



Course Code & Title	LISS217N Biographical Methods in Transdisciplinary Perspective				
Convenor(s)	Dr Alvina Hoffmann				
Institution	Queen Mary University of London	Department		LISS DTP	
Academic Year	2022-23	Term		Summer	
Number of sessions	5	Research Platform	Qualitative Research (QuL)	Length of Session(s)	2 hours
Day, Date		Start : End		Room Location	
Wednesday, 19 April 2023		1300 : 1500		Online	
Wednesday, 26 April 2023					
Wednesday, 3 May 2023					
Wednesday, 10 May 2023					
Wednesday, 17 May 2023					
Enrolment Links:	Available to book on SkillsForge from Tuesday 11th April 2023 . Click to log in and register: https://training.kcl.ac.uk/kcl/#he/dev/eventDetails;em,providerCode=LISS,providerOrgAlias=kcl,number=217N,;Questions? Visit our Training FAQ here: Frequently Asked Questions - LISS DTP (liss-dtp.ac.uk)				

Course Description:

This course will introduce students across the social sciences to biographical methods, with a focus on biographical interviews and collective biographical analysis (prosopography). The course will first introduce biographical methods and its broad employment in the social sciences, consider the role of the biographer and reflexivity, the reflexive use of biographical data in research, and put to use biographical interviews and/or collective biographical analysis in students’ own projects with a practical ‘surgery’ session at the end of the course.

The first hour of each session will introduce the week’s topic and central questions, followed by a discussion of the assigned text(s). The second hour will be focused on students’ own projects and help them design a strong research strategy to engage in and with biographical research reflexively.

1. Biographical methods and the biographical illusion

How can we explain the social world through individual life experience? What is ‘the biographical illusion’? Do you agree with Bourdieu’s critical engagement with biography?

- Bourdieu, Pierre (1986) ‘The Biographical Illusion’ in Hemecker, Wilhelm and Edward Saunders (eds.) (2017) *Biography in Theory* de Gruyter
- Marie Kolkenbrock (2017) ‘Life as Trajectory: Pierre Bourdieu’s ‘The Biographical Illusion’ in Hemecker, Wilhelm and Edward Saunders (eds.) (2017) *Biography in Theory* de Gruyter.



- Margaretha Järvinen (2000) 'The biographical illusion: Constructing meaning in qualitative interviews' *Qualitative Inquiry* 6(3): 370-391.

2. Biography and the plural actor

What is the 'plural actor' according to Lahire? What is the role of the past in constructing dispositions?

- Bernard Lahire (2001) 'Outline of a Theory of the Plural Actor' in *The Plural Actor* Polity Press

3. Biographical interviews

How to conduct biographical interviews – An example.

This is a biographical interview in which socio-legal scholar Yves Dezalay reflects on his own academic/life trajectory (prompted by the interviewers) and the biographical methods he and his co-author Bryant Garth employ.

- Bigo, Didier and Antonin Cohen (2020) 'Investigating the Internationalisation of State Nobility: A Reflexive Turn to Double Game Strategies – An interview with Yves DEZALAY (Part One)' *Political Anthropological Research on International Social Sciences* 1 (2020). 103-116.
- Bigo, Didier and Antonin Cohen (2020) 'Investigating the Internationalisation of State Nobility: A Reflexive Turn to Double Game Strategies – An interview with Yves DEZALAY (Part Two)' *Political Anthropological Research on International Social Sciences* 1 (2020). 306-336.

4. Prosopography

How to conduct a more structural and collective biographical analysis.

- Jacob Aagaard Lunding, Christoph Houman Ellersgaard, and Anton Grau Larsen (2020) 'The Craft of Elite Prosopography' in François Denord, Mikael Palme, Bertrand Réau (eds.) *Researching Elites and Power* Springer

Take a look at chapter 2 in Bourdieu's *Homo Academicus* as an example of collective biographical analysis:

- Bourdieu, Pierre (1988) *Homo Academicus* Cambridge: Polity Press (Chapter 2: The Conflict of the Faculties)

5. Surgery session

The final 'hands on' session will be held in person to allow participants to ask specific questions on their project which they will submit to the convenor beforehand and to work on their research strategy in a collective environment.

Reading List:

Readings will be provided for each week.

Eligibility:



London Interdisciplinary Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership

Advanced Research Methods in Social Sciences

The course is open to all Master's and PhD students in the social sciences, specifically to those who consider conducting interviews and/or have identified a coherent class of actors they would like to study more systematically.

Pre-course preparation:

There is no need to prepare for the course, but it might be helpful to start building a list of potential interviewees or names of actors students would like to study. The convenors will circulate core texts and tasks in advance.

Number of students:

Minimum number required to run: 4

Maximum number of places available: 20