Text analysis for the political sciences

Winter Semester 2014/2015

Semester: Winter

Start and end dates: 12 Jan 2015 – 3 April 2015

Academic Program:

Master of Arts in Political Science;
Master of Arts in Political Science (2 years)

Name of instructor: Roel Popping

Learning Outcomes:

Text analysis is a data collection technique just like many others. Usually there are no direct responses to a (research) question like agree, agree a little bit till disagree with an argument. The answers are found in a piece of text, where the investigator should try to find them. In general these are not answers to direct questions (like open-ended questions in a survey), but the texts contain opinions or facts on a specific issue that are relevant for an investigator. This results especially in data that allow describing certain developments in time, as development of democracy based on information in editorials in newspapers. It is also possible to describe differences between groups, view of women versus men on certain issues.

The course is an introductory one. It is meant as an introduction in the quantitative text analysis. In there several qualitative elements do receive attention.

Generally social scientists use for their data collection some kind of survey research. Here the data are collected from individual respondents. However, there are several other methods to collect data. Text analysis is one of these. In such studies data might be sampled from individual respondents (via diaries, letters, etc.), but more often the data come from articles in newspapers, documents from a government, minutes of meetings, discussion groups, and so on. These articles usually are assumed to represent the opinions that are hold by a broad public. At the end of the course the participants should have an idea of how to perform a simple text analysis study and must be able to evaluate more complex studies.

Assessment:

Students are expected to attend classes regularly, to read mandatory readings before classes, to be active there, to write short position papers when asked, and, depending on the number of participants in the class, to give a short presentation. Secondly, there will be an in-class, midterm test to be completed. Finally, a 10 pages long (one-and-half spaced, without the references) final essay reporting a text analysis study you performed yourself should be written, to be handed by the last class. Evaluation: Activity and position papers 30%, Midterm test 20%, Final essay 50%.

Full description:

Master of Arts in Political Science Program - elective course
Master of Arts in Political Science (2 years) Program - mandatory course

In the course an overview is given of the actual state of the art of text analysis mainly within research in sociology, political science, and communication studies. This overview is based on the literature. After being confronted with the traditional content analysis or instrumental thematic text analysis where concepts or themes are considered from the perspective of the investigator (Holsti, Krippendorff, and Weber) the student will learn about the representational form of analysis, where the concepts are considered from the point of view of the sender of the message. The instrumental and representational approach are not only applied to the thematic analysis (with focus on frequency of occurrence and co-occurrences of concepts or themes), but also to the semantic (having attention for relations between
concepts: subject – verb - object) and network (text is transposed into networks) analyses. Finally attention will be given to reliability and validity and some new developments will be mentioned.

At the end the student must be able to perform a simple (thematic) text analysis and must be able to judge the more complex forms.

In the assignment a (small) study is performed in which the type of text analysis is performed that is used by most investigators. During the course you will be asked to read some texts, we can discuss together.

Information about the course

Familiarity
The student should be familiar with basics of methodology. Also some knowledge about statistics would be very helpful.

Classes
The course will take place in two blocks: January 12 – February 6 and March 23 – April 3 2015. Classes are on Tuesday from 15:30 h. till 17:10 h. and Thursday also from 15:30 h. till 17:10 h. in FT809.

Way of working
During the teaching part of the courses the literature is worked out and clarified. Here the order as in the reader is followed as much as possible. In the working part of the courses questions about literature and assignments can be posed.

Assignment
There will be no final exam. The judgement is based on participation during the course, a midterm test (February 3) and the final assignment. A sufficient grade is needed. The assignment is to write a research paper / essay.

The final paper, which is an individual research paper, must be handed in on April 2 2015 before 17 hours. During the course the data needed for writing the paper will be elaborated in 3 steps (defining the categories, defining the codebook, performing the analyses and reporting).

The idea is that the research for the paper and its writing is for the greater part done between February 9 and March 20. The topic of the papers is the comparison of some issues (to be agreed upon with each of the students) is State of the Union speeches by the US Presidents Bush Jr. and Obama (so the presidents are compared) or issues that are discussed in speeches outside Parliament by the Hungarian Prime Minister. Here types of audience will be compared. For both topics data (texts) are available.

Evaluation of the assignment
To be decided after consultation.

Speaking hour
As I have no office at CEU the easiest way is to send an email: poppingr@ceu.hu.

Literature
Reader;
Lecture notes.

The reader, the PowerPoint presentations which will be made available and the content of the courses give the background on which the assignments must be based.

Organisation and way of working

Way of studying
The course is organised around the literature and the assignments. The literature contains an introduction into the quantitative text analysis (for a considerable part based on examples). In the assignments it becomes clear how the text analysis can be used in a research situation.
Classes
The classes consist of a teaching part and a working part. The teaching part is meant to make the study of the literature easier. The working part offers the possibility to discuss the assignment, so is focussed on applying the things that are taught.
Global course outline with required readings

January 13  Introduction to text analysis

January 15  Instrumental thematic text analysis


January 20  Representational thematic text analysis, assignment / explanation computer programs.


January 22  Semantic text analysis


January 27  Modality text analysis


January 29  Assignment + what was left

February 3  Network text analysis + mid term test


February 7  Reliability and validity


March 24  Instrumental thematic text analysis (2)


March 26  Instrumental thematic text analysis (3)

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<td>April 2</td>
<td>Assignment / final questions on reporting. Hand in assignment</td>
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