Urban Studies and Regional Science Courses – A.A. 2018 - 2019

Regional Science
Prof. Alessandra Faggian (GSSI)
Dr. Marco Modica (GSSI)

The Regional Science coursework provides students with a basic understanding of the main theories and facts about the social and economic organization of regions, regional growth dynamics and the rationale behind regional development policies. The main questions addressed by the teaching core on Regional Science are the determinants of the location decisions of firms and industries; the drivers of inter-regional migration and the consequences of factors’ mobility for regional growth and regional inequality.

The course is structured around three main units:

1. The location and agglomeration of people and economic activities
2. The functioning and consequences of interregional migration
3. Theories of regional growth and development, and regional policy options.

For the academic year 2018/19, the course will include 20 contact hours taught by Professor Alessandra Faggian (course convener) and Dr. Marco Modica. The course is compulsory.

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Economic Geography
Dr. Giulia Urso (GSSI)
Dr. Alessandro Crociata (GSSI)
Dr. Gloria Cicerone (GSSI)

Why do some territories and regions perform better than others in terms of economic growth and development? How can local and regional development policies foster economic activity and socio-economic development in lagging areas? The Economic Geography coursework will provide students with an in-depth understanding of the determinants of spatial economic disparities and of the evolution of the attendant geographic perspective, examining the main theories and approaches to local and regional economic development. The final part of the course will focus on the regional development policy of the European Union, illustrating its rationale and discussing its evaluation and results. The last lesson will be devoted to a debate exercise: students will be divided into two groups defending contrasting policy positions on a pre-established topic.

The course will include 20 contact hours taught by the course convener, Dr. Giulia Urso, and some faculty members (Dr. Alessandro Crociata and Dr. Gloria Cicerone). Seminars with international speakers are also an integral component of the Economic Geography course. The course is compulsory.

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Critical approaches to the City
Dr. Alessandro Coppola (GSSI)
Dr. Audrey Lumley-Sapanski (GSSI)
Dr. Margherita Grazioli (GSSI)

The “Critical approaches to the City” course aims to introduce students to key theoretical foundations and to the empirical practice of qualitative research approaches to the study of the city. While discussing the tradition and prevailing contemporary developments in urban theory ranging from urban sociology to urban geography, the course will discuss a selection of relevant research topics such as housing, neighbourhoods, urban movements. Using a critical lens, scholars will address each research topic and the surrounding scientific debates. The focus will be on scholarship which employs qualitative methodology.
The course will include 20 contact hours taught by the course coordinator (Dr. Alessandro Coppola) with lectures by Dr. Audrey Lumley-Sapanski and Dr. Margherita Grazioli. The structure is a series of reading seminars. Students will be invited to read and present assigned readings that will be discussed collectively in class. A final session, taught by Prof. Alberto Vanolo (University of Turin), will discuss the concepts, topics and research addressed during the class given recent scientific developments in the broad field of the critical approaches to the study of cities. The course is compulsory.

Urban Planning

Prof. Francesco Chiodelli (GSSI)

The teaching core on urban planning explores regulatory, institutional, social and ethical aspects of spatial planning. The course covers main aspects of both planning theory and practice. In particular, the course is devoted to the investigation of the complex nexus between technical knowledge and political knowledge in planning, and of the connection among spatial regulation, power and social regulation lato sensu. Several historical and contemporary case studies are explored at this aim. The course will include 20 contact hours taught by the course convener (Dr. Francesco Chiodelli), plus a seminar by Dr. Jonathan Rokem (UCL, London). Students will be invited to read and present assigned readings that will be discussed collectively in class. The course is compulsory.

Principles of Public Policy

Dr. Paolo Spada (GSSI)

This course introduces the key approaches to the analysis of public policy and seeks to encourage a critical and comparative approach to the study of trends in contemporary public policy. Specifically, in this course, students will consider how and why public policies emerge, the role of citizens and organized interests in the formulation of public policy, why things go wrong in public policy, the challenges that face policy-makers in handling scientific evidence and regulating societal and economic risks. The course will encompass topics such as agenda-setting, public opinion, science, risk regulation and trends in public management. It will be organised around the following series of overarching questions:

1. What is public policy?
2. Where do policies come from?
3. How is policy made at the front line by officials?
4. How do policy-makers listen to citizens?

The course will include 10 contact hours taught by the course convener (Dr. Paolo Spada). The course is optional.

Introductory Qualitative Research Methods

Dr. Giulia Pezzi (GSSI)

Introductory Qualitative Research Methods introduces students to the basic theoretical and practical elements of qualitative research applied to Social Sciences. The course has a strong focus on applied methodologies, and touches the following topics: theoretical orientations and traditions in qualitative research; qualitative research applications; qualitative research design; the nature of qualitative data collection: sampling strategies, fieldwork strategies, participant observation, interviews, focus groups; surveys: how to construct questionnaires and qualitatively assess quantitative data. The course will include 20 contact hours, taught by the course convener Dr. Maria Giulia Pezzi, and will include several class exercises. At the end of the course, students are invited to present an assigned research project that will be discussed collectively in class. The course is compulsory.
Introductory Quantitative Research Methods

Dr. Davide Luca (GSSI)
Dr. Félix Modrego (GSSI)

Introductory Quantitative Research Methods is a course mainly aimed at students with no prior knowledge of statistics. The course provides basic statistical concepts and methods, emphasizing the principles of data collection and analysis rather than theory. Practical exercises are an integral component of the course and are intended at getting the students familiar with the use of a popular statistical package (Stata). Topics to be addressed in the introductory quantitative methods course include:

• Graphical and numerical summaries to describe the distribution of a variable and the relationship between two variables
• Data collection and management
• Concepts of probability and probability distribution
• Statistical inference and hypotheses testing
• The univariate and multivariate linear regression models

The course will include 20 contact hours taught by the course conveners (Dr. Davide Luca and Dr. Félix Modrego). The course is compulsory.

Research Papers: from design to publication

Dr. Cecilia Pasquinelli (GSSI)

This course presents the academic publishing journey from structuring the paper, designing a research question, and core structural components (methodological, empirical, theoretical), to the use of databases for bibliographic searches and the selection of “the right” journal for submission, to academic paper drafting and, finally, to addressing journal editors and referees. Focus will be on the distinctive character of a research paper, highlighting the differences between academic research and other typologies like policy reports and monographies. Students will receive an introduction into writing for an international journal, focusing on standards and requirements. Secondly, the course will explore how to utilize tools to build a robust and well-focused literature review, suggesting strategies to find useful and relevant references. Thirdly, the course will explain the academic journal process, including an overview of the complete double-blinded peer review process. Academic ethics, as well as basic copyright issues to be considered when submitting papers, will be introduced. The course will include 10 contact hours taught by the course convener (Dr. Cecilia Pasquinelli). The course is optional.

Spatial econometrics

Prof. Roberto Basile (University of L'Aquila)

Spatial econometrics deals with methods to model spatial data considering spatial interaction (spillover) effects and spatial heterogeneity. The course aims at introducing the basic concepts and techniques of spatial statistics and econometrics, along with the main issues posed by the statistical treatment of georeferenced data and by the construction, estimation and interpretation of spatial econometric models. Students will gain an up-to-date and accessible overview of the relevant theory as well as exposure to empirical applications of spatial econometric models in economics. The course will include 10 contact hours taught by the course convener (Prof. Roberto Basile, University of L'Aquila). The course is optional.

Advanced Qualitative Research Methods
Dr. Maria Giulia Pezzi (GSSI)
Dr. Gabriella Punziano (University of Naples)

The intensive course Mixed Methods introduces students to the theoretical and practical elements of qualitative research applied to social sciences, in a mixed methods perspective. The course has a strong focus on applied methodologies, and touches the following topics: applications of qualitative research methodologies in social sciences; netnography: understanding social interaction in contemporary digital communications contexts; content analysis: texts, online resources, videos and images; software supporting qualitative and mixed methods analysis: NVIVO. The course will include 10 contact hours, taught by the course convener Dr. Maria Giulia Pezzi, along with Dr. Gabriella Punziano (Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II), and will include several class exercises. The course is optional.

Advanced Qualitative Research Methods

Dr. Masood Gheasi (GSSI)

This course will provide students with an overview of the different disciplinary traditions and theoretical underpinnings of quantitative research. It will train students in a range of core methods relevant to the social sciences sub-disciplines, including an appraisal of their respective strengths and weaknesses, with a focus on the challenges of data analysis. Students would be able to grasp the relevant knowledge and theory, and develop research skills as detailed below:

Knowledge and Theory
- Understand the assumptions behind statistical techniques
- Ability to select and apply appropriate statistical techniques for testing hypotheses
- Familiar with a range of statistical techniques and ability to choose and implement appropriate statistical techniques for research
- Ability to interpret statistical outputs and think through the meaning and implications of statistical findings.

Research Skills
- Ability to carry out statistical analyses
- Ability to use STATA to record and program statistical analysis
- Ability to manage and analyze large cross-sectional survey datasets
- Ability to generate, interpret and present statistics and charts to describe the distributional characteristics of variables
- Ability to explore the relationships between two or more variables
- Write up statistical findings appropriately

The course will include 10 contact hours taught by the course convener (Dr. Masood Gheasi). The course is optional.

Visualizing Data, Theory and Praxis

The aim of the course is to enable students to develop visual communication skills in the field of urban studies and regional science. The focus is twofold: on the one hand, the course will provide an overview on the variety of tools and techniques adopted over time to convey information by means of visuals, with a more detailed description of selected examples of charts, timelines, maps and the design process behind them; on the other hand, students will familiarise themselves with the essential image making/ manipulation software used in the creation of information graphics through a sound introduction to the capabilities of Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator, followed by a series of tutorials.

The course will include 10 contact hours taught by the course convener (Dr. Maddalena Falletti and Roberto Rota). The course is optional.

Methods of Geographical Analysis
The Methods of Geographical Analysis course is aimed at providing students with an introduction to the analytical methods and tools for handling spatial data. The emphasis of this course is on the choice and application of appropriate methods for the analysis of spatial phenomena of relevance in the fields of applied Regional Science and Urban Studies. The theory behind the different methods will be presented and discussed. The course has also a strong practical orientation, providing the students with the basic knowledge for handling geographic information systems (GIS) and other relevant tools in contemporary geographical analysis. The students are expected to become familiar with these methods, so that they can develop an understanding of their potential and of its limitations. The course will include 10 contact hours taught by the course convener (Prof. Rachel Franklin). The course is optional.

Complex Network Analysis

Dr. Gloria Cicerone (GSSI)

Networks are everywhere, from the internet and social networks to financial markets and biological systems. During recent years network science has emerged as a holistic approach used to analyze the structure and evolution of complex systems in social and economic sciences. The first part of the course aims to explain the basics of graph theory and provides an introduction to the modern field of network science to an interdisciplinary audience. In the second part of the course, students learn the conceptual tools and a wide array of statistical metrics used to characterize the structure and dynamics of networks in the context of economic complexity science. Extensive online resources, including software and packages for network analysis, make this a multifaceted course for anyone with an interest in network science. The course will include 10 contact hours taught by the course convener (Dr. Gloria Cicerone). The course is optional.

Policy Evaluation

Dr. Paolo Spada (GSSI)

This course introduces the main methodologies employed to evaluate policy programs. Some of the methodologies analyzed include cost/benefit analysis, survey based evaluation, process-tracing, case-study comparison, meta-studies, participatory-action research, crowd-sourcing and randomized controlled trials. The aim of the course is to teach the students how to design, implement and evaluate a variety of impact evaluation frameworks that combine multiple evaluation methodologies in a coherent system. The course will include 10 contact hours taught by the course convener (Dr. Paolo Spada). The course is optional.