

School of Government

MMPM 553 / MAPP 570 / STRA 519

RESEARCH ESSAY

(30 Points)

Trimester F 2008

COURSE OUTLINE

Contact Details

Course Coordinator:

Dr Amanda Wolf

Room RH 803, Level 8, Rutherford House, Pipitea Campus

Telephone: (04) 463 5712

Fax: (04) 463 5454

Email: amanda.wolf@vuw.ac.nz

Amanda is responsible for ensuring that you get general advice and support on academic matters up to the point at which you are underway with an approved supervisor. She is also responsible for other matters associated with the Part 3 options, including trouble-shooting supervisory problems, and ensuring consistent and accurate assessment.

For specific inquiries of an administrative nature, please contact:

Raewyn Baigent, Senior Programme Coordinator

raewyn.baigent@vuw.ac.nz (04) 463 5453

Darren Morgan, Masters Administrator

darren.morgan@vuw.ac.nz (04) 463 5458

Raewyn and Darren look after your enrolment and fees, notify workshops, provide support materials and track your progress.

For Human Ethics Committee matters, please contact:

Dr Russell Harding, HEC representative

russell.harding@vuw.ac.nz (04) 463 7488

Russell is delegated by the Head of School to ensure that HEC standards are met, and to check all applications to the HEC from School staff and students.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you should have:

- Demonstrated the ability, at a high academic standard, to design and conduct an investigation that contributes to public sector understanding
- Developed an in-depth understanding of a body of theoretical or conceptual material and/or its applicability in a public sector arena
- Acquired skills in the fresh and critical examination of public sector issues
- Become well-informed in the subject area(s) investigated for the paper.

Course Content

This course is an independent research course.

Readings

There are no specified readings.

Please refer to a separate booklet, *School of Government Research Guidelines MPM/MPP/MSS 2008*, available from the Masters Administrator, which supplements this course outline.

Mandatory Course Requirements

A formally approved proposal is required.

Learning Commitment

As this is an individual course of study, and courses vary between students, it is not possible to indicate the amount of time you can expect each part to take. However, as a rough overall guide, the University considers that a 120-point Masters thesis is a full-time, full-year course of study. Thus, your 30-point essay is about 1/4 of a full-time year of study.

Communication of Additional Information

Any additional information will be communicated by email.

Assessment Requirements

OVERVIEW

Your grade is based on a final essay. However, there are three additional requirements, which are summarised and explained in detail below.

Requirement	Due Dates
1. One-paragraph description of the intended topic	3 March 2008 **
2. Draft proposal for the essay, approx 1,000-1,250 words	31 March 2008
3. Final proposal, approx 1,000-1,250 words	28 April 2008
4. Final essay, 15,000-20,000 words	10 October 2008

** Note that the final date for withdrawal with refund from this course is 7 March 2008. If you do not provide a satisfactory topic description, you will be advised to withdraw and re-enrol in a later trimester.

YOU SHOULD AIM TO SUBMIT A PENULTIMATE DRAFT OF THE FINAL ESSAY TO YOUR SUPERVISOR BY 19 SEPTEMBER 2008 AT THE LATEST.

PENALTIES

Five marks will be deducted from the final grade for late submission of the final proposal, or if a final proposal submitted by the due date is not of an approvable standard.

Five marks will be deducted for each week the research essay is late, up to a maximum period of 4 weeks, after which the student will be awarded an E, and will need to re-enrol in the course to complete.

ASSESSMENT DETAILS: One-Paragraph Description of the intended topic, due 3 March 2008

Set out in one paragraph the topic you intend to develop into your research essay. The purposes of this paragraph are:

1. to ensure you make a timely start with proposal development
2. to assist the course convenor to identify likely supervisors for all research projects getting underway at the same time, and to achieve the best possible allocation of supervisors
3. to identify possible linkages between your research interests and that of other students and researchers in the School of Government, in order to explore possibilities for beneficial clustering of research activities.

Your paragraph should identify what “corner of the world” you are in. This corner may be substantive (child health, tax policy) or functional (consultation, decision making). Next, you should raise a curious or puzzling feature for focused examination in that corner of the world. Third, if possible, you should convey the question(s) your research will address. The

paragraph should be about 3 or 4 sentences (a fuller version of this paragraph will become the “issue statement” in your proposal).

Your paragraph should be presented on one page, with the following information:

- Course code and name
- Assessment item descriptor (one-paragraph description)
- Due date (and date submitted, if different)
- Name of candidate
- Candidate Student ID number

Please email to amanda.wolf@vuw.ac.nz by 5.00pm on 3 March 2008.

ASSESSMENT DETAILS: Draft Proposal, due 31 March 2008 and Final Proposal, due 28 April 2008

The above dates are the latest possible dates. Earlier submission is encouraged.

A final proposal is due by 28 April 2008. The proposal is a mandatory requirement. An acceptable proposal is needed for you to be formally allocated a supervisor and for you to proceed with the proposed research. Feedback on at least one draft of the proposal is almost always needed in order for the final proposal to be accepted.

Your proposal, which should be approximately 1,000-1,250 words, should include the following:

1. A title
2. An issue statement
3. A brief summary of the background, merit, and methodology of the proposed research
4. A section-by-section outline of the proposed research, detailing the research focus, conceptual framework, and empirical focus
5. Particular conditions
6. A statement indicating if HEC approval will be required
7. An indicative bibliography

The Proposal in Detail

The Title

Titles should be short and descriptive. Remember that title key words help others find your work in bibliographic searches. Journals are good sources of ideas on titles. Here are four from a recent issue of the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*:

- Determinants of Initial Entry onto Welfare by Young Women
- The Environmental Impact of Suburbanisation
- Values, Conflict, and Trust in Participatory Environmental Planning
- Policy Analysis in the Presence of Distorting Taxes

The Issue Statement

The issue statement should achieve four things. First, let the reader know what “corner of the world” you are in. This corner may be substantive (child health, tax policy) or functional (consultation, decision making). Next, you should raise a feature for focused examination in that corner of the world. Third, you should convey the question(s) your research will address. Finally, you should convey the nature of the answer you will provide. The issue statement should be about 4 or 5 sentences.

Summary

The summary also has three parts: the objective(s) of the research, the value expected from the results and an indication of the methodology to be used. This section can vary from one paragraph to about three or four, but should probably not exceed 150 words.

The purposes of the summary are to allow the reader to assess

- The feasibility of the research;
- The coherence of the overall design and
- The academic merit of the proposed work.

In reaching this assessment, the reader will look at how well the indicated methodology matches the study objectives (will the methodology provide the desired type of answer?). The reader will judge feasibility mainly by looking at the stated objectives, but also by looking at the implied time and resources required for the indicated methodology. Academic merit will be established through scrutiny of all three components.

A Note on Methodology

A perennial weakness with proposals is inadequate attention to *methodology*. In general terms, a research methodology develops the strategy with which you will test/explore the relationships among concepts in your particular study and explains how you will measure your concepts and how you will know that you have measured what you say you are measuring. The summary section should clearly state your strategy and the rest of the proposal should develop it in a consistent manner.

Attention must be paid to methodology in two important respects:

- What information are you going to use and how are you going to get it?
- How are you going to construct your argument? That is, how are you going to “marry” theory and evidence in a way that allows the reader to follow you and be able to judge for themselves the judgements or conclusions you have reached? It may help to think of making an argument - imagine that you must convince a boss to let you do a study. How will you go about putting together a chain of evidence and reasoning which will stand up to close scrutiny?

Section-by-section Outline

Here you will describe what each section of your final essay will contain. As appropriate you will indicate the information you are going to draw on and how that information will be collected and interpreted. This section will be about two pages long.

As a general rule, most research essays will have six chapters. However, depending on your topic or methodology, you may have anywhere from five to about nine. For instance, you may

divide any of chapters 2 to 5 below into two parts. You may need to have a stand-alone chapter on methodology if your methodology is difficult or unusual. The suggested chapters are given below, with commentary on what should be in the proposal.

1. *Introduction*

This section will typically lay out the issue and provide a reader's guide to the paper. It is usually helpful to provide some context for the research, which serves to raise the reader's interest and justify the study. You need not say much in the proposal.

2. *Background*

This section will provide the reader with key facts about the area of empirical investigation. It could include a summary of legislation, a brief history, a description of the state of the relevant world. If your work is comparative, you may describe aspects of the comparators here. Your proposal should indicate the content and general sources/approaches you will use.

3. *Conceptual frame*

Concepts, theories or ideas (or whatever word you prefer) provide the framework and terms for assessing your evidence. In this section, you select, summarise and justify concepts. In your proposal, you need to identify your concepts or the way in which you are going to come up with them (for instance by drawing on several different strands in the literature, or synthesising several frameworks used in other jurisdictions).

4. *Empirical focus*

In this section you will present the results of your research. To the extent possible, you should present these results first and then (in the next chapter) tell the reader what to make of them. However, this is not a hard and fast rule. For instance, if some of your evidence is collected with a survey, you might present the statistically significant results here. However, for the most part, you should write up what information you collected, organised in some sensible way. Your proposal, therefore, needs to explain what evidence you will collect, or use, and how.

5. *Analysis and interpretation*

In this section you interpret your evidence in light of your conceptual frame. Your proposal needs to make clear how you will analyse and interpret the evidence.

6. *Conclusions/Implications*

This final section reports your conclusion and recommendations (if any). In the proposal, you should re-iterate from your issue statement the *nature* of these conclusions. This does not mean that you will state your actual conclusions. In other words, NOT "this research will show that government should stick with the status quo", but rather, "this research will recommend that government either stick with the status quo or do X."

What you say here will be used to help judge the merits of the proposed research, but also serve to check that you are not overpromising.

Particular Conditions

Note any particular conditions that apply, including arrangements with a third-party mentor. A third-party mentor may be a workplace supervisor, another public sector employee, or a

member of the School's academic or research staff (other than your supervisor). If your research has workplace implications (e.g. controversy, conflicts of interests, political sensitivities), discuss how you plan to deal with these.

HEC Statement

State whether HEC approval will be required.

If your research will involve getting information from people, you may find that working through the Human Ethics Committee application at the same time as you write your proposal will make both processes easier. Remember that HEC approval must be secured before you embark on research involving people.

HEC Process

(Note that you do not actually begin this process until after your proposal is approved as you must develop your application with your supervisor)

Pipitea HEC guidelines and application form are **only** available at www.victoria.ac.nz/fca/research/forms/pipitea-hec-guidelines-and-application.rtf

Full HEC requirements are at www.victoria.ac.nz/postgradlife/pages/pages_current_pg/ethics.html (this link is to be used **only** to refer to the Victoria University Policy - **NOT** to download the application form)

If approval is needed, you will need to draft an application, with advice from your supervisor.

Forward your draft applications electronically to Russell Harding (russell.harding@vuw.ac.nz). Please use a subject heading in the format: HEC SoG Application your name. Russell, with authority delegated by the Head of School, checks the application and, if amendments are required, notifies the applicant and supervisor.

Corrected applications are forwarded electronically by Russell in one rtf file to the FCA HEC secretary, Maggie Teleki-Rainey. When HEC notice of approval is received, you must forward a signed hard copy to the FCA HEC secretary. Student research requires three signatures, the student's, the supervisor's, and the Head of School's, (or delegate, Russell Harding). When an approved signed copy is sent in, the approved research may begin.

Indicative Bibliography

The last required part of the proposal is an indicative bibliography, which will probably contain at least 10 items. The bibliography will show that you have undertaken sufficient preliminary investigation to have identified the key sources of facts, concepts, methodology, comparisons or whatever else is relevant for your study. As you compile the bibliography – which should be presented in correct format – check that you have at least one reference for each type of published information that you have described.

When submitting your proposal, use the following standard conventions:

Front page

Include a front page with the following details (centred):

- Course code and name
- Assessment item descriptor (e.g. draft or final proposal)
- Due date (and date submitted, if different)
- Name of candidate
- Candidate Student ID number

Please email your proposal in an attachment to amanda.wolf@vuw.ac.nz

Proposal Approval

Approval of research essay proposals is a collective responsibility of the School. While Bill Ryan and Amanda Wolf have distinct responsibilities regarding programmes and research, each six months a group of staff is designated as a Research Committee. The Research Committee may make one of three recommendations:

1. Approve, with the student and supervisor invited to consider the Research Committee comments
2. Conditionally approve, with the student to address issues or make changes as indicated by the Research Committee, to the satisfaction of the supervisor before proceeding to undertake further work.
3. Not approve. This option requires the student to submit a new proposal, taking into account the comments of the Research Committee, and incurs a penalty (see section on penalties below).

Comments and suggestions on the research are referred to the student and supervisor for their further consideration. This approval process is used in order to ensure that you pursue research that meets programme standards and to ensure that your proposal gets careful scrutiny from a range of perspectives/disciplines. This process also ensures that the best possible student-supervisor arrangements are made (supervisors are assigned on the basis of knowledge of the topic and workload balances, including leaves of absence. Because we do not restrict the topics you may choose to study, and because staff are broadly trained and experienced, occasionally supervisors will be matched to a topic which is not among their main interests or areas of expertise).

ASSESSMENT DETAILS: Final Essay, due 10 October 2008

The essay, of 15,000-20,000 words is worth 100% of your final grade. It should be completed in accordance with your approved proposal and with the advice of your supervisor.

The course coordinator will contact you and your supervisor about two months before the deadline in order to check that you are making satisfactory progress.

No major changes can be made to an approved proposal without speaking to Amanda Wolf. However, it is recognized that as information becomes available during the research process, the original proposal may need to be modified. Modest modifications can usually be approved by your supervisor.

Format and Procedures for Submission of the Research Essay

Abstract

Include an abstract of no more than 200 words, written for a wide audience without specialized knowledge. Avoid acronyms. State the research issue, the conceptual framework or theory and empirical content used, and indicate the main conclusions. The abstract should follow the title page, and precede other front matter.

Other front matters

In addition to a required Table of Contents, you may wish to provide acknowledgements, and lists of tables and figures.

Style of Presentation

The research essay is a piece of academic writing and so differs from the formats used in government reports. The ideas and information presented in the essay should be understandable to a wide audience and prior detailed knowledge of institutional arrangements or terminology specific to a particular discipline should not be presumed.

Be sure to:

- Appropriately document reference material, using a consistent style of your choice
- Provide a full bibliography
- Devise a consistent system of headings
- Use 1 ½ line spacing
- Print single sided

Document Specification

There are no specific requirements beyond those expected for all Master's Programme work (e.g. word processed) and those that your supervisor may set.

Submission

Submit one clean copy to Raewyn Baigent by the due date. After the paper has been assessed, you will need to supply a corrected copy (as needed, see Library copies below).

Include a title page, with title, your FULL name, degree and date. Special covers and binding instructions are available from Raewyn Baigent.

Library Copies

Research essays are lodged in the VUW library after completion, and are therefore available to all browsers and borrowers. Obviously, it is in everyone's interest that these copies be error-free to have the best possible copies available to the public. If your final version contains typos or related errors, you will be required to supply a corrected copy. Errors in the final version can affect your grade. As a courtesy, you might ask your supervisor if they would like a final copy for their own bookshelves. The library will, on request, seek permission from the Head of School to photocopy your entire work to meet a request of a person not able to visit the library.

IF YOU DO NOT WISH THE HEAD OF SCHOOL TO APPROVE SUCH REQUESTS, YOU MUST MAKE THIS KNOWN WHEN YOU SUBMIT YOUR PAPER.

Assessment

Assessment of post-graduate research is not a formulaic process. There is no “right” or “wrong”. The professional judgement of the examiner plays a significant role. Because students have a right to know the assessment considerations, a number of points are given below. In general, one may assume that a “passing” competence must be demonstrated on *each* point. That is, a brilliant insight in a conclusion cannot be used to cancel shocking grammar, spelling, and documentation of sources. It is also assumed in what follows that the student prepared and kept to an approved research design (which means that many assessment criteria for the research design carry through to the finished project). The main criteria are:

- Completion of intended objectives (as set out in the research proposal, or as modified with approval)
- Coverage of theory
- Depth of understanding and analysis
- Adequate and proper use of resources
- Logical coherence of arguments
- Structure and expression
- Technical aspects of production
- Difficulty and originality
- Recommendations and conclusions follow from theory and analysis of issue
- Adherence to acceptable research methods.

Withdrawal Dates

Students giving notice of withdrawal from this course after **Friday 7 March 2008** will NOT receive a refund of fees.

Students giving notice of withdrawal from this course after **Friday 9 May 2008** are regarded as having failed the course, unless the Associate Dean subsequently gives approval to withdraw.

Notice of withdrawal must be in writing or emailed to the Masters Administrator. Ceasing to attend or verbally advising a member of staff will NOT be accepted as a notice of withdrawal.

Faculty of Commerce and Administration Offices

Railway West Wing (RWW) - FCA Student and Academic Services Office

The Faculty’s Student and Academic Services Office is located on the ground and first floors of the Railway West Wing. The ground floor counter is the first point of contact for general enquiries and FCA forms. Student Administration Advisers are available to discuss course status and give further advice about FCA qualifications. To check for opening hours, call the Student and Academic Services Office on (04) 463 5376.

Easterfield (EA) - FCA/Education/Law Kelburn Office

The Kelburn Campus Office for the Faculties of Commerce and Administration, Education and Law is situated in the Easterfield Building on the ground floor (EA 005). This counter is the first point of contact for:

- Duty tutors for student contact and advice.
- Information concerning administrative and academic matters.
- Forms for FCA Student and Academic Services (e.g. application for academic transcripts, requests for degree audit, COP requests).
- Examinations-related information during the examination period.

To check for opening hours, call the Student and Academic Services Office on (04) 463 5376.

Notice of Turnitin Use

Student work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine www.turnitin.com. Turnitin is an on-line plagiarism prevention tool which identifies material that may have been copied from other sources, including the Internet, books, journals, periodicals or the work of other students. Turnitin is used to assist academic staff in detecting misreferencing, misquotation, and the inclusion of unattributed material, which may be forms of cheating or plagiarism. At the discretion of the School, handwritten work may be copy typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin. You are strongly advised to check with your tutor or the course coordinator if you are uncertain about how to use and cite material from other sources. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted materials on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.

General University Policies and Statutes

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied. See the Victoria University Calendar or go to www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/students.aspx

For information on the following topics, go to the Faculty's website www.victoria.ac.nz/fca, under Important Information for Students:

- Academic Grievances
- Student and Staff Conduct
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means *no cheating*. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:
www.victoria.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html

Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme

Manaaki Pihipihinga is an academic mentoring programme for undergraduate Māori and Pacific students in the Faculties of Commerce and Administration, and Humanities and Social Sciences. Sessions are held at the Kelburn and Pipitea Campuses in the Mentoring Rooms, 14 Kelburn Parade (back courtyard), Room 109D, and Room 210, Level 2, Railway West Wing. There is also a Pacific Support Coordinator who assists Pacific students by linking them to the services and support they need while studying at Victoria. Another feature of the programme is a support network for Postgraduate students with links to Postgraduate workshops and activities around Campus.

For further information, or to register with the programme, email manaaki-pihipihinga-programme@vuw.ac.nz or telephone (04) 463 6015. To contact the Pacific Support Coordinator, email pacific-support-coord@vuw.ac.nz or telephone (04) 463 5842.