

## HUMA doctoral seminars on Truth and Method

HUMA's doctoral fellowship programme has been construed as a structured programme including seminars and reading groups. These are not intended as credit-bearing, nor will students' participation be graded or formally assessed. The emphasis is on a collegial, if intellectually demanding, preparation for the sorts of theoretical, methodological and substantive issues that HUMA doctoral fellows are likely to encounter during the course of their research.

The first series of seminars, on Truth and Method, will work at two levels: epistemological and more technical. We will focus on the task of producing a PhD proposal, but at all times embedding the technical options and choices in epistemologically informed discussion.

The series will comprise two parts: the first, focusing on the process of initiating doctoral research, and the second, raising issues of data analysis, once the field work stage of the research has been completed.

### **Part One:**

Suggested readings will be circulated, but the emphasis will be on collective discussion. The seminars will also create opportunities to reflect retrospectively on the experiences of Masters level research, with an eye to identifying the distinctive requirements of a PhD.

The discussions will be grouped as follows:

#### *1. Epistemological Foundations*

We will interrogate a series of key concepts: knowledge, research, objectivity, truth, evidence. And revisit the epistemological foundations of the disparate traditions of social research, qualitative and quantitative.

#### *2. Formulating a research question*

We will identify and discuss the critical elements of a well-formulated research question, appropriate to the scale and expectations of a PhD

#### *3. Epistemological and technical considerations in the question of sampling*

We will discuss the difference between a research population and a sample, and the implications of the incompleteness of a sample vis a vis the research population; as well as the different types of samples, and their possibility, appropriateness and implications for questions of evidence and argument, in qualitative and quantitative research

*4. Choosing research method/s*

We will discuss and compare techniques of quantitative and qualitative research, the latter including ethnography, interviews of various types, oral histories, archival research – visual as well as textual.

*5. Ethical issues*

We will focus on the kinds of ethical issues that the participants' proposed doctoral research are likely to raise – philosophically, and in relation to the ethical guidelines for doctoral research at UCT.

*6. Assembling a PhD proposal*

We will wrap up this part of the series by focusing on the different elements of a doctoral proposal and how to put them together.

**Part Two:**

This series of seminars will discuss various techniques of data analysis, drawing on the material that the PhD students' research will have generated by then.

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