MSc Artificial Intelligence & Governance (Public Administration)

Study guide, 2024-2025

Draft version. Details may be subject to change.

VU VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM | FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Artificial Intelligence and Digital Governance Programme

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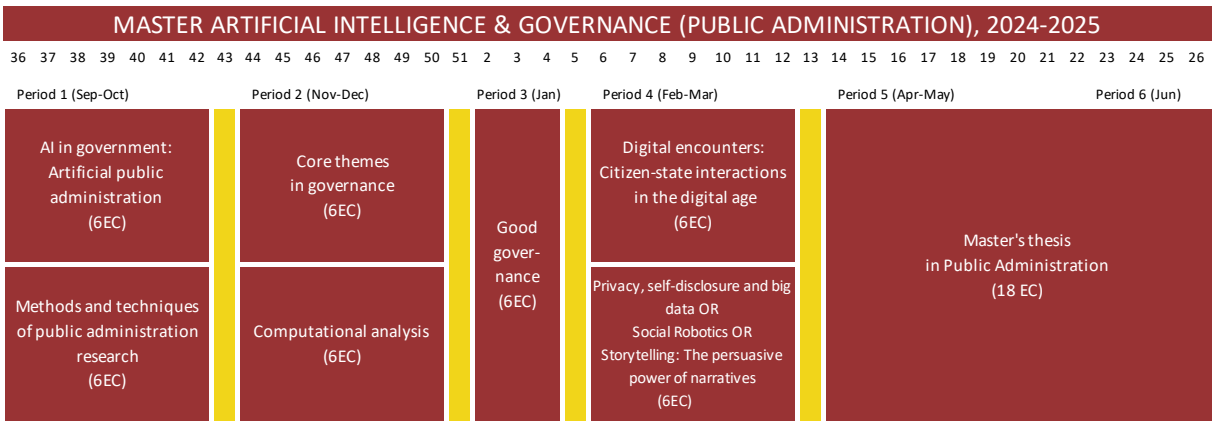
GENERAL DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

The digitalisation and algorithmisation of government, public service delivery and public decision-making gives rise to new substantive and methodological demands for the skills needed to navigate an increasingly complex and data-driven professional environment. It requires a new generation of trained experts who are both well-versed in the theory and practice of governance as well as technologically savvy. This programme is designed to ensure students acquire such skills.

With this programme, we educate the next generation of policymakers, officials, or regulators to develop a reflexive, analytical and technological understanding of both the opportunities and challenges presented by the rise of AI and digital technologies in governance and society. Students will build a strong theoretical and analytical understanding of governance processes, coupled with valuable technical skills. The programme is a collaboration with Communication Science.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW



COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

CORE COURSES

AI IN GOVERNMENT: ARTIFICIAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Course code	S_AIG
Period	Period 1 (Sep-Oct)
Credits	6 EC
Level	500
Teaching method	Lectures
Mode of assessment	Written assignments
Course coordinator	Prof. dr. M. (Madalina) Busuioc
Examiner	Prof. dr. M. (Madalina) Busuioc
Lecturer(s)	Prof. dr. M. (Madalina) Busuioc

Course description

Algorithms and automation shape public administration, public sector decision-making and the delivery of public services in fundamental ways. Artificial intelligence algorithms are increasingly relied upon in high-stakes public domains, ranging from predictive policing or criminal justice to the automation of the welfare state.

In this course, students learn to critically and analytically reflect on the transformation the public sector is undergoing in this context ranging from: promises and pitfalls of the reliance on AI and digital technologies in the public sector; implications thereof for governmental processes, structures, and routines; citizen-state interactions; implications for public values (accountability, transparency); and issues of bias, discrimination and/or digital inclusion/exclusion. The course incorporates both core theoretical debates related to these issues as well as real-life case studies and assignments pertaining to algorithm use in public sectors.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding – The student has acquired knowledge and understanding of:

1. core debates, approaches, concepts and theories within the field of governance in relation to the rise of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in government;
2. the most important societal developments affecting public governance pertaining to the rise of artificial intelligence and digital technologies.

Skills – The student has acquired the skills to:

3. critically reflect on the ethical and normative challenges involved in the responsible deployment of new technologies and formulate concrete solutions;

4. analyse real life problems in various policy sectors arising in relation to the use of AI and digital technologies in government.

Attitude – The student displays:

5. a reflective and analytical attitude in relation to core debates and the use of AI and digital technologies in government.

Teaching method

Lectures

Mode of assessment

Written assignments

Literature

To be announced in the course manual (see CANVAS)

Entry requirements

N.A.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH

Course code	S_MTPA
Period	Period 1 (Sep-Oct)
Credits	6 EC
Level	500
Teaching method	Lectures and tutorials
Mode of assessment	Exam (40%) and assignment(s) (60%)
Course coordinators	Dr. B. (Benjamin) Leidorf-Tidå & Dr. K.S. (Kristina) Weißmüller
Examiner	Dr. B. (Benjamin) Leidorf-Tidå
Lecturer(s)	Dr. B. (Benjamin) Leidorf-Tidå; Dr. K.S. (Kristina) Weißmüller

Course description

This course ensures that students take their first steps towards data literacy and quantitative analytical expertise to become computationally savvy professionals (researchers, civil servants, public managers, policymakers, and regulators). At the same time, this takes place against a general background where students are familiarised with broader knowledge and appreciation of the diverse research traditions and practices in the field of public administration.

The course starts off by discussing distinct ontological and epistemological positions, the most common methods of data collection and data analysis in PA, and the different types of knowledge that these types of research generate. Students will critically reflect on the role and applicability of different types of research in the age of digitalisation, AI, and big data.

The course will focus on giving students hands-on experience with quantitative methods. Namely, how to perform basic data operations, conduct and interpret descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, and how to visualise the results of these analyses effectively using the programming language R. Students will learn why and how basic descriptive and inferential statistical analyses are performed and interpreted correctly. This will prepare students for the subsequent course *Computational Analysis of Digital Communication* (P2), where they will become acquainted with advanced computational and statistical methods of analysis in R.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding – The student has acquired knowledge and understanding of:

1. broader ontological and epistemological positions that exist within the field of public administration and general familiarity and awareness of core methods and techniques of research in public administration;
2. hands-on experience with handling data;
3. basic descriptive and inferential statistical analyses;
4. basic principles for effective data visualization.

Skills – The student has acquired the skills to:

5. perform basic data management operations (import, clean, transform) in R;
6. perform basic descriptive and inferential statistical analyses in R;
7. visualise and interpret the results of basic descriptive and inferential statistical analyses using R.

Attitude – The student displays:

8. an ability to openly and critically reflect on the role of different approaches to public administration research and the different types of knowledge that they generate;
9. an ability to openly and critically reflect on the importance of quantitative and computational data analysis skills for public administration research and practice in the age of digitalisation, AI, and big data.

Teaching method

Lectures and tutorials. Every week there will be one lecture and one study group session. The lectures will introduce and explain the topics of the week. In the study group sessions, we will discuss student solutions on small weekly group assignments related to the content of the preceding lecture. Submission of the weekly assignment and participation in the study group sessions are mandatory but will not be graded.

Mode of assessment

Exam (40%) and final assignment (60%)

Literature

To be announced in the course manual (see CANVAS)

Entry requirements

N.A.

CORE THEMES IN GOVERNANCE

Course code	S_CTG
Period	Period 2 (Nov-Dec)
Credits	6 EC
Level	400
Teaching method	Lectures and tutorials
Mode of assessment	Presentation (40%) and written assignment (60%)
Course coordinator	Dr. K.S. (Kristina) Weißmüller
Examiner	Dr. K.S. (Kristina) Weißmüller
Lecturer(s)	Dr. K.S. (Kristina) Weißmüller

Course description

This course provides in-depth knowledge and understanding of selected core debates in governance and public administration. Integrating several core topics, such as theories of governance, political control of bureaucracy, public management, leadership and motivation in citizen-state interactions, and public decision theory, the course offers an advanced introduction to core topics of public administration theory and practice. The course covers insights into these topics' foundations and contemporary developments from a comparative and applied perspective.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding – The student has acquired knowledge and understanding of:

1. the core debates, approaches, concepts and theories of public administration and governance, thus enabling them to analyse and understand the complexity and challenges of governance from various theoretical perspectives;
2. the differentiation and partial socialization ('vermaatschappelijking') of public governance, particularly with regards to the changing distribution of tasks and responsibilities between public and private sector agents, modern techniques of policy making, policy implementation and public management.

Skills – The student has acquired the skills to:

3. analyse and critically assess contemporary questions of governance, from empirical, normative and action-oriented perspectives;
4. recognize how core debates in governance affect citizen-state interactions, administrative behaviour, and decision-making;
5. critically reflect on aspects of the core debates in governance and public administration in written form;
6. critically discuss aspects of the core debates in governance and public administration.

Attitudes – The student displays:

7. critical reflection upon the theoretical foundations and their methodological and normative implications of core debates in governance and public administration;
8. a critical attitude towards advanced public administration literature;
9. an open, reflexive, and independent attitude towards prevailing discourses on policy and governance in societal context.

Teaching method

Lectures and tutorials. Every week there will be one lecture and one study group session. Each week, the lecture will introduce and explain one core theme of governance. Each week, students will deepen their understanding of the week's core topic by solving related case studies in the study group sessions. Students will work in teams in the study groups and each team will present and discuss a solution to a case study, which will be graded (team assessment: presentation).

Mode of assessment

Presentation (team assessment): One presentation and in-depth, theory-based discussion of a case study solution in one of the study group sessions (40%)

Written assignment (individual assessment): Final Assignment (60%)

Literature

To be announced in the course manual (see CANVAS)

Entry requirements

N.A.

COMPUTATIONAL ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

Course code	S_CADC
Period	Period 2 (Nov-Dec)
Credits	6 EC
Level	500
Teaching method	Lectures and tutorials
Mode of assessment	Exam (70%) and assignments (30%)
Course coordinator	Dr. P.K. (Philipp) Masur
Examiner	Dr. P.K. (Philipp) Masur
Lecturer(s)	Dr. P.K. (Philipp) Masur, Dr. K. (Kasper) Welbers, E. (Emma) Diel

Course description

In this course, students will learn how to use computational techniques to analyse communication by learning to speak the "language of data". They will both expand their methodological toolkit and develop a conceptual framework for understanding key developments in society.

This course introduces data science technologies and techniques to study communication processes and effects in novel and innovative ways. Learning data science and computational methods is useful because it provides new skills and much sought-after qualifications in the job market, but also allows us to tap into new areas of research and gain a better understanding of today's society.

In the course, students will learn about common computational methods, how to use the statistical programming environment R to: a) gather data from online sources, b) transform and wrangle data to get it ready for analysis, c) perform text analysis (including machine learning approaches), d) perform advanced statistical methods in line with their chosen specialization (e.g., time series analysis, multilevel analysis, factor analyses and structural equation modelling, analysis of variance based on experimental data).

Based on a problem-based learning approach, each lecture introduces a new empirical problem and discusses methods and statistical approaches that can solve the problem. Students then learn how to conduct these methodological solutions in the practical sessions and are given the opportunity to further practice these approaches in homework assignments.

Learning outcomes

Skills – The student has acquired the skills to:

1. use the statistical programming environment R for various data analytical techniques;
2. gather and import data from different file types, APIs, and websites;
3. clean and transform messy data into a tidy data format ready for analysis;
4. link data from different sources to create new insights;

5. conduct computational text analysis, in order to extract useful information from the vast range of textual (communication) data that is available online;
6. perform advanced statistical analyses that allow to tackle more complicated data;
7. study communication phenomena using advanced and computational approaches.

Teaching method

Lectures and practical sessions. The course consists of three cycles (1) Introduction and data wrangling, (2) Text analysis, and (3) Specialization. Each cycle covers two weeks. Each week includes one lecture and two practical sessions in which students learn how to implement the concepts and approaches introduced in the lectures using R. Students will also do practical homework assignments each week.

Mode of assessment

After the first two cycles, there will be a (graded) written exam (70% of the final grade). After each week, students are required to hand in "homework", which represents a practical application of some of the taught analysis/methods (e.g. with a new data set, specific research question). Students need to reach "sufficient" on average to pass (10% of the final grade).

At the end of the third cycle, students are required to present results from their working groups, conducted in their respective specialization, in a mini conference. This presentation will be graded per group (20% of the final grade).

Literature

Van Atteveldt, W., Trilling, D. & Arcila, C. (2021). *Computational Analysis of Communication*. Wiley. Will be made available from https://cssbook.net.

Grolemund, G., & Wickham, H. (2017*). R for Data Science*. O'Reilly Media.

Grimmer, J., & Stewart, B. M. (2013). Text as data: The promise and pitfalls of automatic content analysis methods for political texts. *Political analysis*, 21(3), 267-297.

Welbers, K., Van Atteveldt, W., & Benoit, K. (2017). Text analysis in R. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 11(4), 245-265.

Entry requirements

N.A.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Course code	S_GB
Period	Period 3 (Jan)
Credits	6 EC
Level	500
Teaching method	Lectures and tutorials
Mode of assessment	Written assignment (100%)
Course coordinator	Prof. dr. G. (Gjalt) de Graaf
Examiner	Prof. dr. G. (Gjalt) de Graaf
Lecturer(s)	Prof. dr. G. (Gjalt) de Graaf; Various lecturers

Course description

According to many scholars the contemporary "late modern" or "postmodern era" is characterized by conflicting and perhaps incompatible moral views, virtues, and values. Due to various social and technological developments, people are increasingly confronted with a multitude of moral views, while they are at the same time to an increasingly lesser extent being "helped" by traditional institutions in answering these questions.

In this course, we explore what kind of answers are formulated to the question of what is "good", and what consequences this may have for governing society. In doing so, for once we do not give primacy to administrative science but look at the extent to which answers from different fields relate to each other: the good administrator, policy practice, and science.

We will first focus on good governance from the perspective of the professional: what is "a good manager" and what does public professionalism entail? "Practice" is represented by the practitioners themselves. Two directors are invited to first explain in a guest lecture how they deal with questions of good governance in practice, and then to be interviewed for 45 minutes in a lecture tour-like manner by the students and teachers. "Science" is represented by two specific approaches that put public value(s) at the centre: Public Value Management and the Public Values approach.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding - The student has acquired knowledge and understanding of:

1. how practitioners in public administration deal with dilemmas surrounding the question of what Good Governance is or should be;
2. core texts on good governance and the good governor;
3. a number of scientific publications on good governance with a focus on the role of public value(s) (Public Value Management & Public Value approaches).

Skills – The student has acquired the skills to:

4. connect the insights from practice and science presented in this course, pointing out differences and similarities;
5. using gained knowledge about how "good governance" is understood and applied in practice and science, consider their own ideas about what good governance should be, taking a critical distance.

Attitudes - The student displays:

6. the ability and willingness to consider, without bias and with nuance and critical distance, the judgments of others about the quality of governance.

Teaching method

Lectures and tutorials. In order to map out how "practitioners" think about good governance, we will use two lecture tour-style room interviews, in which a practitioner will be critically questioned by students after a lecture about their views on governance. The other two perspectives will appear in the literature and lectures.

The supporting tutorials then serve to further advance students' understanding of the implicit moral principles of the three perspectives in joint discussions. In the end-term paper that serves as the assessment for this course, students are asked not only to compare perspectives in detail, but also to arrive at a formulation of their own views on good governance.

Mode of assessment

Written assignment (100%)

Literature

To be announced in the course manual (see CANVAS)

Entry requirements

N.A.

DIGITAL ENCOUNTERS: CITIZEN-STATE INTERACTIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Course code	S_CSI
Period	Period 4 (Feb-Mar)
Credits	6 EC
Level	600
Teaching method	Lectures and tutorials
Mode of assessment	Written assignment and presentation
Course coordinator	TBA
Examiner	TBA
Lecturer(s)	TBA

Course description

Digital Encounters introduces students to the topic of technology-mediated interactions between citizens and government and teaches them to critically reflect on the impact of the adoption of digitalisation and digital communications on public services, citizen participation, open government, co-production and citizen trust.

The course covers critical issues ranging from growing citizen datafication and its implications, the promise of digital technologies to alleviate (or to the contrary compound) administrative burdens, the importance of citizen-centric design of governmental portals and digital interfaces, and aspects of how user experience (UX) design in government can be leveraged to improve citizen experience of digital government, promote public value, and develop solutions to public problems.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding – The student has acquired knowledge and understanding of:

1. the core debates, approaches, concepts and theories of public administration and governance in relation to the growing technology-mediated nature of government and citizen-state interactions;
2. how the reliance on algorithmic and digital technologies impacts citizens' experience of government.

Skills – The student has acquired the skills to:

3. recognize how core trends in governance pertaining to technology adoption affect citizen-state interactions, administrative behaviour, and decision-making.

Attitudes – The student displays:

4. an open, reflexive, and independent attitude towards key trends and prevailing discourses on citizen-state interactions in a digital context.

Teaching method

Lectures and tutorials

Mode of assessment

Written assignment and presentation

Literature

To be announced in the course manual (see CANVAS)

Entry requirements

N.A.

ELECTIVE COURSES (CHOOSE 1 OF 3 COURSES)

PRIVACY SELF-DISCLOSURE AND BIG DATA (ELECTIVE: CHOOSE 1 OF 3)

Course code	S_PSBD
Period	Period 4 (Feb-Mar)
Credits	6 EC
Level	600
Teaching method	Lectures and tutorials
Mode of assessment	Presentation and written assignment
Course coordinator	Dr. P.K. (Philipp) Masur
Examiner	Dr. P.K. (Philipp) Masur
Lecturer(s)	Dr. P.K. (Philipp) Masur

Course description

In the information society, the ability to achieve privacy plays a pivotal role for enabling individual agency. From a socio-psychological point of view, the individual needs private spheres from time to time to maintain the self, to experience autonomy, and intimacy.

On a broader, societal level, privacy is central to shaping power relations between the government, commercial actors, and the citizen. As such, it is a fundamental building block for democratic societies. Yet, disclosing the self and sharing private information with others is equally important for individual well-being. Only those who are willing to share information benefit from the gratifications modern information and communication technologies have to offer.

At the same time, private information has become a commodity and value that companies and institutions are all too willing to harness. The Snowden revelations, the Cambridge Analytica scandal, and the discussion around the GDPR are just a few examples of the increasing value of personal data for various commercial and institutional players. How can individuals retain their autonomy in such communication environments? How can individuals remain in control over their personal information flows? Is control even a feasible concept for understanding privacy in an increasingly networked ecology? What skills and abilities should individuals have to achieve informational self-determination? Proposed solutions include specific regulations as well as fostering individuals' privacy literacy.

This course is designed to explore such questions and other key issues around privacy and self-disclosure in the age of information. More specifically, it will discuss the current online privacy literature, analyse implications of big data, and develop research ideas that aim at increasing individuals' self-determination in online communication.

Learning outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students are able to:

1. summarize and critically evaluate theories of privacy and self-disclosure, theories of computer-mediated communication, and research on privacy literacy;
2. design a research question that studies the role of privacy in shaping internet users' communication behaviour, and design and conduct a quantitative research study to investigate their research questions. This includes the development of an adequate research methodology (e.g., online survey, experiment…) and the collection of observational data;
3. analyse their data to answer their research question;
4. work on a practical project collaboratively, take responsibility for the project delivery, and write a concise report on their findings.

Teaching method

A combination of lectures and supervised working groups. After an introductory phase, students will be split into project groups in which they work on their own research projects.

Mode of assessment

Two presentations related to their group projects (e.g., presenting research questions, motivation, and designs before data collection; presenting analysis and findings after data collection) (30%)

Project report (70%)

Literature

Masur, P. K. (2018). *Situational Privacy and Self-Disclosure*. Springer.

Trepte, S. & Reinecke, L. (2011). *Privacy Online*. Springer.

Van der Sloot, B. & de Groot, A. (2018). *The Handbook of Privacy Studies. An Interdisciplinary Introduction*. Amsterdam University Press.

Entry requirements

N.A.

SOCIAL ROBOTICS (ELECTIVE: CHOOSE 1 OF 3)

Course code	S_SR
Period	Period 4 (Feb-Mar)
Credits	6 EC
Level	600
Teaching method	Lectures and tutorials
Mode of assessment	Participation, assignments, and final exam
Course coordinator	Dr. D.F. (Daniel) Preciado Vanegas
Examiner	Dr. J.F. (Johan) Hoorn
Lecturer(s)	Dr. D.F. (Daniel) Preciado Vanegas; Dr. J.F. (Johan) Hoorn

Course description

The future is now, and we are designing it. Certain layers of society already work with social robots on a day-to-day basis. Until recently, robots seemed to be the realm of engineering but with the rise of Big Data analysis and embedded software in the Internet of Things, it becomes socially critical to understand how digital communications (i.e. patterns, trends, read-outs) should be translated back into human-digestible forms.

Social robots seem to be the ultimate interface between the digital and analogue world but in what way are robots different from humans? Do the same rules of conduct and communication apply as to human-human interactions? Will Computer-Mediated Communication branch off into robot-mediated communication? Will Media Psychology have found a new field to explore human bonding with machines?

This course consists of 12 lectures that describe the study and creation of social robots. Learning the ingredients is one thing, combining them in practice is another. Therefore, lectures are flanked by practical exercises during the work groups, where you will learn how to formally model a theory but also how to draw on your own creativity to design a robot or a robot application. If possible (but this is dependent on the availability of participants), we will let your design be tested by real users.

While working, we will have plenty of discussions about the societal impact of robots on work, privacy, security, ethical behaviour, our self-image as humans, and the like. Theoretical explorations will not be limited to communication science but will stretch to science philosophy (i.e. epistemics) and the theory of creativity and innovation as well. In practice, we will primarily work with NAO/Zora and Pepper robots for design challenges. Other types of robots, for example DARwIn-OP, Autonomous TurtleBot 2, and many toy robots (Hasbro's monkey, Roboraptor, LEGO's Mindstorms, LittleBits, Fischertechnik) might be available for additional demonstrations.

Learning outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students are able to:

1. understand and discuss current thematic and research issues in social robotics;
2. critically discuss the role of theory building (i.e. formal modeling) within social robotics, and reflect on ethical and normative issues in robot research and design;
3. apply a critical-reflective attitude about up-to-date and interdisciplinary scientific research in the field of social robotics;
4. develop a design proposal and related research to tackle a communication problem in social robotics.

Teaching method

Lectures and work groups. Lectures are partly done by robot tutors. Work groups are directed at robot-communication design in relation to electro-mechanical and industrial design engineering (equipment is available). Students will be trained to access their individual creativity and ingenuity.

Mode of assessment

Short graded assignments (group-based) (40%)

Individual participation in the work groups (10%)

Individual paper-pencil examination (50%)

Literature

To be announced in the course manual (see CANVAS)

Entry requirements

N.A.

STORYTELLING: THE PERSUASIVE POWER OF NARRATIVES (ELECTIVE: CHOOSE 1 OF 3)

Course code	S_SPPN
Period	Period 4 (Feb-Mar)
Credits	6 EC
Level	600
Teaching method	Lectures and tutorials
Mode of assessment	Participation and written assignments
Course coordinator	Dr. K.E. (Katalin) Balint
Examiner	Dr. K.E. (Katalin) Balint
Lecturer(s)	Dr. K.E. (Katalin) Balint; A.M.M. (Appoline) Leroux MSc

Course description

Stories (e.g. content communicated in a narrative structure) are all-around us. They are not merely for entertainment but are also powerful tools to transfer knowledge and influence cognition, emotion, attitudes, beliefs, as well as behaviour. A growing body of research shows that stories also have a strong potential to foster resilience and a sense of community.

The persuasive effect of narratives is capitalized on in many different fields of communication, such as marketing, health, environmental and science communication. New media technologies, such as VR and interactive storytelling create new questions and opportunities for storytelling design.

During this course, students explore key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and applications of storytelling. Why stories are so powerful? What makes a story engaging? Are stories more effective when presented in VR or made interactive? Why do people love stories and get engaged with them so easily? During this course, we discuss what actually makes a story, how people get absorbed in a story and how this absorption experience leads to certain effects, such as narrative persuasion. Are some people more likely to get involved with a story than others? We will look at certain media and user-specific features that determine the effect of a story. How can the power of narratives be applied for addressing relevant issues in society?

In the second half of the course, students will dive into different fields where narratives are used to influence people, such as brand storytelling, organizational storytelling, narrative health communication, environmental communication, storytelling to foster resilience and wellbeing.

Learning outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students:

1. have an overview and understanding of the communication science theories of narrative features, experiences, and effects in old and new media storytelling, in order to be able to clearly define theoretical developments and recent research findings;
2. have an overview and understanding of the principles of the research methods used in the study of narrative features, experiences, and effects in old and new media storytelling in communication science;
3. will be able to interpret how narrative strategies are used in real-life examples of environmental, science, marketing, education, and political communication;
4. will be able to design and present a long session on research findings, conclusions, and implications on narratives orally or in writing;
5. will be able to design a research proposal in the field of narrative studies.

Teaching method

Interactive lectures, guest lectures, and student-led sessions (flipped classroom). Attendance is mandatory for the guest lectures and student-led sessions.

Mode of assessment

The final grade will consist of an individual assignment and a group assignment, and several non-graded tasks.

Literature

To be announced in the course manual (see CANVAS)

Entry requirements

N.A.

MASTER'S THESIS

MASTER'S THESIS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Course code	S_MTBK18VT
Period	Period 5 and 6 (Apr-June)
Credits	18 EC
Level	600
Teaching method	Group sessions and Individual supervision
Mode of assessment	Thesis
Course coordinator	Dr. J.S. (Jaap) Timmer
Examiner	Dr. J.S. (Jaap) Timmer
Lecturer(s)	Various lecturers

Course description

The master's thesis is the conclusion of the Master's program in Public Administration. It is the final test in which the student demonstrates his or her ability – with lecturer guidance – to independently set up, carry out, and report on scientific research that meets the demands of scientific relevance, methodological rigor, and intellectual integrity.

In principle, each student carries out the thesis research within the context of a thesis group. Well before the start of the thesis project, the offer of thesis groups is announced on Canvas and an information meeting is held.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding – The student has acquired knowledge and understanding of:

1. a relevant issue of public governance.

Skills: The student has acquired the skills to:

2. relate this governance issue to a relevant mix of social science, especially theories and concepts of public administration;
3. distinguish, select, and apply different theoretical approaches and methods to issues of governance and be able to justify one's selection;
4. integrate empirical, normative, and theoretical considerations so that she/he can independently analyse, evaluate and report on social and governance problems using research methods and techniques, and make proposals that contribute to possible solutions;
5. critically reflect on the results of own research and relate them to theoretical debates within the discipline;

6. report own scientific research into a social management issue in a clear written and oral manner and to focus it on a diverse audience.

Attitude(s) – The student displays:

7. the ability to critically reflect on one's own analytical competencies and one's (future) professional role and related social responsibilities;
8. the willingness to search for new, original, interdisciplinary and creative angles to problems, evidenced by the ability to critically analyse and, if necessary, redefine problems before seeking new solutions;
9. a consistent set of norms and values regarding the conduct of scholarly and professional activities, evidenced by academic citizenship.

Teaching method

Students will be assigned to thesis groups, as much as possible according to their preference. Each thesis group is led by a professor who is also the supervisor of the master thesis. In the first phase, a series of group meetings take place dedicated to developing the theme into individual problem statements, a joint literature review, and the development of the research design (design, methods of data collection and analysis). Thereafter, each student conducts his or her own thesis research. Intermediate products and draft texts are discussed in the thesis group and/or individual supervision discussions.

Mode of assessment

Individual thesis

Literature

Core literature will be provided and suggested by the thesis supervisor.

Entry requirements

The student should have acquired at least 18 EC in the prior courses of the Master's Programme.