

COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT

Academic School / Department:	Social Sciences and Humanities
Programme:	Political Science American Studies International Relations
FHEQ Level:	5
Course Title:	Research Methods and Practices: Social Sciences
Course Code:	PLT 5201
Total Hours:	120
Timetabled Hours:	45
Guided Learning Hours:	0
Independent Learning Hours:	75
Credits:	12 UK CATS credits 6 ECTS credits 3 US credits

Course Description:

Introduces students to research methodology, key research methods, and research practices used in the social sciences with an emphasis on qualitative methods. Students will learn skills that translate directly into the workplace, including in NGOs, charities, the corporate sector, and intergovernmental and development agency contexts. This course also trains students for practically undertaking academic research such as that required to complete a dissertation. Students are prepared to carry out a range of methods (including textual analysis, interviews, surveys, focus groups, and ethnography) and learn principles of data collection and analysis from the positivist and post-positivist perspectives. Writing research proposals and pitching research are both taught and assessed, and students are introduced to widely used and newer modes of and approaches to research, including creative methods and participatory/reflexive approaches.

Prerequisites:

GEP 4180 Research and Writing 2

Aims and Objectives:

- To introduce the concept of methodology and teach social science research

methods and practices including their ethical considerations as they are used in both academic contexts and beyond

- To prepare students for fieldwork, internships, and future employment in an international research setting, as well as for dissertation writing, in part through engaging with consideration of research ethics
- To provide a background for eventual careers in fields (including work in government, international organisations, business, and the media) which require articulate, clear-thinking individuals with a grasp of social science research methods
- To provide a framework to assist concerned citizens to think critically about issues that are of increasing importance in the 21st century
- To promote critical engagement with a wide range of literature, and the development of both a succinct writing style, and the ability to present complex arguments orally

Programme Outcomes:

PLT: 5C(i); 5C(ii); 5C(iii); 5D(i); 5D(ii); 5D(iii)

AMS: 5C(i); 5C(ii); 5C(iii); 5D(i); 5D(ii); 5D(iii)

INR: 5C(i); 5C(ii); 5C(iii); 5D(i); 5D(ii); 5D(iii)

A detailed list of the programme outcomes is found in the Programme Specification. This is maintained by Registry and located at:

<http://www.richmond.ac.uk/admitted-students/programme-and-course-specifications/>

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, successful students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a detailed understanding of and critical engagement with key research methods and practices in the social sciences, including issues of research design and methodology
- Complete assigned work with a degree of clarity, technical competence and critical thinking, and a degree of independence and capacity for self-evaluation, appropriate for a 5000-level course
- Demonstrate well-developed control of research methods and related ICT skills that will translate into the workplace, including the ability to present research in a manner suitable to a range of audiences and changing contexts.

Indicative Content:

- Overview of core research methods and practices in social sciences and questions of research ethics
- Research design, literature reviews and theoretical frameworks
- Case studies and comparison
- Qualitative research methods such as:
 - Interviews and focus groups
 - Archival research/policy documents
 - Surveys/Polls
 - Participatory research methods
 - Content/Discourse analysis
 - Process tracing
 - Visual and textual analysis
 - Digital ethnography
 - Creative methods
- Qualitative/Quantitative data analysis and presentation
- Research project design (for example questions of costing, implementation, evaluation, and ethics)

Assessment:

This course conforms to the University Assessment Norms approved at Academic Board and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/university-policies/>

Teaching Methodology:

This course will be taught through a combination of lectures and seminar-type activities, including group work, sub-group activities, classroom discussion, and the showing of documentaries. The general approach to classes is informal, and discussion is viewed as an essential part of an interactive and participatory learning program. Audio-visual aids, study materials and electronic learning resources will be used as appropriate.

Lectures provide a framework for the course and are designed to ensure students have an overview of main issues and concerns on a particular topic, receive clarification on the major points of debate understand the broad dimensions of core problems, and are aware of relevant literature in the specific area of concern. It is essential that lectures are supplemented with assigned readings; together, the readings and the lectures are designed to provide guidance for seminar discussion.

Seminar classes are based on the principle of active and student-directed learning, and are designed to be **Safe, Enjoyable, Managed, Inclusive, Necessary, Academic, Respectful & Stimulating**. The seminars provide an opportunity for discussion of contentious issues, addressing questions and exploring academic debates in more depth, group, and sub-group discussion. They are encouraged to share their opinions freely but must also maintain respect for the opinions of others. It is expected that students will participate regularly in discussions in a creative, competent, and critical way, as the formulation of their own thoughts and clarification of their assumptions, often in contradiction to other students' thoughts and assumptions, form a crucial part of the learning process. Students are expected to come to seminar classes prepared.

Indicative Texts:

Rubin, Ashley. (2021) 'Rocking Qualitative Social Science: An Irreverent Guide to Rigorous Research', California: Stanford University Press.

Lowndes, V. et al. (2017) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. 4th ed. Palgrave Macmillan.

Choi, S. et al. (2017) *Critical Methods for the Study of World Politics*. New York and London: Routledge.

Kara, H. (2015) *Creative Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. UK: Polity Press.

May, T. (2011) *Social Research: Issues, Methods, and Process*. 4th ed. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

See syllabus for complete reading list

Change Log for this CSD:

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