

## City University of Hong Kong

**Information on a Course**  
**offered by Department of Asian and International Studies**  
**with effect from Semester B in 2014/2015**

**Part I**

<b>Course Title:</b>	Research Design for the Social Sciences
<b>Course Code:</b>	AIS5026
<b>Course Duration:</b>	One semester
<b>Credit Units:</b>	3
<b>Level:</b>	P5
<b>Medium of Instruction:</b>	English
<b>Prerequisites:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Nil
<b>Precursors:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Nil
<b>Equivalent Courses:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	Nil
<b>Exclusive Courses:</b> <i>(Course Code and Title)</i>	AIS5022

**Part II****Abstract**

Research Design for the Social Sciences introduces students at the Master's degree level to the logic of systematic social scientific inquiry, providing them with the basic skills to design, perform, and evaluate social science research. The course serves as preparation for students who wish to write a Master's thesis (successful completion of the course with a grade of B+ or above is required); for that purpose, the main assignment required of the course is a proposal in which students are asked to design an original research project. Weekly sessions focus on the philosophy of science, the logic of causal inference, the formation, systematization, and measurement of concepts, theory/hypothesis building, case selection, and general principles of research design (both qualitative and quantitative).

## Course Aims

This course serves as a basic introduction to the logic of systematic political inquiry, aiming to provide students with the skills to design, perform, and evaluate social science research. The course focuses primarily on the philosophy of science, the logic of causal inference, the formation, systematization, and measurement of concepts, theory/hypothesis building, case selection, and general principles of research design. In addition, it evaluates both the usefulness and limitations of qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches to the social sciences. While this course is designed as preparation for the Master's thesis, students may apply the skills learned in this course to conduct original social science research in a variety of settings.

## Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

*Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:*

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)
1.	Identify the strengths and weaknesses of various methodological approaches to social science research;	
2.	Evaluate existing empirical research in the social sciences.	
3.	Discuss the restrictive assumptions threatening the validity of causal inferences drawn through both qualitative and quantitative methods;	
4.	Design a study to solve open research questions in the social sciences and test original, innovative research hypothesis.	

### NOTE:

CILOS 2-4: Students will be required to structure an original research proposal, in preparation for their thesis, structuring a research design with the potential to produce novel social-scientific findings through the performance of original research. In the course of working on the research design, students are required to: 1) Identify open questions in the social-scientific literature or lacunae in the existing understanding of a particular phenomenon; 2) Formulate new hypotheses that address the shortcomings in the existing research and offer new ways of understanding a phenomenon; 3) Structure the research process by finding innovative ways to test competing hypotheses. Throughout the semester, classroom discussions will provide a forum in which students will be discussing problems encountered in the research process as well as creative solutions. In the presentation and research report, students will present their research design in oral and written forms, respectively.

### Teaching and learning Activities (TLAs)

(Indicative of likely activities and tasks designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CIOs.  
Final details will be provided to students in their first week of attendance in this course)

CIO No.	TLAs	Hours/week (if applicable)
CIO 1	Lectures; Classroom exercises; Readings	
CIO 2	Lectures; Classroom exercises; Readings; Presentation	
CIO 3	Lectures; Classroom exercises; Readings; Presentation; Project	
CIO 4	Lectures; Classroom exercises; Readings; Presentation; Project	

### Assessment Tasks/Activities

(Indicative of likely activities and tasks designed to assess how well the students achieve the CIOs.  
Final details will be provided to students in their first week of attendance in this course)

CIO No.	Type of Assessment Tasks/Activities	Weighting	Remarks
1-3	Seminar Participation	20%	
2-3	Presentation	20%	
2-4	Research Proposal	60%	

**Grading of Student Achievement:** Refer to Grading of Courses in the Academic Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Degrees.

Grading pattern: Standard (A+, A, A-....F). Grading is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities.

Letter Grade	Grading criteria in relation to CIOs
<b>A-/A/A+</b>	Demonstration of an excellent understanding of methodological approaches to the social sciences reflected in class discussions, presentations, and written work. Ability to comprehend and critique lectures and reading materials. Student is able to make sophisticated arguments in his/her evaluation of research findings and to apply his/her knowledge and skills to the design of a social science study in a sound and creative manner.
<b>B-/B/B+</b>	Demonstration of good to very good understanding of methodological approaches to the social sciences reflected in presentations and written work; at least satisfactory participation in discussions and debates in class.
<b>C-/C/C+</b>	Demonstration of basic but not advanced understanding of methodological approaches to the social sciences reflected in presentations and written work; at least occasional and useful participation in discussions and debates in class.
<b>D</b>	Partial but very inadequate understanding of methodological approaches to the social sciences reflected in presentations and written work, with at least some class participation.
<b>F</b>	Failure to demonstrate understanding and analysis of methodological approaches to the social sciences, or seriously inadequate understanding and presentation with poor attendance and little or no constructive participation

### Part III

#### Keyword Syllabus:

Social science research; Positivism; Scientific realism; Research ethics; Causation; Research designs; Tools for primary data collection; Concept formation; Measurement; Logic of inference in qualitative/quantitative research; Dynamic processes; Case studies.

**Recommended Reading:**

- Friedman, Milton. 1968. "The Methodology of Positive Economics." In M. Brodbeck (ed), *Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences*. New York: Macmillan (Ch. 41).
- Lane, Ruth. 1996. "Positivism, Scientific Realism and Political Science." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 8: 361-382.
- Elster, Jon. 1999. *Alchemies of the Mind*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kuhn, Thomas. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lakatos, Imre. 1970. "Falsification and Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes." In I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gerring, John. 2001. *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fearon, James D. 1991. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science." *World Politics* 43: 169-195.
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton University Press.
- McKeown, Timothy J. 2004. "Case Studies and the Limits of the Quantitative Worldview." In Henry E. Brady and David Collier (eds.) *Rethinking Social Inquiry*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bartels, Larry M. 2004. "Some Unfulfilled Promises of Quantitative Imperialism." In Henry E. Brady and David Collier (eds.) *Rethinking Social Inquiry*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Ragin, Charles C. 2004. "Turning the Tables." In Henry E. Brady and David Collier (eds.) *Rethinking Social Inquiry*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Review* 64: 1033-1053.
- Adcock, Robert, and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95:529-46.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1971. "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." *American Political Science Review* 65: 682-693.
- Lieberson, Stanley. 1991. "Small N's and Big Conclusions." *Social Forces* 70: 307-320.
- Mahoney, James and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. 2003. "Comparative Historical Analysis: Achievements and Agendas." In James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pierson, Paul. 2004. *Politics in Time*. Princeton University Press.
- Hall, Peter. 2003. "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics." In James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett. 2005. Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences. MIT Press.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. The Interpretation of Cultures. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Hammersley, M., and P. Atkinson. 1995. Ethnography: Principles in Practice, 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Online Resources:

<http://www.unisa.edu.au/ltu/students/research/methods/web-links.asp>

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/>

<http://www.joeant.com/DIR/info/get/4805/20796>

<http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/>

<http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/he/tutorial/social-research-methods>

<http://www.qualquant.net/index.htm>

<http://www.sociology.org.uk/ctheory.htm>

<http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/tutorial/social-statistics>

<http://www.trinity.edu/~mkearl/methods.html>

[http://learningforsustainability.net/research/social\\_research.php](http://learningforsustainability.net/research/social_research.php)