

**Department: International Relations      Faculty: Social Sciences**

**Course Title: Research Methods (MA, Compulsory)**

**Number of Credits: Four**

**Course Objectives:**

The investigation of phenomenon related to international affairs can be conducted using a range of methodological approaches. The selection of the appropriate methodology is influenced by a number of factors including the theoretical approach underlying the research project. Further, this selection is then linked to the identification of appropriate data collection and interpretation techniques. This course is geared to introduce students to these various facets of conducting research.

The subject of International Relations (IR), apart from being based on historical approaches, is also considerably influenced by the behavioral and positivist movements. More recently, there has been the development of post-positivist approaches such as discourse analysis. As such, a researcher in the field of IR can choose from a plethora of approaches, depending on their interests and project feasibility. This course aims to teach the comparative value and benefits of a selection of key approaches. It covers issues relating to philosophical traditions, framing of research questions, definition of research objectives, engaging with theories and concepts, qualitative and quantitative research design, literature survey, data collection, data analysis, and writing.

**Course Structure:**

***Unit I: Introduction to Research***

1) Research and Writing: This first unit is an introduction to the notion of academic research, as ostensibly different from other forms of knowledge production, as well as the initial steps towards designing individual research projects.

2) Theory and Method: This unit examines the links between theory and methodology, highlighting in particular the distinction between empiricist and interpretivist approaches. Using examples from social sciences research, students are further drawn to think of research as a conscious activity that involves making choices, for instance, about theoretical assumptions and empirical puzzles.

3) Ethics, Knowledge and Power: This unit examines issues pertaining to the interface between knowledge and power that arises in the course of undertaking research in international relations, drawing primarily on post-positivist scholarship. Further, ethical concerns that arise during the course of conducting research are also discussed.

**Unit II: Qualitative Research**

4) Designing Qualitative Research: Students are introduced to the value of qualitative research in the study of IR and Social Sciences, more generally. Its relevance for both positivist and post-

positivist approaches is discussed. Specifically, the following kinds of research enquiries are examined – case study approach, historical analysis, process tracing and discourse analysis.

5) Data Collection: In light of the techniques for generating data generally used by students at this University, the focus is on two methods of data collection. First, drawing on insights from methodological choices made in specific research approaches (discussed earlier), the use of documents for mining data is discussed. The second method explored here are interviews. Students will receive hands-on experience in the operational aspects of conducting interviews in qualitative research projects.

6) Organizing and Interpreting Data: These sets of discussions will focus on the process of employing the collected data to answer the identified research questions and ‘to make convincing arguments’. Techniques such as triangulation that can be used to strengthen research findings are also presented.

### **Unit III: Quantitative Research**

7) Designing Quantitative Research: This week intends to discuss the logic of employing quantitative techniques for research in international relations. Engaging with broad contours of the use of survey method for research in international relations, the focus would be on describing concepts such as variables, hypothesis and measurement. Students will also learn various methods of sampling and content analysis that can be adopted while using the survey design for conducting quantitative research in International Relations.

8) Content Analysis and Survey Strategies: This week discusses as how content analysis has emerged as an important technique of research. Survey strategies will also be discussed for in section.

### **Reading suggestions:**

Babbie, Earl. 2010. *The Practice of Social Research*, 12<sup>th</sup> Ed., Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth.

Balnaves, Mark and Peter Caputi. 2001. *Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods: An Investigative Approach*, London: Sage.

Detlef F. Sprinz and Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias 2011. (ed.), *Models, Numbers and Cases: Models for Studying International Relations*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Crotty, Michael. 1998. *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. New York: Sage.

Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash 2008. (eds.) *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 78-92.

Lamont, Christopher. 2015. *Research Methods in International Relations*. London, Sage.

Henry E. Brady, and David Collier 2008. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mason, Jennifer. 2002. *Qualitative Researching*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. London, Sage.

Maxwell, J.A. 2005. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York: Sage.

Yin, Robert K. 2011. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, New York and London: The Guilford Press, pp. 132-140.