts in social work
- Design comprehensive methodological research frame work for a social work research project

Pre-condition and registration

Registration as a PhD student at the ITTS, a Swiss university or as auditor in the perspective of being a future PhD student of the ITTS. Registration at messagerie.itts@unine.ch until January 31, 2025.

Documentation & literature

All the documentation will be available on Moodle.