

City University of Hong Kong
Course Syllabus

Offered by Department of Public Policy
with effect from Semester A 2017 /18

Part I Course Overview

Course Title:	Research Design, Methodology, and Ethics
Course Code:	POL8617
Course Duration:	one semester
Credit Units:	2
Level:	R8
Proposed Area: <i>(for GE courses only)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Humanities <input type="checkbox"/> Study of Societies, Social and Business Organisations <input type="checkbox"/> Science and Technology
Medium of Instruction:	English
Medium of Assessment:	English
Prerequisites: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Nil
Precursors: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Nil
Equivalent Courses: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Nil
Exclusive Courses: <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Nil

Part II Course Details

1. Abstract

The overall goal of the course is for research students to develop the habits of critical and innovative thinking and acquire creative research skills. For that purpose, the course introduces and critically examines the major ontological, epistemological, methodological, and ethical debates in the social sciences. Its primary theoretical focus is the question of whether the social sciences yield objective, value-neutral knowledge about the world or if and in what sense they may be subjective and value laden. Practically, the course explores the implications of such questions for conceptualization, hypothesis making, and methodological discovery in conducting social research. Special attention is given to the paradigmatic debate between interpretivism (critical hermeneutics) and positivism in the social sciences and, associated with it, the methodological disagreement and possible synthesis between qualitative and quantitative approaches. The course is also designed to help students develop original research projects and enhance literature search skills.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

No.	CILOs [#]	Weighting* (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1.	Demonstrate a good understanding of major ontological, epistemological, and methodological issues in social inquiry	20%	x	x	
2.	Evaluate major ethical concerns in social research and explore their implications for research design and methods.	20%	x	x	
3.	Critically evaluate and synthesize various research strategies.	20%	x	x	
4.	Apply academic knowledge and analytic skills to real-world problems in selected topic areas, particularly with respect to their PhD dissertations and publications.	20%		x	x
5.	Design an original, creative, and practical research project and develop relevant literature search skills	20%	x	x	x
		100%			

* If weighting is assigned to CILOs, they should add up to 100%.

[#] Please specify the alignment of CILOs to the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning outcomes (PILOs) in Section A of Annex.

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.					Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4	5	
Seminars	Structured seminars	X	X	X	X	X	
Seminars Preparation	Preparation of materials for presentation and discussion during seminars	X	X	X	X	X	
Consultation	Individual consultation and inquiry together with teachers	X	X	X	X	X	
Research design	Research design and literature search practices	X	X	X	X	X	

4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.					Weighting*	Remarks
	1	2	3	4	5		
Continuous Assessment: ____%							
Reading, class presentations, and short essays	X	X	X			40%	Students are required to critically read assigned materials and actively participate in class discussion. Students are also expected to make presentations to show their critical understanding and evaluation of class materials. They should submit short essays on assigned topics to demonstrate creative and critical thinking capability.
Research design (5,000 words or so)				X	X	60%	Students are required to design a research project to demonstrate their abilities to identify original research topics, challenge conventional assumptions, explore new ideas and perspectives, demonstrate literature search skills and discover innovative research strategies.
Examination: ____% (duration: _____, if applicable)							

* The weightings should add up to 100%.

100%

5. Assessment Rubrics

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
1. Reading, class presentations, and short essays	Demonstration of knowledge and skills required for original and creative research and capacity for critical review of literature and empirical findings.	Excellent	Good	Moderate	Basic	Poor
2. Research design (5,000 words or so)	Ability to apply creative and critical thinking skills to research design and engage in theoretically-informed and empirically sound informed analysis.	Excellent	Good	Moderate	Basic	Poor

Part III Other Information (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

1. Keyword Syllabus

Theoretical and practical knowledge, objectivity and subjectivity, facts and values, positivism and interpretivism, cultural relativity, the ethics of social research, literature review, quantitative/qualitative approaches, research strategies, concepts, hypotheses, variables, measurements.

2. Reading List

2.1 Compulsory Readings

1.	Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady and David Collier, eds., <i>The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology</i> (Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2008)
2.	Bonnell, Victoria E. and Lynn Hunt. <i>Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture</i> (Berkeley, Calif. : University of California Press, 1999)
3.	Brady, Henry E. and David Collier. <i>Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools and Shared Standards</i> (Lanham, MD.:Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004)
4.	Geddes, Barbara. <i>Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics</i> (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003).
5.	George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett. <i>Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences</i> (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005).
6.	King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. <i>Design Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994)
7.	Little, Daniel. <i>Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science</i> (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).
8.	Mahoney, James and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. <i>Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences</i> (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
9.	Marsh, David and Gerry Stoker. <i>Theory and Methods in Political Science</i> , 2 nd ed., (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002)
10.	Pierson, Paul. <i>Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis</i> (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004)

2.2 Additional Readings

1.	
2.	
3.	