

CERES PhD Training for Year 1+2

Date: March-June 2025

ECs: 16 (full block)

Tuition:

PhDs from member institutions: 2500 euros

PhDs from non-member institutions: 5000 euros

Description:

The CERES PhD Training Course is tailored for PhD students in their first and second years, offering a unique learning experience and a robust foundation for their research. The course has two main objectives: The first is to cultivate a general and shared integrative understanding about what it means to do a PhD degree in the field of Development Studies, from the perspective of both theory as well as empirical research. Significant emphasis is placed on ontology and epistemology, not only in their theoretical aspects but also in its linkage to and application of methods. A key goal is to ensure that ontology and epistemology are not merely background concepts but are continuously integrated and articulated throughout the PhD journey. The second objective is to assist participants in advancing their research designs, in preparation for the defence of their research proposals at the end of their first year (e.g., variously called ‘Dissertation Design Seminar’, ‘Upgrade Seminar’, etc).

The course also emphasises a ‘learning by doing’ approach to support the different steps of developing a convincing and defensible research proposal. The approach mixes both teacher-led and participant-led sessions, starting with more of the former and with a greater emphasis of the latter towards the end of the programme. It combines taught plenary sessions, seminars, and group and individual work overseen by the facilitators, on different topics related to doing or conceiving research, specifically tailored to the themes, and needs of Development Studies.

Module 1: Proposing Research in Development Studies

Date: March 2025

Location: Residential (location to be confirmed)

Module leader: Prof. Dr. Tom De Herdt

Description: This module focuses on the different principles involved in developing a research proposal, which are similar regardless of whether PhDs are working with qualitative or quantitative approaches, in anthropology, economics or other disciplines. It aims to equip the students to rethink their research question in view of defining a workable research strategy. At the same time, students are invited to position their topic vis-à-vis some contemporary debates in the field of development studies.

Learning Objectives

At the end of module, participants can expect to:

- draft a (revised) research problem that is clear and concise, reflects your research interests, and is convincing/compelling.
- formulate a (revised) main research question in clear relation to your problem statement.
- start developing a research strategy, e.g., brainstorming, case rationale, analytical and conceptual mapping, etc.

Module 2: Philosophy of Social Science and Development: Ontology, Epistemology and Political Economy

Date: April 2025

Location: Residential (location to be confirmed)

Module leader: Dr. Karim Knio

Description: This course aims to emphasize the necessity and desirability of embedding thematic and empirical research within ontological debates to produce rigorous scholarly research. It introduces students to fundamental debates in social ontology and highlights their subsequent implications on political economy analysis. Namely, the course focuses on two important ontological debates in their own right before it develops a cartography which charts their intersection, then this cartography is subsequently situated within the classic debate on neoliberalism in critical political economy literatures. In so doing, the course not only demonstrates how different approaches interpret and articulate neoliberalism, but it also reflects on the making of theoretical approaches in their own right. This should provide doctoral students with various analytical skills to help them in appropriately navigating through various academic literatures as well as situating their own research.

Module 3: Methods and Ontology

Date: May 2025

Location: Residential (location to be confirmed)

Module leader: Prof. Dr. Tom De Herdt and Dr. Karim Knio

Description: The aim of this module is to provide hands-on coaching and advice tailored to the specific research needs of the students. The exact program will be developed once we understand the methodological needs of the participants. The module will address not only the technicality of method, but how they are related to the philosophy of social science.

Module 4: Presentation Tutorials

Date: June 2025

Location: Residential (location to be confirmed)

Module leader: Prof. Tom De Herdt and Dr. Karim Knio

Course description:

The presentation tutorials are the final part of the Training Programme and offer PhDs an important opportunity to present and discuss their research projects, and to receive comments and suggestions on their research proposals/designs. PhDs will present their draft research proposals/designs in a seminar format, e.g., with a chair and two discussants assigned to each presentation, and they will participate in the presentations of their peers. The latter participation is especially important given that an intuitive understanding of presenting research is deepened through the experience of going through the process multiple times. As such, it is a key moment that cements the pedagogical principle of ‘learning-by-doing’ followed throughout the programme. The module ends with a discussion of the subsequent stages of the PhD journey.

Course: Safety and Security for fieldwork/in-situ research

Date: June 2025

Location: ISS

ECs: 1.5

Tuition: Free for members, 400 euros for non-members

Teachers: Prof. Dr. Dorothea Hilhorst, Dr. Rodrigo Mena

Course description:

When conducting in-situ research or fieldwork, researchers often operate within complex and dynamic social and political contexts. From criminality, illness, and engagement with authoritarian authorities, to cybersecurity threats and disasters, researchers, research participants and collaborators face a wide range of risks that might affect their safety and security and the quality of the research process itself.

This course is designed to assist researchers in conducting their research in complex, remote or hazardous environments as safely, securely and ethically as possible, both for those working within their home country and for foreigners.

The content is organized into three main groups: (a) The main frameworks and theories of research safety and security with a focus on risk assessment and research ethics; (b) a review of specific fieldwork-related risks and actions designed to prevent them from happening; and (c) on preparedness and contingency planning so the researcher knows what to do if the risks become manifest.

The course has a workshop format with a two-fold teaching-learning methodology: one, through lecture sessions; two, through personal and group exercises on fieldwork research methodologies and techniques, risk assessment and risk reduction and safety and security. The course will also feature input from guest experts on mental health and wellbeing and cybersecurity.

The course also provides tools and forms that the participants can use to prepare themselves before and during fieldwork. These tools combine safety and security considerations with research methodologies to inform and support knowledge production.

By the end of the course, participants are expected to understand the relevance of safety and security considerations in research, understand major risks related to fieldwork research, and have an enhanced understanding of key preparations before, during and after in-situ research.

The course is equivalent to 1.5 ECs of course work towards those required for a PhD degree. To be awarded credit, full-time attendance of the course is compulsory, as is the study of the prescribed preparatory reading. The course requires the active participation of the students.

CERES PhD training for Year 3 and upwards

Course 1: Advanced Ontology Course

Date: 6 November to 11 December 2024 (one lecture every Wednesday for six weeks: 14:00-16:00)

Location: International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague

ECs: 4

Tuition: 500 euros for members, 650 euros for non-members

Course leaders: Dr. Karim Knio and invited trainers

Course description: This is an advanced course which examines on one hand the intersection between the ontological debate on dispositions and necessitarianism with the literatures on complex systems and time on the other. Accordingly, the first section of the course will introduce the ontological debate and analyse it from various dimensions and standpoints. The second section will situate this ontological debate within contemporary thinking on complex systems and time. Finally, the third section will invite participants to locate their own research topics and methods within these debates.

Course 2: Post fieldwork PhD Course

Date: January-March 2025

Location: ISS

ECs: 4

Tuition: 500 euros for members, 650 euros for non-members

Course leaders: Invited trainers from CERES network

Course description:

This course is designed for post-fieldwork PhDs who are in the writing-up phase of their degrees, including the processing and analysing of data.

The course focuses on topics such as: 1) moving from proposing research to presenting what you researched; 2) Writing up fieldwork results (writing analytically, linking theory with evidence, and triangulating results); 3) Presenting qualitative and quantitative data in written output.

Course 3: Methods and Ontology

Date: February 2025

Location: ISS

ECs: 4

Tuition: Free for members, 500 euros for non-members

Course leaders: Dr. Karim Knio and Invited trainers from CERES network

Course description: The module offers an advanced training on ontology and methods. Some methods that can be offered include evaluation techniques, mixed methods, process tracing, and case studies.

Registration

For registration, use the Google Form link below. When registering, please be careful to fill in all the required details, including updated contact information and institutional affiliation. PhD researchers should also check the protocols of their own institutes in order to have their course credits recognized or to have eventual course costs covered by their institutions (For example, please verify if you need to include these courses in your Training and Supervision Plan, if you need approval from your research department/PhD Office before or after registering)

<https://forms.gle/UNZ1MWbuMWrdsoXx7>

Possibility of registration usually closes one week before the start of each course. For further questions and information not found on this programme, you can reach out to the CERES email:

ceres@ceresresearchschool.nl

If you have registered and can no longer attend the course, please send a cancellation email to the CERES mail address above. If you do not cancel in time, you may still be obliged to pay the course fee.