



Mahidol University  
International College

## ICIR 301 Research Methods

### **Course Description & Aims:**

This course introduces students to the different methods of conducting meaningful research in International Relations and Global Affairs related fields. It aims to introduce students to research intent and design, methodology and technique, format and presentation, and data management and analysis. The purpose is to help students prepare for advanced level research tasks independently.

An introduction to the scientific method and its use in social science research; examination of research methods, data collection, survey techniques, and hypothesis formation, observations and testing. Students will assess; analyze; evaluate world events; disciplinary research methods in international relations.

Lecturer: Dr. Ruchi Agarwal

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### **Assessment**

Class Participation	20%
Activities & assignments	40%
Mock Research Proposal	15%
Final Research Report	25%

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

At the completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. Categorize the constitutive elements of research design and analyze their relations with one another as well as their foundations in models of social life and social research.
2. Use methods of sampling, data collection, and data analysis as well as their areas of applications and their limits
3. Critique and evaluate general designs of social research projects
4. Develop an original research design

<b>Topic No.</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1	Foundations: Social Research
	Social Life and Social Research
2	Designing a Research Project
	Research Questions and Research Problems
3	Research Methodologies
	Choosing Appropriate Method
4	Literature Review
	Conducting Background Research
5	Sampling Techniques & Data Collection
	Conducting Interviews
6	Focus Groups
	Participant Observations
7	Conducting Surveys
	Questionnaires
8	Ethics in Research
	Applying for IRB
9	Techniques and Projections
	Methods of Data Analysis
10	Review and Outlook: Research Proposals
	Statistical Analysis
11	Software for Data Analysis
	Reporting the findings
12	Advanced preparation for Independent Research
	Summary and Review

### **Assessment Methods & Criteria**

**1. Class Participation 20%**

Students will be assessed on their active participation in class discussions, doing peer reviews, and engaging in different class activities.

**2. Activities & assignments 40%**

Activities and assignments include discussions and small scale exercises, in class and outside of classroom, with the aim of helping students to apply the knowledge gained during weekly lessons.

**3. Mock Research Proposal 15%**

The mock research proposal will be a written assignment helping students to practice the skill of writing a proposal for a research project. In the proposal students need to address the data collection and analysis procedure. The MRP should be 3-5 pages long.

**4. Final Research Report 25%**

The final research report is where the students need to write a report listing the research findings on a research topic chosen earlier during the process of writing the MRP. The research topics should be on social science related issues on a smaller scale. Potential topics will be suggested by the instructor during the term. A prior approval of the topic for the final research report is required. Students need to research the topic, explore and analyze the different perspectives related to the selected issue. Students can then formulate their own recommended solutions for the issue. The length of the report is expected to be between 15-20 pages with proper referencing.

A draft copy of the report (at least 75% complete) has to be submitted by week 10 and will be peer reviewed by another student. During week 11 and 12, the reports will be presented by each group in class.

## **Foundations: Social Research**

**Topic description:** This week students will be introduced to the course outline, course requirements, and their expected input. Basic concepts are defined (such as Social Science Research, its importance).

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to explain the importance of doing research and the definitions central to the field of social science research

### **Readings and activities:**

- Creswell, John (2014). Chapter 1: The Selection of a Research Approach. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods approaches*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Sage Publications
- Booth, C Wayne, Colomb, G. Gregory, & Williams, M. Joseph (2008). Chapter 1: What is Research? In *The Craft of Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. The University of Chicago Press.
- Activity – In class discussion of the importance of social science research

## **Designing a Research Project**

**Topic description:** This week the importance of social science research will be discussed. Significance of designing a research project and conducting one by one self, finding a topic, and searching for related information, will be discussed.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to demonstrate the importance of Social Research, elements of research design, and apply these to design a research project.

### **Readings and activities:**

- Dawson, Catherine (2007). Chapter 1: Introduction: How to Define Your Project. In *A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Howtobooks: UK.
- Booth, C Wayne, Colomb, G. Gregory, & Williams, M. Joseph (2008). Chapter 3: From Topics to Questions. In *The Craft of Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. The University of Chicago Press.
- Activity – in class discussion on choosing a research topic and searching for relevant information to design the project.
- Assessment – Students have to choose a topic and define the relevance of the chosen topic in the area of social research. The topic has to be on a small but relevant issue which they come across in their day to day life.

## **Research Methodologies**

**Topic description:** This week students will be introduced to the different types of research based on the qualitative and quantitative orientations, how are they different, what are their goals and their outcomes.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to evaluate the importance of different types of research orientations and differences that lie within these two approaches.

### **Readings and activities:**

- Creswell, John (2014). Chapter 1. The Selection of a Research Approach. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods approaches*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Sage Publications
- Dawson, Catherine (2007). Chapter 2: How to Decide Upon a Methodology. In *A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Howtobooks: UK.
- Activity – in-class discussion on the pros and cons of using different types of research methodologies.

## **Literature Review**

**Topic description:** This week students will be introduced to the importance of literature review and its role in research projects. This class will focus on developing the search methods including list of search terms, and the ways to use these terms to search for relevant literature. This class will follow on from the previous weeks by helping to develop questions to initiate a literature review and planning a critical discussion in response to specific questions based on evidence from the published literature.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to explore and identify different types of literature review, develop questions to initiate a literature review, and learn to critically discuss and reflect on one's own research project.

**Readings and activities:**

- Dawson, Catherine (2007). Chapter 4: How to Conduct Background Research. In *A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Howtobooks: UK.
- Creswell, John (2014). Chapter 2: Review of Literature. In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods approaches*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Sage Publications

### **Sampling Techniques & Data Collection**

**Topic description:** Students will be introduced to sampling design and analysis methods that are useful for research in social sciences. A good sampling technique ensures the one can summarize and analyze data with fewer complications. Sampling techniques include choosing the population, sample size, simple random sampling, probability sampling, and non-probability sampling. The class will also emphasize on the different ways of collecting data such as through interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to analyze sampling and data collection methodology used in many researches and designing and implementing one's of their own. To understand the usefulness of choosing the right sampling design that can help to summarize and analyze the data with minimum assumptions and complications.

**Readings and activities:**

- Dawson, Catherine (2007). Chapter 5: How to Choose Your Participants. In *A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Howtobooks: UK.
- Booth, C Wayne, Colomb, G. Gregory, & Williams, M. Joseph (2008). Chapter 5: From Problems to Sources. In *The Craft of Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. The University of Chicago Press.
- Activity: in class discussion of the pros and cons of using different sampling and data collection techniques.

### **Doing Focus Groups & Participant Observations**

**Topic description:** This week will focus on an in-depth study of conducting and administering focus groups and participant observations. Focus groups consists of one investigator and a group of participants in a session. Both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses. This session will build on from the last session by focusing specifically on the data collection techniques of focus groups and participant observations.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to compare the specific data collection techniques like conducting focus groups and participant observations. To point out the pros and cons of using either focus groups or/ and participant observations to collect data.

**Readings and activities:**

- Dawson, Catherine (2007). Chapter 8: How to Conduct Focus Groups. In *A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Howtobooks: UK.
- Dawson, Catherine (2007). Chapter 9: How to Construct Questionnaires. In *A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Howtobooks: UK.

- Kruegar RA, Casey MA. (2002). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2002
- Activity: Exercise on developing questions: Students will have to design their own questions on chosen research topics for conducting either focus groups interviews or conducting questionnaires.

### **Conducting Surveys & Questionnaires**

**Topic description:** This week the importance of surveys and questionnaires will be discussed. Students will also be introduced to the techniques of developing questionnaires. Increasing number of researchers now uses questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus groups to collect data. Questionnaires are paper based or delivered online which include a set of questions that participants are asked to complete. The focus will be on the techniques of entering the field and building a rapport, field notes, and the strengths and weaknesses of each approach will be covered.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to select the ways of conducting surveys and questionnaires. Students will be able to examine the lessons learned while conducting surveys or doing participant observations.

#### **Readings and activities:**

- Dawson, Catherine (2007). Chapter 10: How to Carry Out Participant Observation. In *A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Howtobooks: UK.
- Activity – In class, students will watch and discuss the documentary film Sidewalk by Mitchell Duneier and Barry Alexander Brown. As an assignment students will be asked to conduct participant observations in given areas on their own and will have to write and present an observation report.

### **Ethics in Research**

**Topic description:** This week the importance of ethics in conducting research will be discussed. The focus will be on developing skills to analyze and recognize ethical challenges in research. Students will get an opportunity to engage in different perspectives on ethical questions and how these perspectives apply to their own research and ethical thinking. The focus will also be on the ways to prevent and resolve any ethical issues that may arise when conducting research.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to understand and discuss the ethical issues involved in gaining access to the participants. To understand the relationship between the researcher and the subjects, and the techniques of resolving ethical issues as they arise.

#### **Readings and activities:**

- Creswell, John (2014). Chapter 4: Writing Strategies and Ethical Considerations Booth,
- C Wayne, Colomb, G. Gregory, & Williams, M. Joseph (2008). Some Last Considerations. In *The Craft of Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. The University of Chicago Press.

### **Techniques and Projections & Data Analysis**

**Topic description:** This week focuses on the techniques of conducting research carefully and reporting it clearly. The differences between qualitative data analysis and the quantitative data analysis will be discussed. With a qualitative research involving interviews, focus groups, experiments, data analysis involves identifying common patterns in the participant responses and critically analyzing them to achieve research objectives. Quantitative data analysis requires critical analysis and interpretation of statistical data and finding a rationale behind the emergence of main findings.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to understand the different techniques of analyzing the data collected when conducting research. To understand the basics of interpreting the data collected through different sampling techniques and to be able to critically analyze and report the findings.

**Readings and activities:**

- Booth, C Wayne, Colomb, G. Gregory, & Williams, M. Josph (2008). Chapter 9: Assembling Reasons and Evidence. In *The Craft of Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. The University of Chicago Press.
- Dawson, Catherine (2007). Chapter 11: How to Analyse Your Data. In *A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Howtobooks: UK.

### **Research Proposal Writing**

**Topic description:** One of the most important tasks in conducting research is to be able to write a good research proposal. The task is to learn designing and actual writing of the project, choice of theory, formulating research questions, developing hypotheses, and the research ethics.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to develop practical skills in writing a research proposal that demonstrate the research they wish to undertake, the significance of their proposed research topic and if it is feasible to conduct the proposed research project.

**Readings and activities:**

- Booth, C Wayne, Colomb, G. Gregory, & Williams, M. Josph (2008). Chapter 3: From Topics to Questions. In *The Craft of Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. The University of Chicago Press.
- Booth, C Wayne, Colomb, G. Gregory, & Williams, M. Josph (2008). Chapter 4: From Questions to a Problem. In *The Craft of Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. The University of Chicago Press.

### **Software for Data Analysis**

**Topic description:** There is a number of software developed to help researchers in analyzing the social science data. This week will focus on how to use open source data analysis software like NVivo for categorizing and analyzing qualitative data and R for statistical computing and graphics.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to analyze collected data using computer software like NVivo for qualitative data analysis and the statistical analysis software R.

**Readings and activities:**

- Saldaña, Johnny (2016). Chapter 1: An Introduction to Codes and Coding. In *The SAGE Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 2nd Edition London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd

### **Advance Preparation for Independent Research**

**Topic description:** This week the teaching will be based on the research proposal developed by the students. The aim will be on strengthening theoretical and methodological approaches and also understanding the substance issues. The specific outcome will be on the research instruments that the students intend to apply in their field work. This week students will be presenting their own planned research work.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to enhance their capability to conduct independent research in view of existing knowledge, relevant analytical frameworks, and research methods.

**Readings and activities:**

- Activities: Students will be presenting their research proposals, identifying the existing research on their chosen topics, the literature reviews, the analytical frameworks, and the research instruments they intend to use for the proposed research topic.