The Department of Methodology
Contents

1  About the Department of Methodology
2  Academic staff
3  Professional services staff
4–5  Methods training and support
6–7  MSc and PhD programmes
7  Department seminars
8  Data Science seminars
9  Research showcase
9–10  Qualitative research
10–11  Brexit spotlight
11–12  Quantitative research
13  Data Science
The Department of Methodology is an internationally recognized centre of excellence in research and teaching in the area of social science research methodology. The disciplinary backgrounds of the staff include political science, statistics, sociology, social psychology, anthropology and criminology. The Department coordinates and provides a focus for methodological activities at the School, in particular in the areas of graduate student (and staff) training and of methodological research. The Department is an interdisciplinary group and its primary role is to facilitate collaboration between departments and to provide courses where appropriate. The Department provides methods training to students from across the School. The Department is central to the LSE’s Doctoral Training Partnership scheme.

The Department offers its own MSc and PhD programmes and also provides advanced level courses in methodology for students across the School, in the form of seminars and workshops in research design, quantitative analysis and qualitative methods (see page 4 for further information). Many other departments in the School require students to take Department of Methodology courses as part of their MSc and PhD programme.

The Department of Methodology’s newest frontier is in data science. The forthcoming new MSc in Applied Social Data Science (commencing in September 2018) will train and provide students with core skills in data manipulation and analysis, computer programming, and research design for applications in data science, preparing them for a variety of careers in the private, non-profit and public sectors.

LSE has always been at the forefront of methodological development in the social sciences. With the training in the core social scientific tools of analysis and research offered by the Department of Methodology, coupled with its numerous workshops in other transferable skills such as computer programming and the use of methods-related software, the Department of Methodology ensures that the School’s students and staff have the expertise and training available to maintain the School’s excellence in social scientific research. We also work closely with colleagues in the Departments of Statistics and Mathematics to cover advanced topics, including in the interdisciplinary area of social applications of data science.
METHODOLOGY

Academic staff

KENNETH BENOIT
Professor of Quantitative Social Research Methods, Head of the Department of Methodology
Key research interests: automated quantitative methods, political texts and social media, analysis of big data, methods of text mining, comparative party competition, the European Parliament, electoral systems.

FLORA CORNISH
Associate Professor in Research Methodology (qualitative), Deputy Head of the Department of Methodology
Key research interests: health inequalities, health and social justice, HIV/AIDS in India, UK public health, community mobilisation, community participation, accountability, evidence, qualitative evaluation research, dialogue, social effects of monitoring, evaluation and accountability systems.

DAVID HENDRY
Assistant Professor in Research Methodology (quantitative)
Key research interests: social interactions, social pressure and social norms, political, evolutionary, and social psychology, racial and ethnic politics, political communication, voting and elections.

JONATHAN JACKSON
Professor in Research Methodology (quantitative)
Key research interests: criminology, survey methods.

ALASDAIR JONES
Assistant Professor in Research Methodology (qualitative)
Key research interests: public space, transport and health, sustainable urbanism, qualitative methods.

ELEANOR KNOTT
Assistant Professor in Qualitative Methodology
Key research interests: kin-state politics, ethnic politics, nationalism, citizenship, post-Soviet politics, Crimea, Moldova, qualitative methods, interpretive methods, comparative politics, interviews.

JOUNI KUHA
Associate Professor in Statistics and Research Methodology (quantitative)
Key research interests: statistics for the social sciences, model selection, measurement error, misclassification and missing data, latent variable modelling, analysis of cross-national survey data.

BENJAMIN LAUDERDALE
Associate Professor in Research Methodology (quantitative)
Key research interests: US politics, judicial politics, elections, public opinion, political polling methods, Bayesian methods.

JEN TARR
Assistant Professor in Research Methodology (qualitative)
Key research interests: chronic pain, ethnography, visual and sensory methods, qualitative interviewing, qualitative research methodologies, sociology of health.

CHANA TEEGER
Assistant Professor in Qualitative Research Methodology
Key research interests: qualitative methods, inequality, race, education, collective memory, South Africa.

MILENA TSVETKOVA
Assistant Professor in Quantitative Methods
Key research interests: computational methods, network analysis, experiments, agent-based modelling, cooperation, collective behaviour, social psychology.
Professional services staff

ESTHER HEYHOE
Graduate Teaching Administrator
e.heyhoe@lse.ac.uk
+44 (0)207 955 6156

For enquiries about: MSc in Social Research Methods and auditing Methodology courses.

ESTI SIDLEY
Research and Communications Administrator
Methodology.admin@lse.ac.uk
+44 (0)207 955 6947

For enquiries about: PhD in Social Research Methods, Methods Surgery and Workshops, and the Seminar Series.

GILLIAN URQUHART
Department Manager
g.urquhart@lse.ac.uk
+44 (0)207 955 7639

For enquiries about: MSc in Applied Social Data Science.
Workshops in Advanced Qualitative Research (MY530)

These workshops address advanced problems in qualitative social research. The programme will (a) bring together software developers and researchers, (b) will present examples of researchers who put computer tools to creative use and (c) provide a forum for discussing key papers in qualitative research. The workshop will be a forum for open discussion on philosophical and technical issues that arise in qualitative research practice.

This programme consists of workshop modules at PhD level, offered during MT and LT by research active experts from LSE. Each module focuses on one particular technique or issue for qualitative research. Students are welcome to raise issues or questions from their own research for discussion.

**Topics include:** Research Ethics, Participant Observation, Interviews, Thematic Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Content Analysis, Designing Mixed Method Evaluation Research, Fallacies of Induction, Deduction and Abduction, Social Network Analysis and Visualisation using UCINET and Netdraw, and Participatory Research Methods.
Workshops in Advanced Quantitative Analysis (MY560)

MY560 is a series of workshops on advanced topics in quantitative research methodology. These workshops assume a background in quantitative methods at least covering basic statistics, linear and logistic regression. While many of the workshops are part of a series on related topics, each workshop is self-contained, and can be attended without attending prior workshops.

Topics include: design of experiments, questionnaire design, machine learning, matching methods for causal effects, regression discontinuity designs, event history analysis, social network analysis, quantitative text analysis, and Bayesian methods.

Workshops in Applied Analysis Software (MY591)

The workshops in Applied Analysis Software offers targeted training sessions on software used in analytical research, including statistical analysis packages, qualitative analysis software, and tools for text analysis. The workshops are open to all students and staff. Like MY530 and MY560, sign up is exclusively via the LSE’s Training and Development System which opens around one month before each class takes place. Classes are usually around three hours long and are repeated at least once a term. Classes which are more popular are held twice per term where resources permit and the schedule is published on the MY591 Moodle page around the beginning of each term.

Topics covered usually include: NVIVO, QDA Miner, SPSS, Stata and Wordstat. Occasionally, we may run one-off classes or sessions on Python and R should the demand arise and the resources permit.

Methods Surgery

The Department of Methodology offers a walk-in ‘methods surgery’ weekly during term-time on Thursdays 10am–12pm in the PhD Academy on the 4th floor of the Lionel Robins Building. Staff and students can drop in for advice on methods-related problems they may have.

Two members of staff, one with a background in quantitative methods and the other in qualitative methods, are present at each session to help with a range of methodological problems.

Please note that entrance is only via the Portugal Street side of the building. The PhD Academy cannot be accessed via the LSE Library.

This service is based on a first-come, first-served policy: no appointment is necessary.

Top tip: If you need methods advice for your dissertation, please ensure you plan this well in advance in the academic year, as the Methods Surgery is available in term time only.

Methods courses for auditing

Students from across the School may audit courses from the following list. Please note that as places are limited, students wishing to audit methodology courses should liaise with Esther Heyhoe, the Graduate Teaching Administrator (e.heyhoe@lse.ac.uk) prior to attending courses. Full and up-to-date details of each course can be viewed on the Timetables pages.

MY400 Fundamentals of Social Science Research Design
MY405 Research Methods for Evaluation in Health, Development and Public Policy
MY421 Qualitative Research Methods
MY426 Doing Ethnography
MY427 Qualitative Research with Non-Traditional Data
MY428 Qualitative Text Analysis
MY429 Special Topics in Qualitative Research: Introspection-based Methods in Social Research
MY451 Introduction to Quantitative Analysis
MY452 Applied Regression Analysis
MY454 Applied Statistical Computing using R
MY455 Multivariate Analysis and Measurement
MY456 Survey Methodology
MY457 Causal Inference for Observational and Experimental Studies
MY459 Special Topics in Quantitative Analysis: Quantitative Text Analysis
MY461 Social Network Analysis
MY470 Computer Programming
MY472 Data Structures, Databases and Data Sharing
MSc and PhD programmes

MSc in Social Research Methods

Central to the Department’s activities is the MSc Social Research Methods, which provides advanced training in core social research methods skills, while simultaneously providing students with the opportunity to develop sophistication in research design and quantitative and qualitative research while maintaining a focus in a social scientific discipline. Students will acquire skills of “practical scholarship” and the ability to design, conduct, analyse and report a social research project.

This programme draws on the range of expertise available within the Department, as well as related academic departments, in order to provide an advanced training in social research methodologies, combined with a focus on one of a number of special areas in the social science. Specialist options are available in: Social Policy, Social Psychology, Sociology, Statistics, Philosophy, Development Studies, Government, Management, Population, and Decision and Policy Sciences.

The syllabus for the MSc goes beyond the ESRC’s requirements for the first year of a 1+3 PhD programme, and it is designed as a training for doctoral research and as a pre-professional training for careers in social research in the public and private sectors.

MSc in Applied Social Data Science (from 2018–19)

The MSc in Applied Social Data Science provides training in data science with an emphasis on real-world applications to social, economic, and political fields. With the rise of new and big forms of data, and computation and analytics forming ever-increasingly important elements of a wide range of professions. This multi-disciplinary programme will provide students with core skills in data manipulation and analysis, computer programming, and research design for applications in data science, preparing them for a variety of careers in the private, non-profit and public sectors.

Students on the MSc programme in Applied Social Data Science take a series of data, programming, and applied quantitative methods courses. They learn to use a variety of programming languages and applications, to create and manipulate large databases, and to think creatively about how to deploy these skills in the context of specific projects. This programme shares core courses with the MSc in Data Science (Department of Statistics), but differs in that its focus is more applied and is specifically designed for students without a formal computing or statistical background.

Students also have the opportunity to choose substantive electives, allowing them to tailor the programme to their particular interests. The programme culminates in a capstone project where students creatively apply the technical skills learned to a project of their own design.
**PhD in Social Research Methods**

The Department of Methodology welcomes applications to its PhD programme from students with proposals in qualitative and quantitative research, as well as interesting ways of combining them. Candidates should demonstrate a potential for methodological innovation as well as a firm grounding in a substantive area of research. This could involve collecting innovative new data, new analytic techniques, method comparison, evaluation or validation, method critique, applying existing methodology in new contexts, or cost-benefit analysis of methodologies. At the end of the first year, students produce a 10,000 word research proposal, outlining the theoretical and conceptual framework, the aims and methods of the thesis, and defend this proposal before a committee. In second through to the fourth year, students spend more time on independent study under the guidance of a supervisor. This will involve the collection, organisation and analysis of data, and writing up the results. PhD students also contribute to research seminars by presenting papers and joining in the discussions.

**Department seminars**

The Department of Methodology holds three seminars per term on Thursday afternoons during Michaelmas and Lent Terms. These are open to everyone (including members of the public) and places are given on a strictly first-come, first-served basis. Where the speaker permits, seminars are recorded for a downloadable podcast.

A sample of previous seminar series titles include:

**Research and policy change: the case of cycling in London**  
**Speaker:** Dr Rachel Aldred, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, University of Westminster.

**“These things are dangerous”: researching abortion in sub-Saharan Africa**  
**Speaker:** Dr Ernestina Coast, Department of Social Policy, LSE.

**Why we cheat: Experimental Evidence on Tax Compliance**  
**Speaker:** Professor Ray Duch, Nuffield College, University of Oxford.

**What is the role of individual accountability in patient safety? Insights from an ethnographic study of hospitals in diverse settings**  
**Speaker:** Dr Emmilie Aveling, Visiting Scientist (2015-2017), Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Research Fellow, Department of Health Sciences, University of Leicester.

**Right on the night, again (more or less) – the 2015 UK general election exit poll**  
**Speaker:** Dr Jouni Kuha, Associate Professor of Statistics and Research Methodology, Department of Methodology and Department of Statistics, LSE.

If you wish to be kept updated with the details of forthcoming seminars, please e-mail methodology.admin@lse.ac.uk with a request to be added to the seminar series mailing list.
Data science seminars

The Data Science Seminar Series runs on alternate weeks from the Department seminars, in the same Thursday slot. Part of an interdisciplinary initiative organized around the Social and Economic Data Science Unit (SEDS), the seminar series include speakers from around the world on a variety of data science topics focusing on social, economic, political, computational, and statistical applications. SEDS is an inter-departmental research unit jointly run between the Departments of Mathematics, Methodology and Statistics with input from other departments across LSE, and hosted in the Department of Methodology in 2016–2018.

For further information on SEDS and its events, please see lse.ac.uk/seds or email seds.admin@lse.ac.uk to request to be added to the data science seminars mailing list. You can also follow SEDS on Twitter @SEDS_LSE.

Topics discussed in the 2016/17 academic year included:

**The Case for Research Preregistration, with Applications in Elections Research**  
**Speaker:** Professor Jamie Monogan, Department of Political Science, University of Georgia.

**Revealing the Anatomy of Vote Trading**  
**Speaker:** Dr Omar Guerrero, Said Business School, University of Oxford.

**Measuring and explaining political sophistication through textual complexity**  
**Speaker:** Professor Ken Benoit, Department of Methodology at LSE (with Kevin Munger and Arthur Spirling)

**Detecting the Structure and Dynamics of Political Concepts from Text**  
**Speaker:** Dr Paul Nulty, Research Associate, Cambridge Language Sciences at the University of Cambridge

**Fitting Hierarchical Models in Large-Scale Recommender Systems**  
**Speaker:** Professor Patrick Perry, Stern School of Business, New York University

If you wish to be kept updated with the details of forthcoming seminars, please e-mail methodology.admin@lse.ac.uk with a request to be added to the seminar series mailing list.
Research showcase

Methodology staff carry out research in a number of disciplines. Below are some examples of current research in the department.

Social care quality in England

The provision and quality of social care for older people in England is becoming an increasingly pressing issue, with many predicting an imminent crisis. Little is known, however, about how local authorities practically work to meet their social care responsibilities. The researchers in this NIHR School for Social Care Research-funded project are using a mixed-methods design to explore existing approaches to the provision of social care in England.

In phase one, a website review is being conducted to map and synthesise the range of initiatives taken by local authorities to ensure high quality social care. This will be followed by an interview and validation workshop-based process evaluation of quality initiatives in place in a sample of three local authorities. This will be undertaken as a means to analyse differences between quality initiatives ‘as planned’ and ‘as performed’. Both sets of findings will be used as the basis of a final phase of knowledge exchange activities.

Alasdair Jones

ALASDAIR JONES

Alasdair Jones is Assistant Professor in Qualitative Research Methodology, Programme Director (MSc Social Research Methods) and an Associate at LSE Cities.

Alasdair’s research primarily coalesces around the theme of urban life. In particular, he is interested in the relationship between built form in cities and social practices, and his published research to date has centred on public space, mobilities, and the ways that citizenship is experienced in urban settings. This includes the recent of an ethnographic study of London’s South Bank, On South Bank: the production of public space (Routledge, 2014).

Alasdair is particularly interested in using qualitative methods to explore the fit, broadly, between plans/policies and social practices. In this vein he is currently writing up an interview-based study that adopts a material culture approach to explore the fit between sustainable design features of masterplanned developments and the living practices of residents of those developments. He is also embarking on a project with collaborators from LSE’s Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) comprising a process evaluation of discrepancies between how social care quality initiatives are planned and performed by local authorities in England.

He received his PhD in Sociology from the LSE’s ‘Cities Programme’.
Qualitative research methods allow us to investigate grassroots, frontline, and 'ordinary' experiences and practices, often revealing how those realities differ from the official, formal, or idealised versions that get a lot of airtime. We study how significant social problems play out, and how they are understood, contested, neglected or tackled, in the interest of positive social change. — Flora Cornish

**FLORA CORNISH**

Flora Cornish is Associate Professor in Qualitative Research Methodology and Deputy Head of the Department of Methodology.

Flora’s research investigates the role of community mobilisation in achieving advances in health and social development. She has conducted extensive ethnographic research on community mobilisation as an HIV prevention strategy among sex workers in India, as well as research on how community mobilisation interventions fare under conditions of new public management and the evidence paradigm. She is particularly interested in using qualitative research methods to compare and engage the perspectives of diverse stakeholders in controversial change projects. She recently co-authored a popular book *Qualitative Research for Development: A guide for practitioners*, with Morten Skovdal (Practical Action, 2015), in the interest of boosting the use of qualitative methods to inform people-centred development. She received her PhD in Social Psychology from the LSE.

---

**Qualitative research on Brexit**

**The Meaning and Practice of EU Citizenship for non-UK EU Citizens After Brexit**

“...The UK’s exit from the EU will destabilise the rights, status and belonging of non-UK EU citizens/migrants resident in the UK.” — Eleanor Knott

This project seeks to understand the lived experience of EU citizenship and what this means for non-UK EU citizens during this period of instability through a longitudinal survey and interviews.

*What does EU citizenship mean for non-UK EU citizens? How will Brexit shape the preferences and sense of belonging of non-UK EU citizens?* These questions are explored through the EUintheUK survey which started in 2016 and tries to capture these meanings, preferences and practices from the perspective of those affected. From 2017, the survey will be available in 8 languages. In the longer term, the survey will be supplemented by in-depth interviews across the UK with non-UK EU citizens.

---

**ELEANOR KNOTT**

Eleanor Knott is an Assistant Professor in Qualitative Research Methodology.

Eleanor’s research focuses on the politics of identity and citizenship. She is interested in how identity and citizenship can be studied comparatively and from the bottom-up, in terms of their everyday meanings and lived experience. She has published in political science on identity and citizenship in Crimea and Moldova, where she conducted field research using interviews and ethnography.

She received her PhD in political science from the London School of Economics and Political Science.
Benjamin Lauderdale is an Associate Professor of Social Research Methods and an Associate Editor of the American Political Science Review (2016–19).

Ben’s research is focused on the measurement of political preferences from survey, voting, network and text data. Applications of these methods have included citizens, legislators and judges in the US, UK and EU. He received his PhD in Politics from Princeton University in 2010 and joined the Department of Methodology 2011.

“Social data science involves the application of scientific analysis to data from the social, economic, and political world, especially big data, using statistical and computational tools such as machine learning. Our focus is not just on teaching the methods for doing this, but also in a thorough grounding of the social scientific approaches to the research questions we can use such tools to answer.”

Kenneth Benoit

Quantitative research on Brexit

The Brexit debate through social media

From the moment the EU referendum was announced, the question as to whether Britain should remain in the EU was the topic of extensive discussion over social media, with the tone and content of the language used playing a prominent part. Using over 35 million Tweets collected in the year before the EU referendum, Ken Benoit’s team used machine learning and quantitative text analysis to classify users as Remain or Leave supporters, and then analysed the debate and campaign through social media to track the framing, the sentiment, and argumentation, and the patterns of communication based on the Brexit side and other user characteristics.

KENNETH BENOIT

Ken Benoit is Professor of Quantitative Social Research Methods and Head of the Department of Methodology. He is also the current Director of the Social and Economic Data Science (SEDS) Research Unit.

Ken’s research focuses on automated, quantitative methods of processing large amounts of textual and other forms of big data – mainly political texts and social media – and the methodology of text mining. He is the creator and co-author of several popular R packages for text analysis, including quanteda, spacyr, and readtext. He has published extensively on applications of measurement and the analysis of text as data in political science, including machine learning methods and text coding through crowdsourcing, an approach that combines statistical scaling with the qualitative power of thousands of human coders working in tandem on small coding tasks.

He received his PhD in Government with a specialisation in statistical methodology from Harvard University.

Developing models to predict election results

Recently, Ben has worked on several projects related to election polling and forecasting. After serving as an academic member of the British Polling Council’s inquiry into 2015 UK general election polling, he has collaborated with YouGov to improve the methodology that they use in their polling. Most recently, this involved correctly predicting a hung parliament in the 2017 UK general election and 93% of individual parliamentary seats, when nearly every other forecaster expected an enlarged Conservative majority.

Benjamin Lauderdale

Benjamin Lauderdale is an Associate Professor of Social Research Methods and an Associate Editor of the American Political Science Review (2016–19).

Ben’s research is focused on the measurement of political preferences from survey, voting, network and text data. Applications of these methods have included citizens, legislators and judges in the US, UK and EU. He received his PhD in Politics from Princeton University in 2010 and joined the Department of Methodology 2011.
The Emergence of Inequality in Social Groups

From small organizations to entire nations and society at large, socioeconomic inequality is one of the most significant problems facing the world today. Funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, this four-year project will approach the problem of inequality from a new perspective and with new computational social science methods. An interdisciplinary team of sociologists, computer scientists, and physicists will develop and conduct large-scale controlled experiments online. This method will allow the construction of “artificial societies” comprising dozens of individuals who interact over days or weeks. Manipulating the structure of these multiple parallel worlds will help identify the structural conditions that give rise to inequality and inform policy and managerial interventions that reduce it.

Milena Tsvetkova

MILENA TSVETKOVA

Milena Tsvetkova is an Assistant Professor in Quantitative Research Methodology.

Milena’s research interests lie in the fields of computational and experimental social science. She employs online experiments, network analysis, and agent-based models to study fundamental social phenomena such as cooperation, contagion, segregation, and inequality.

Milena’s current work investigates the structural conditions under which inequality emerges and worsens when individuals interact in large social groups. She is collaborating with computer scientists to combine gamification and citizen science and develop new methods for large-scale social interaction experiments online.

She received her PhD in Sociology from Cornell University.
Data science

Big data is transforming almost every aspect of science, engineering, geography, and medicine, from mapping genes to exploring galaxies. In the study of human affairs, there is an emerging ‘data society’, in which increasingly comprehensive aspects of human behaviour and the economy are quantified through data.

Data science is a discipline concerned with the processes and systems required for extracting knowledge and insight from data sets, which are then translated into meaningful action. This data can come in many forms: it can be structured or unstructured, and its scope and scale can vary dramatically. The theoretical foundations of data science often lie at the intersection between statistics, mathematics and computer science.

In an increasingly data-driven age, governments, organisations and researchers are questioning how to harness the good that can come from responsible use of data while at the same time minimising inherent risks to individuals, groups, and society at large.

By leveraging its position as a world leader in social science research, LSE aims to develop the necessary tools for analysing large data sets and to answer questions regarding how organisations can make well informed data-driven decisions.

With the launch of the Department of Methodology’s new MSc in Applied Social Data Science programme, the department will be at the forefront of equipping students with the knowledge and skills to work in this industry. Methodology has recently recruited new members of staff who specialise in data science to take this initiative forward, who have expertise in computational methods, natural language processing, the analysis of social networks and social media, and machine learning.

For further information on SEDS and its events, please see lse.ac.uk/seds or email seds.admin@lse.ac.uk to request to be added to the data science seminars mailing list. You can also follow SEDS on Twitter @SEDS_LSE.