COURSE MANUAL

FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIETAL RESILIENCE

S_FSR

2023-2024

YEAR 1, PERIOD 2, NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

CONTENTS

Course name	Foundations of Societal Resilience
Executed by	Sociology, Organization Science, Anthropology, Public Administration & Political Science
Course code	S_FSR
Level	400
Academic Year	2023-2024
Period	Y1, P2 (November-December)
EC	6 EC, 168 hours
Teaching Staff	René Bekkers, r.bekkers@vu.nl (coordinator) Kees Boersma, f.k.boersma@vu.nl Dimitris Dalakoglou, d.dalakoglou@vu.nl Wolfgang Wagner, w.m.wagner@vu.nl
Mode of instruction	Lectures and workshops
Mode of assessment	Written exam, final paper
Open to	Students in the Research Master Societal Resilience (Y1)
Frequency p/w	2 meetings, Tuesday and Thursday

Study load allocation	**Per week**	**Total**
1. Lectures, workshops	2.8	22
2. Reading	13.2	106
3. Assignments	3.9	31
4. Preparation for the exam	0	9
5. Total		168

GENERAL AIM OF THIS COURSE

This course aims to discuss the key theories and approaches to resilience in different academic disciplines. You also learn to critically reflect on the construct of societal resilience. With this course, you lay the foundation for their future work on societal resilience, both in the thematic courses in P4 as well as in Writing a Research Proposal in P5 and the internship and master thesis in the second year.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Societal resilience refers to responses and strategies at the individual, group, institutional and societal level, that are innovative and effective and that contribute to 'a better world'. A resilient society not only tries to respond to disruption and crisis by trying to bring the system *back* into balance, but rather tries to develop solutions that bring a system in *a new state* that is capable of dealing with present and future challenges. In this course, you learn to critically reflect on the concept of societal resilience. You will reflect on the ways resilience has been conceptualized in different disciplines and how the concept of resilience has been used to inform viable solutions to the wicked problems that present day society faces. You will read theory papers on resilience as well as empirical papers in which individual, organizational and societal resilience is investigated using both theoretical and empirical, and both quantitative and a qualitative research approaches.

In this course, we discuss theories on resilience. Societal resilience is a complex construct because it has a functional definition. Also the term has been applied in many contexts. The wide range of application possibilities makes resilience useful for researchers in different disciplines. We discuss the approaches to resilience in different disciplines. Also the construct raises questions from a meta science perspective. We discuss questions on resilience from the philosophy of science and the sociology of knowledge.

This course consists of three parts.

1. First we discuss the concept of resilience. You discover the ways in which societal resilience emerges at the micro-, meso- and macro-level, in the actions of citizens, groups and nations. You learn about theories that explain when and why resilience emerges, and about the consequences of resilience.
2. Then we discuss theories on resilience from different disciplines in the social sciences, broadly conceived: sociology, anthropology, psychology, political economy, international relations, political science, public administration, and organization sciences. Also we discuss theories on resilience from other disciplines: behavioural genetics, and the natural sciences.

3. Finally, we apply the theories to the case of disaster responses, with a field visit to the 510 project at the Red Cross Head Quarters, and to a case of your own choice, in your final paper.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Knowledge and Understanding. By the end of this course, you are able to:

   (1) interpret societal problems from the perspective of resilience (KU1, KU2);
   (2) recognize resilience at the individual, community, organizational, and national level (KU1, KU2);
   (3) identify features of qualitative, quantitative and computational social science methods in research on resilience (KU4);

Application. You have acquired the competences to:

   (4) discern theories on resilience in sociology, governance, psychology, and organization science research (A6);
   (5) apply theories on resilience from different disciplines and at different levels of analysis to cases of resilience (A6);

Making judgements. You are able to:

   (6) identify the strengths, weaknesses and interrelations of different disciplinary perspectives on resilience (JF9);
   (7) reflect critically on the scientific and societal relevance of research on resilience in different disciplines (JF10);

Communication. You have acquired the skills to:

   (8) quickly grasp and convey the key messages, disciplinary and methodological approaches, and strengths and weaknesses of research reports (C13);
   (9) present theories and interpretations of results of research on resilience in a clear manner (C13);

Learning skills. You are able to:
   (10) identify your disciplinary and methodological expertise (LS17);
   (11) use insights from peers in a multidisciplinary group in the analysis of a case (LS15).

With this course, you gain specialist knowledge of and insight into contemporary research questions regarding complex societal problems (KU1) and societal resilience (KU2). You learn to analyse societal problems and societal resilience employing knowledge from various disciplines (AK6) and learn to reflect on different perspectives (JF9). By discussing research presented in the course, you learn to identify features of qualitative, quantitative and computational social science methods (KU4) and evaluate the scientific and societal relevance of research (JF10). In the assignments, you learn to present research results and interpretations in a clear manner (C13) and process insights from peers in your team (LS15).

PLACE OF THE COURSE

This course prepares for the P4 courses on themes in societal resilience by discussing the concept of resilience and applying it in multiple areas. The course includes examples from the P4 themes Dynamics of Polarization, Diversity and Inclusion, and Algorithmic Governance of Care and Welfare. The course runs parallel to Big Data / Small Data, a methods course in which you learn to collect and analyse empirical data. The current course does not have a data component.

REQUIRED LEVEL OF ENTRANCE

This course builds on the course Big Problems (BP) in P1, in which you have become acquainted with the complexity of societal challenges. The skill to investigate societal issues from multiple perspectives is trained further in the current course. Knowledge about the complexity of societal challenges and examples of societal resilience with respect to these challenges from Big Problems is not a prerequisite, but will facilitate the application of theories on resilience discussed in the course.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Preparation. In this theory course you read a lot of articles. In preparation of the meetings on campus you read the literature assigned for that particular meeting. For each reading, think about and prepare questions for the discussion in class, and raise them during the meeting. Because the readings are from a wide variety of disciplinary approaches, many aspects of the readings will be new to you. This is fine. You can only start learning when you realize what you don't know yet. Relevant questions on the readings include clarification questions (e.g., on the meaning of terms that are new to you), theory questions (e.g., on the relation between constructs), methods questions (e.g., on data collection and analytical procedures), discussion questions (e.g., on limitations of the research), and meta questions (e.g., on distinctive characteristics of the disciplinary approach and epistemological assumptions). Submit the assignments on the literature for each week before class.

Class meetings. We meet twice a week on campus for interactive workshops. We discuss the readings and the assignments in a constructive and critical way. Your active participation is a key condition for a productive meeting. The discussion is not a debate you can win; it is not about being right or wrong, but about discovering what you don't know. We start the discussion of each reading with a brief conversation starter by one of the participants in the course (see below).

In the class meetings we also discuss the assignments with each other. Teaching staff actively participate in the plenary discussion, and connect ideas and theories discussed in the meeting with related constructs in other research and reflect on disciplinary differences in the approach to resilience.

Conversation starters. For each of the assigned readings, a student prepares a clear and short summary of the key message of the reading, and suggests questions for the group discussion. As a conversation starter in class take a maximum of 3 minutes and use only one slide / image. At the first meeting, we create a schedule for the conversation starters.

Field trip. About halfway through the course we go on a field trip to see resilience research in action.

MODE OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment will take place through written assignments and an exam. The course grade is based on an evaluation of the exam at the end of the course (50%) and the final paper (50%).

Conversation starters. The conversation starters will not be graded with a mark. Instead, your preparation of the discussion is sufficient if you have signed up and acted as a conversation starter for an approximately equal number of readings.

Written assignments. For each meeting, you write a one pager responding to the question(s) about the readings for that particular meeting, and summarize your thoughts on a single slide that you can share in class. The instructions for assignments are provided in Appendix A. The assignments are not graded. To pass the course, you have to submit each assignment before the meeting begins in which it is discussed. The lecturers use this information to structure the discussion in the meetings.

Final paper. For the last meeting of the course there are no new readings. Instead, we go over the highlights of the readings from the preceding weeks. You can use the review for your final assignment. After submitting the final paper you have a short meeting with the course coordinator to discuss it.

Exam. The exam takes place at the end of the course. You will receive a mock exam one week before the written exam. The mock exam is a diagnostic test, consisting of questions that are similar to the questions in the written exam.

The exam consists of open questions. The questions test your performance in understanding ideas and concepts, applying them to new materials, analyzing connections between ideas and materials, and evaluating arguments based on theories and results. The questions do not test your recall of facts and concepts. To answer the questions, you are allowed to consult the readings, slides, and other materials available on the web. The questions presuppose that you understand the theories and hypotheses discussed in the readings and in course meetings. The prototypical question starts with a piece of new material: a quote, a cartoon, a news item, a table or a figure from an article not discussed in class. You should be able to interpret the new material and explain it from theories and concepts covered in readings and class meetings. Questions of a second type work in the reverse order, and ask you to first draw connections between theories and hypotheses, and then invite you to present examples from new materials you collect yourself.

General guidelines for the final paper:

- The final paper should be typed in a 11 pt font. Use page numbers. Always mention your name, your student number, title of the paper, the name of the course, your e-mail address and a word count.
- Use a consistent style for references.
- Check your English!
- It is fine to use generative artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT, Bing, Bard, Claude, Perplexity, Elicit or ResearchRabbit, as long as you identify that you have used them, and how you have used them. Do so in sufficient detail for others to be able to reproduce your findings. This means that you specify the software version, settings, date of usage, the prompts and commands, and output with a URL or a screendump. Whenever you use AI-generated content, independently verify the claims made and insert references to sources supporting the claims including DOIs (for scholarly publications) or URLs (to non-scholarly sources such as Wikipedia).
- Plagiarism and fraud are absolutely not allowed. For more information: https://vu.nl/en/student/examinations/academic-integrity-fraud-and-consequences

Learning goals: you are able to…	Exit qualification:	Assessment in assignment
1. interpret societal problems related to the themes Dynamics of Polarization & Inclusion, Algorithmic Governance of Care & Welfare from the perspective of resilience	KU1, KU2	1, 6, 7b, 9
2. recognize resilience at the individual, community, organizational, and national level	KU1, KU2	1, 6, 14
3. identify features of qualitative, quantitative and computational social science methods in research on resilience	KU4	All
4. discern theories on resilience in sociology, anthropology, political science, psychology, and organization science research	A6	1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13, 14
5. apply theories on resilience from different disciplines and at different levels of analysis to cases of resilience	A6	3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
6. recognize the distinctive elements of different disciplinary perspectives on resilience, their strengths, weaknesses and interrelations	JF9	1, 3, 4, 5, 7a, 10, 13, 14
7. reflect critically on the scientific and societal relevance of research on resilience in different disciplines	JF10	2, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14
8. quickly grasp and convey the key messages, disciplinary and methodological approaches, and strengths and weaknesses of research reports	C13	Conversation starters
9. present theories and interpretations of results of research on resilience in a clear manner	C13	Conversation starters, 13, 14, 15
10. identify your disciplinary and methodological expertise	LS17	All
11. use insights from peers in a multidisciplinary group in the analysis of a case	LS15	6, 7b, 9, 12, 14

Meeting	1: 31 OCT, 11.00-12.45 HG-14A40	2: 2 NOV, 15:30-17:15, HG-14A40	3: 7 NOV, 11.00-12.45 HG-14A40	4: 9 NOV, 15:30-17:15, HG-14A40	5: 14 NOV, 11.00-12.45 HG-14A40	6: 16 NOV, 15:30-17:15, HG-14A40	7: 21 NOV, 11.00-12.45 HG-14A40	8: 23 NOV, 15:30-17:15, HG-14A40
Title	Conceptualizations	Meta questions and disciplinary approaches	Anthropological approach	Resilience Grassroots and Social Movements	Case: disaster resilience	Field visit: the 510 project	Sociological approach	Critical approach
Reading	Bekkers 2016 Norris et al. 2008 Anholt et al., 2021	Baggio, Brown & Hellebrandt, 2015 Hoffman, Sharma & Watts, 2017 Xu & Kajikawa, 2018	Barrios, 2016 Bollig, 2014 Dalakoglou, 2016 Pike, 2018	Cretney & Bond, 2014 Welsh, 2013 Kousis & Paschou, 2017 MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013	Abramson et al., 2015 Cutter et al., 2010 Papadopoulos et al., 2017 Paton & Johnston, 2007 Tierney, 2015	Red Cross	Adger, 2000 Aldrich & Meyer, 2015 Portes, 1998	Joseph, 2013 Juncos, 2018 Wagner & Anholt, 2016
Assignment	1	2	3	4	5	6a and 6b	7	8

Meeting	9: 28 NOV, 11.00-12.45 HG-14A40	10: 30 NOV, 15:30-17:15, HG-14A40	11: 5 DEC, 11.00-12.45 HG-14A40	12: 7 DEC, 15:30-17:15, HG-14A40	13: 12 DEC, 11.00-12.45 HG-14A40	14: 14 DEC, 15:30-17:15, HG-14A40	15: 19 DEC, 12:15-14.30, NU 6C33
Title	Psychological approach	Draft paper discussion	Case: International Development	Case: COVID-19	Conclusion	Course Review	Digital Exam
Reading	Rutter, 2006 Amstadter et al., 2016 Chabris et al., 2013		Jeans et al., 2016 Chugani et al., 2021 Gaillard, 2010 Keating & Hanger-Kopp, 2020	Van Bavel & Scheffer, 2021 Wernli et al., 2021 Wallace et al., 2023 Van der Zwet et al., 2022	Bonanno et al., 2010 Holling, 1973 Healy, 2017 Infurna & Luthar, 2016 Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000		
Assignment	9	10	11	12	13	14	15

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1. Recognizing and classifying resilience

a. Every day you can find examples of societal resilience in the daily news, even when the term is not explicitly used. Select an article from this week's news that discusses a case of resilience. Describe who is resilient to what and why according to the article. Include a proper reference to the news source. Present your example on a single slide that you can share in the meeting.

b. Read Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum (2008), and Anholt et al. (2021). The authors discuss various approaches to resilience from different disciplines. Identify two approaches, and place them in the 9 cells of the 3 level ABC model of Bekkers (2016) below.

	Antecedents	Behaviors	Consequences
Macro-level: Government policies	1	2	3
Meso-level: Organizational capacities	4	5	6
Micro-level: Citizen's resources	7	8	9

Discuss the differences in the kind of research questions that researchers try to answer in different disciplines. Finally, discuss the research methods that are used in these disciplines. Present your example on a single slide that you can share.

2. Meta questions: philosophy of science and approaches to resilience

Aside from the ideological underpinnings of the concept and the challenge of reliable and valid measures of resilience, the concept raises questions from a philosophy of science perspective. To what extent can resilience be predicted? In the absence of adversity, how can we tell whether actors are resilient?

   a. Baggio, Brown & Hellebrandt (2015) and Xu & Kajikawa (2018) present network analyses of the research on resilience. The topic is present in many disciplines, without much cross-fertilization in terms of theories or approaches. Formulate testable hypotheses that explain clustering of citation networks and knowledge fragmentation.
   b. Read Hoffman, Sharma & Watts (2017). Predictions on systemic changes due to exogenous shocks such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, or financial crises rely on mathematical models that do not offer explanations for resilience. What do you make of the argument of Hoffman, Sharma & Watts against the assertion that "an emphasis on predictive accuracy leads to complex, uninterpretable models that generalize poorly and offer little insight"?

3. An anthropological approach to resilience

Read "What is Anthropology?" at: https://www.americananthro.org/AdvanceYourCareer/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2150 and the articles by Barrios (2016), Dalakoglou (2016), Bollig (2016) and Pike (2018) for today's meeting.

a. Discuss and explain briefly what is distinctive about the anthropological perspective of the concept of resilience in comparison to other disciplinary approaches, and where you see similarities.

b. Anthropology is often described as a discipline that deals with 'exotic' and small -relatively isolated- communities in the Global South. Can you discuss the uses of anthropological approaches in Western contexts in reference to resilience?

4. Resilience and Grassroots Social Movements

With references to the readings of this week analyze what is the relationship between grassroots social movements and resilience. Debate whether we can have a radical version of resilience as discussed by Cretney and Bond (2014).

For your final assignment: draft a research question using the rules at https://betteracademicwriting.word-press.com/2022/04/05/rules-for-research-questions/ and https://betteracademicwriting.word-press.com/2021/06/05/crafting-your-research-question/

5. Case: disaster resilience

Suppose a hurricane like Katrina would hit the coasts of New York or Amsterdam. What would you predict would be the result in terms of damage, government response, and child outcomes? How would the consequences be different between these cities? To what extent are these differences caused by mechanisms at the macro, meso, and micro-level?

To answer these questions, read Abramson et al. (2015) and reread Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum (2008). Apply insights from these papers and other theories or authors discussed in the previous weeks that you think may be relevant.

6a. Revise research question

Revise the research question for your final assignment, benefiting from the feedback you received.

6b. Prepare for field visit

Study the 510 website, https://www.510.global/what-we-do-3/. Which characteristics of the sociological and anthropological approach to resilience do you recognize in the activities of 510? What types of data and methods does 510 use? How does 510 combine quantitative, qualitative and computational data and methods?

7. Sociological approaches to resilience

Adger (2000) asks how social and ecological resilience are related. Aldrich & Meyer (2015) argue that social capital should be the basis for policy on disaster survival and recovery. Link their arguments to at least two different theories of social capital discussed by Portes (1998).

8. Positioning resilience in political debates

The concept of resilience is used in political debates on the future of crisis management and interventions in conflict zones. The 2016 Global Strategy of the European Union is a prominent example. The paradigm

shift to resilience has been accompanied by criticism according to which responsibility is shifted to individuals and resilience is used as a pretext to scale down expectations and resources (Joseph, 2013; Wagner & Anholt, 2016; Juncos 2018). Discuss these arguments from the perspective of sociological, anthropological, and psychological approaches to resilience (max 1 page).

9. Psychological approaches to resilience

In this meeting, we discuss approaches from psychology. First read Rutter (2006), then Amstadter et al. (2016). Finally, read Chabris et al. (2013) and Van de Weijer et al. (2023). In your weekly assignment, answer the following questions:

a. What in your view is distinctively psychological about the definitions of resilience by Amstadter et al. (2016) "adaptive functioning in the aftermath of adversity, stress, and trauma" and Rutter (2006) "a relative resistance to environmental risk experiences, or the overcoming of stress or adversity"?

b. Chabris et al. (2013) provide arguments why it is unlikely that researchers find genes related to social science traits ('complex phenotypes'). Apply the arguments to the concept of resilience. In your view, what can we learn from twin studies and from behavioural genetics in general on social causes of resilience?

Search the academic record of published and unpublished research for studies that report genetic loci associated with resilience by using Google Scholar or Research Rabbit. Document your search strategy by identifying which tool you used, giving the keywords you have used, and providing a URL to the set of results. Describe the insights you gained from your search.

10. Draft paper discussion

Send feedback on the draft paper of one of your peer students the day before class. Discuss the feedback you received from your peer reviewer during the meeting.

11. Case: Resilience in International Development

With references to Chugani et al. (2021) along the rest of the articles that take a more critical approaches to development and resilience, please debate whether resilience is a useful concept for international development practice and policies if yes, explain in what ways, and if not, why not.

12. COVID-19

In this meeting we discuss research on the COVID-19 pandemic as a case of adversity that tested the resilience of societies, social groups and individuals.

a. According to Van Bavel & Scheffer (2021) societies that offer fewer possibilities for 'ordinary people' to influence public policy responses through institutions become more unequal after disasters. How could you test this hypothesis in the case of COVID-19?

b. Wernli et al. (2021) use the concept of 'multisystemic resilience' to analyze societal level responses to COVID-19. To what extent is the definition of resilience by Bekkers (2016) as the mobilization of resources for the improvement of welfare in the face of adversity applicable at the societal level?

    c.   Wallace, Goldsmith-Pinkham & Schwartz (2023) show that in the US, the excess death rate among Republican voters was higher than the excess death rate among Democratic voters. In your view, what could explain this difference, and what does this tell us about the resilience of social groups?

    d.   Van der Zwet, Barros, Van Engers & Sloot (2022) analyze resistance movements against COVID-19 mitigation policies. Discuss conditions for the emergence of protests from one of the disciplinary perspectives on resilience that we have talked about in the course.

13. Conclusion

a. In 1973, Holling stated that "A quantitative view of the behavior of the system is essential". Revisit the readings for this course. What is your view on the progress in the past 50 years?

b. Healy (2017) advocates against nuance. Which of the theories discussed in the course do you think is most promising? Does that theory follow Healy's recommendations?

c. Bonanno et al. (2010) argue that resilience is the common outcome after disasters. In contrast, Infurna & Luthar (2016) provide evidence that resilience is actually much less common and Doré & Bolger (2017) provide evidence about changes in well-being after stressful life events. Which theories on resilience are inconsistent with the findings of Infurna & Luthar (2016) and Doré & Bolger (2017)? Why?

14. Final paper

Revisit the theories on resilience that you have studied in this course. Formulate a substantive research problem on societal resilience, and show how you can apply three different perspectives as discussed in the course to this research problem. In which cells of the 3 level ABC model do the perspectives belong? Contrast the perspectives on resilience from these theories with each other. Focus on the following questions: What is the scope and the explanatory power of the theories? What are their mutual relationships? Are they mutually exclusive, or complementary? Finally, reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of multidisciplinary research for your research question. Submit the final paper ultimately on Wednesday 20 December 2023 before 17:00. You can pick a slot on Thursday 21 or Friday 22 December for the discussion of your paper with the course instructor.