City University of Hong Kong
Course Syllabus

offered by Department of Public and International Affairs
with effect from Semester A 2024/25

Part I **Course Overview**

Course Title:	**Master's Thesis**
Course Code:	**PIA6021**
Course Duration:	**Two semesters (2 credits in Semester B + 2 credits in Summer Term) ***
Credit Units:	**4**
Level:	**P6**
Medium of Instruction:	**English**
Medium of Assessment:	**English**
Prerequisites: *(Course Code and Title)*	**PIA5026 Research Design for the Social Sciences**
Precursors: *(Course Code and Title)*	**Nil**
Equivalent Courses: *(Course Code and Title)*	**Nil**
Exclusive Courses: *(Course Code and Title)*	**PIA6015 Master's Thesis** **PIA6018/PIA6018A MAIS Capstone Project** **PIA6019/PIA6019A MSSDS/DS Capstone Project** **PIA6020 SSP Capstone Project**

* This is a dissertation-type course as defined in City University's Academic Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Degrees (AR12.6). The maximum duration of the course is 3 regular semesters plus a summer term, after which no further extension can be permitted. As set out in City University's Academic Regulations, dissertation-type courses cannot be repeated.

Part II   Course Details

1. **Abstract**

    This course aims to guide students in the planning, implementation and write-up of a substantial independent research project, exploring one of the themes from their studies of International or Development issues (chosen by the student in consultation with the supervisor). Before undertaking this course—in lieu of the required "Capstone Project" (PIA6018/PIA6018A or PIA6019/PIA6019A)—students must have first completed PIA5026 Research Design for the Social Sciences with a minimum grade of A. The Master's thesis is an opportunity for students to draw on new knowledge gained from MA coursework, previous knowledge derived from undergraduate studies and design a project that entails original discovery and innovation.

2. **Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)**
    (CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	*A2*	*A3*
1.	Formulate an ethically-grounded research plan		✓	✓	✓
2.	Summarize theories, results and conclusions from previous studies		✓	✓	✓
3.	Present analysis and original data or findings effectively		✓	✓	✓
		100%			

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 real-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. Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)
(LTAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)

LTA	Brief Description	CILO No.						Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3				
Supervision Session	Regular, individual consultations with the supervisor; independent planning, analysis, research, and elaboration of findings by the student, with feedback from the supervisor	✓	✓	✓				
Individual Research	Reading and ethically-grounded research		✓					
	Thesis writing	✓	✓	✓				

4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)
(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.						Weighting	Remarks
	1	2	3					
Continuous Assessment: **100%**								
Thesis (10,000-12,000 words)	✓	✓	✓				100	
Examination: N/A% (duration: **N/A**, if applicable)								
							100%	

5. Assessment Rubrics

(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)

<u>Applicable to students admitted before Semester A 2022/23</u> and in Semester A 2024/25 & thereafter

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
Thesis	Demonstrated capacity to undertake and present the results of a piece of original, ethically-grounded research; quality of research design, review of the relevant literature, theoretical development, collection/analysis of evidence (or data), presentation of findings, contribution to the body of knowledge in the chosen area of study.	Excellent, well-designed thesis with evidence that the author is capable of postgraduate studies in social sciences at MPhil or possibly PhD level; very good mastery of the methods and concepts used; original collection and analysis of sources and documentation; good writing quality. A- is on the edge of this category, but still very good.	Good thesis, with appropriate mobilization of methods and concepts; adequate collection and analysis of sources and documentation; but with enough flaws and shortcomings that it cannot be judged to be 'good' or 'very good'.	Fair/satisfactory-documentation, analysis, writing, use of concepts, referencing, and research effort are mostly adequate for a passing grade, but limited originality and contribution to the body of knowledge; fair writing quality.	Flawed thesis, with limited or inadequate mobilization of methods, theory and concepts; limited data collection and low level of analysis of sources and documentation; shortcomings and lack of originality, with no contribution to the existing body of knowledge; poor writing quality with evidence of plagiarism.	Failure to submit; substantial evidence of cheating or plagiarism; does not demonstrate the minimum research effort and documentation

Applicable to students admitted from Semester A 2022/23 to Summer Term 2024

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B)	Marginal (B-, C+, C)	Failure (F)
Thesis	Demonstrated capacity to undertake and present the results of a piece of original, ethically-grounded research; quality of research design, review of the relevant literature, theoretical development, collection/analysis of evidence (or data), presentation of findings, contribution to the body of knowledge in the chosen area of study.	Excellent, well-designed thesis with evidence that the author is capable of postgraduate studies in social sciences at MPhil or possibly PhD level; very good mastery of the methods and concepts used; original collection and analysis of sources and documentation; good writing quality. A- is on the edge of this category, but still very good.	Good thesis, with appropriate mobilization of methods and concepts; adequate collection and analysis of sources and documentation; but limited originality and contribution to the body of knowledge; fair writing quality.	Flawed thesis, with limited or inadequate mobilization of methods, theory and concepts; limited data collection and low level of analysis of sources and documentation; shortcomings and lack of originality, with no contribution to the existing body of knowledge; poor writing quality with evidence of plagiarism.	Failure to submit; substantial evidence of cheating or plagiarism; does not demonstrate the minimum research effort and documentation

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

1.   Keyword Syllabus
(An indication of the key topics of the course.)

Social Research; Thesis; Ethics of Research; Literature Review; Theory Building; Data Collection; Data Analysis; Findings; Dissemination of Research; Academic Integrity.

After initial discussion of the student's preferred topic with the supervisor (typically based on the final proposal prepared for PIA5026), the student will be required to prepare a substantial proposal as a basis for further discussion. The self-directed course will then focus on the ethical review application, the relevant analytical frameworks, and (once the ethical committee approves the research project) on gathering of relevant data or comparable case studies, analysis of the variables or context, implications, and eventually effective presentation and writing. Students and supervisors will meet frequently to discuss progress, issues, and problems.

2.   Reading List
2.1   Compulsory Readings
(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)

Readings depend on the topic and will be decided in consultation with the supervisor. Students will prepare for the project by compiling a detailed literature review that includes a list of articles, books, and perhaps films, and web-based items, to provide the material needed for the thesis. Work on this list will be discussed regularly with the supervisor.

2.2   Additional Readings
(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, 2003. *The Craft of Research (2nd ed.)*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bryman, Alan, 2012. *Social Research Methods (4th ed.)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ragin, Charles C. and Lisa M. Amoroso, 2011. *Constructing Social Research (2nd ed.)*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.