

# Capital Selecta: Critical and Alternative Research Methods

3 ECT

13 May – 25 June 2026

Wageningen University

## Course Guide

There is a growing call from students and researchers to include more diverse ways of showcasing methodological diversity in approaches in natural and social sciences. But what enables and constraints researchers to engage in emancipatory and critical research? Through the course, we will see how alternative and critical methods can support more engaged research and education practices and how scholars can contribute to shaping cultures of critique. We bring together scientists, investigators, journalists, and pedagogues to explore the emancipatory potential of alternative research methods. How can alternative methods and critical practices inform transformative research and education for justice?

Students across all faculties of Wageningen University and beyond are invited to join. Students learn how to plan design, practice, conduct, carry out, and reflect on alternative and critical methods of research, situate current debates about critical and alternative research methods, understand the theoretical and ethical underpinning of Alternative and Critical Methods, understand the choice of methods and the implications of how such choice influences the overall research.

What does a “good” research question look like, and how can you make sure you are designing and conducting a research project properly and ethically? These are common questions that students and researchers still have, and this course is designed with these questions in mind. The aim of this course is threefold: to provide a basic understanding of the philosophical assumptions and ethical principles of critical academic research; to equip students with key practical strategies and techniques for different types and processes of data collection, analysis, and critical interpretation; and to merge theory and practice by having students design, conduct, and write-up and develop their own research project.

**Course objectives:**

The purpose of this course is to prepare students to understand, design, and conduct academic research. After successfully completing the course students will:

- Understand the importance of critical academic research in acquiring knowledge and how this relates to the philosophy of science and the position of the researcher.
- Be able to explain the logic and limitations of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research.
- Possess the practical skills necessary for designing research, conducting research, and writing up a research report.
- Understand how to formulate and operationalize critical research questions, address issues in research ethics, collect different types of data, and learn how to analyze and interpret collected data.

**Course Organization:**

The course utilizes a combination of pre-meeting reflections, experts symposium and seminars. The pre-meeting reflections are done by all students and are broadly applicable to research in the humanities and social sciences. They are meant to provide an overview of academic research, the logic and limitations of qualitative and quantitative methods, and a brief introduction to the philosophy of science and research ethics. The seminars provide a focused engagement based upon the research expertise of the seminar leader. The seminar meetings are meant to assist students in designing a small research project and writing up the tentative results in a research report. While each seminar is unique, all students will be introduced to field specific research design issues, multiple data collection and analysis methods, operationalizing research questions, and how to interpret results, structure and writing with criticality.

**Reading list:**

- Alvesson, Mats, and Stanley A. Deetz. "Doing Critical Research". SAGE Publications, 2021.
- Alvesson, Mats, and Jörgen Sandberg. "Generating Research Questions through Problematization." *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2011.

- Norman Fairclough. Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language. Longman, 2013.
- Ahtisham Younas, Tarja Kvist, Minna Stolt. “Framework and key considerations for designing and conducting critical mixed-methods research (cMMR)”, 2025.

### **Course Material:**

Most of the course materials, recommended readings, assignments descriptions, recorded session, and transcripts of lecture will be host on the course Github:

<https://github.com/critical-alternative-research-methods/Course-Information/wiki>

### **Course workload:**

PhD, MSc and 3rd year BSc students of all study programs are welcome to join this course. The course is organized in such a way that students can follow the course on top of their regular classes. It will be 3 ECTS and contact hours will consist of 1-2 evenings per week over 5 weeks. Being worth 3 ECTS, the course supposedly comprises 84 hours of work in total. 14 hours of which are contact hours, comprising of six weekly two-hour lectures/workshops, spread across 5 weeks. 8 hours per week are reserved to complete the required readings prior to each session. Across the 6 weeks, this totals 48 hours of reading and self-reflection time. The remaining 24 hours are dedicated to completing the research project, which will be presented at the end of the course. We aim to facilitate hybrid participation and to record sessions to make the course the most accessible possible. However, we can not guarantee to support research projects of all students online, with the risk of failing the final assessment and attendance onsite is highly recommended for those who wish to obtain the ECs from Wageningen University after course completion.

### **Student wellbeing:**

Studying can challenge both your physical and mental health. If you feel your motivation slipping, or have problems with self-discipline or focus, there are several options at WUR that might be helpful. First of all, your study advisor is there to help you and think along with you on how to overcome any struggles you are facing. They can also put you in contact with any of the following four platforms, which you can also contact directly yourself: 1) Student Support and Training for help and trainings on stress management, personal development, career development, well-being, study skills, and intercultural communication; 2) Gezonde Boel, the eHealth platform

(currently in Dutch, but translation is underway); 3) a Student life coach, where you can have a heart-to-heart talk with an experienced coach about challenging situations in your life, loneliness, relationships (love, friends, family), motivation, health, making choices, or questions about your future – nothing is taboo; and 4) the Student Psychologists, who you can contact for an appointment at [studentpsychologists@wur.nl](mailto:studentpsychologists@wur.nl) (note that there is currently a 2-week waiting period for appointments).

If these issues affect your work in the course, please do not hesitate to discuss with the course coordinator ([mathea.debant@ru.nl](mailto:mathea.debant@ru.nl)). We understand that everyone has different capabilities that can often change over time, and would like to work to accommodate the needs of everyone who wishes to take the course. Also, please know that mental struggles of any kind are very common and nothing to be ashamed of. Your friends, family, study companions, housemates or others will be understanding of your problems, and it can be very valuable and a great relief to talk to someone close to you if you are facing difficulties.

### **Who we are:**

OtherWise is a non-profit foundation based in Wageningen that aims to create a platform for transformative learning and community by offering free events and credited courses. While systems of oppression keep perpetuating violence and destruction, impacting the Earth and all kinds of communities, OtherWise imagines other ways of being. We question whether current dominant ideologies, such as capitalism, human exceptionalism, or modernism, are helping to create a socially and environmentally just world.

### **Contact for the course:**

Feel free to drop us a line for any question regarding the course organization at [otherwise@wur.nl](mailto:otherwise@wur.nl) and to the course coordinator [mathea.debant@ru.nl](mailto:mathea.debant@ru.nl), or come by in the OtherWise office Generaal Foulkesweg 37, 6703 BL Wageningen.