

**Department: International Relations**

**Faculty: Social Sciences**

**Course Title: Advanced Research Methods (MPhil/PhD, Compulsory)**

**Number of Credits: Four**

**Course Objectives:** The primary objective of this course is to present multiple methodological pathways to MPhil/PhD scholars embarking on their respective research project. Contemporary social science offers a wide array of choices in terms of structuring the study of world politics. These encompass both qualitative and quantitative modes of inquiry that help frame sustainable research designs, and bring to bear relevant evidence to substantiate one's claims. Using published research as illustrative aids, students would have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with these multiple modes of inquiry.

In addition to imparting relevant skills in framing research projects, the course also seeks to develop the capacity of researchers to read texts in a critically and argue cogently on a subject. Further, it seeks to highlight intellectual inheritances and research innovations from South Asia and, more broadly, the global south that tend to be neglected in mainstream International Relations. From this perspective, the course seeks to simultaneously expose students to generic research design possibilities while orienting them strongly to integrating context in their research designs and normative sensibilities.

**Course structure with units, if applicable:**

***I. Philosophy of Science***

This unit will outline the evolution of positivism, and efforts to demarcate scientific knowledge. Subsequent discussion on the discipline of International Relations will focus on relevant 'great debates'.

***II. Framing Research Designs Generically: What Counts as Knowledge?***

This unit will focus on the challenges of putting together a research project, looking especially into the craft of posing research questions and framing hypothesis and propositions. Students will select and review an array of research designs in the study of IR.

***III. Framing Research Designs in South Asia: What Counts as Knowledge?***

This unit will review the status of IR knowledge production in South Asia and the philosophical and methodological foundations of the same. It will include discussions on specific published research from and on the region.

***IV. Inference making: Qualitative Methods and Interpretive Social Science***

This unit will introduce qualitative research design, and methods of data collection. Specifically, it will examine case study method, process tracing, political ethnography and discourse analysis. The comparative value of interviews, documents, focus groups and participant observation – for data collection – will also be discussed.

### ***V. Inference making: Quantitative Methods***

This unit will introduce key concepts in quantitative research design, with particular attention to statistical reasoning employed in IR.

### ***VI. Connecting Quantitative and Qualitative Methods***

This brief unit will look at options for combining quantitative and qualitative methods, focusing specifically on the challenges of sequencing.

### ***VII. The Essentials of Academic Prose***

The concluding unit will review essentials of good research, and also consider practical skills for research and writing. The importance of research ethics will also be highlighted.

### **Reading Suggestions**

Ackerly, Brooke, Stern, Maria and True, Jacqui. *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Gelman, Andrew & Cortina, Jeronimo ed. *A Quantitative Tour of the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Hollis, Martin and Smith, Steve. *Explaining and Understanding in International Relations* (Gloucestershire: Clarendon, 1992).

Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus. *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: The Philosophy of Science and its Implications for the Study of World Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

King, Gary, Keohane, Robert and Verba, Sidney. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Knorr, Klaus and Rosenau, James N. *Contending Approaches to International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1970, 2nd edition, with postscript).

Popper, Karl. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, translation of *Logik der Forschung*, (London: Hutchinson, 1959).

Steve, Smith, Booth, Ken and Zalewski, Marysia ed. *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Sprinz, Detlef F. and Wolinsky-Nahmias, Yael ed. *Models, Numbers, and Cases: Methods for Studying International Relations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).