

MHST 513

RESEARCH METHODS

COURSE OUTLINE



**Museum & Heritage Studies programme
Trimesters 1 and 2**

2008

**School of Art History, Classics & Religious Studies
Victoria University of Wellington**

the best possible available stock of generalisations about social life ... will be based on a good deal of research, but their inductively-founded character will appear in their failure to approach law-likeness. No matter how well-framed they are the best of them may have to co-exist with counter-examples, since the constant creation of counter-examples is a feature of human life. And we shall never be able to say of the best of them precisely what their scope is. It follows of course that they will not entail well-defined sets of counterfactual conditionals. They will be prefaced not by universal quantifiers but by some such phrase as 'Characteristically and for the most part ...'

A MacIntyre (1981) After Virtue

there are no causes to be grasped with certainty where the act of creating meaning is concerned, only acts, expressions, and contexts to be interpreted. ... These contexts are always *contexts of practice*: it is always necessary to ask what people are *doing* or *trying* to do in what context.

J Bruner (1990) Acts of Meaning

COURSE ORGANISATION

Course Coordinator: Lee Davidson
OK 304
Phone 463 5929
Email: lee.davidson@vuw.ac.nz

Administrator: Sally Reweti-Gould
OK 306
Office hours: Wednesday and Thursday 9-1pm
Phone 463 5928

Class Times & Location: Tuesday 9-11am
OK 301

Course notices will be put on the notice board in OK302. Please check the notice board regularly for University notices and other useful information.

AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND CONTENT

Aims

To provide an introduction to social research methodology, including qualitative and quantitative research methods, historical studies, and cultural studies, looking at their application in a variety of contexts related to museums, culture and heritage.

Objectives

By the end of this course students should be able to:

- understand the rationale behind the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods;
- choose appropriate methods for particular research settings; and
- understand the principles and practicalities of research management from a variety of perspectives.

By the end of the course each student will have completed a proposal for their dissertation research.

513 OUTLINE OF COURSE CONTENT

Feb 26	Introduction to research methods
March 4	Ethics and perspectives I
March 11	Ethics and perspectives II
March 18	Library seminar with Jillian Speirs: MHST liaison librarian Venue: Rankin Brown 901
March 25	Easter
April 1	Research questions and methodologies
April 8	Introduction to research in museums

MID SEMESTER BREAK

Apr 29 – Jul 8 Research methods in the museum/heritage setting

This module involves an introduction to various research methods, including surveys, observation, interviews and focus groups, and their application in the museum/heritage setting. The module includes helping to develop, conduct and analyse a small practical research project in a museum, and forms the basis of the second assignment. As part of the assessment students will give a presentation on their research results to the class and other interested parties.

July 15	Historical methods
July 22	Visit to Archives New Zealand (tbc)
July 29	Visit to Alexander Turnbull Library (tbc)
Aug 5	Dissertation seminar – 2nd year students will report on their research
August 12	The Proposal (part I)

MID SEMESTER BREAK

Sept 2	The Proposal (part II)
Sept 9	Student presentation and discussion of draft proposals
Sept 16	Dissertation proposal – the finishing touches
Sept 23	Proposal due - no class
Sept 30	Dissertation writing
Oct 7	Supervision issues, ethics, where next?

READING

Readings will be handed out in class one week prior to the relevant seminar. Further appropriate readings will be advised where necessary.

Some basic background reading includes:

- Beach, D. (1996) *The Responsible Conduct of Research*
Bell, C. & Roberts, H. (1984) *Social Researching: Politics, Problems, Practice*.
Creswell, J.W. (1994) *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*.
Cryer, P. (1996) *The Research Student's Guide to Success*.
Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) (2005) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*.
Patton, M. Q. (1990) *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*.
Rountree, K. & Laing, T. (1996) *Writing By Degrees: A Practical Guide to Writing Theses and Research Papers*.
Sarantakos, S. (1993) *Social research*.
Seale, C. (Ed.) (2004) *Qualitative research practice*.

ASSESSMENT

This course is internally assessed on the basis of three written assignments and a presentation. The word lengths, due dates and percentage of the final mark for each are as follows:

Assign. 1: Ethics & Perspectives	(2000 words)	11 April	20%
Assign. 2: Research project	(3000 words + presentation)	8 July	40%
Assign. 3: Dissertation Proposal	(4000 words)	23 Sept	40%

Method of Assessment

Assessment will be criterion referenced. An assessment schedule will be prepared for each assignment and distributed to students indicating the criteria against which the assignment will be assessed and the marks which will be awarded for each element of the work.

All written assignments may be handed in for comment as initial drafts and resubmitted *one further time only* for final grading by **1 November** at the latest. Assignments not received by the initial due date will not be eligible for resubmission. The only exception will be on medical grounds (including a medical certificate) or in other exceptional circumstances.

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities in examinations and other assessment procedures.

Relationship between assessment and course objectives

The assignments are structured to ensure that by the end of the course the student has completed a research proposal with a well developed research design, including ethical considerations and a sound methodological approach.

WORKLOAD AND TERMS REQUIREMENTS

Workload Guidelines

As a general rule, each paper requires a time commitment equivalent to a full working day (inclusive of teaching or seminar time) for every week of the academic year.

Term Requirements

The minimum course requirements which must be satisfied in order for students to be eligible for assessment for a final grade are:

- completion of all three assignments;
- attendance at 90% of seminars.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES

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* available in hardcopy or under "about Victoria" on the Victoria homepage at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html

Information on the following topics is available electronically under "Course Outline General Information" at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/newspubs/universitypubs.aspx#general>

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

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

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:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>