

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI



VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
STUDIES

Te Kura Mahinga Tangata

SACS 401/501

Methods in Social Science Research

Course Outline

CRN 13122/13123: 30 POINTS:
TRIM 1+2/2008

COURSE COORDINATOR:

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Lectures: Weeks 1 – 4: Alternate Fridays 9 -12 noon and 1-4pm, KK202
Weeks 5 – 8: Consecutive Fridays 9 -1pm, KP20-101

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OFFICE HOURS: By arrangement

LECTURES: Weeks 1 – 4: alternate Fridays
9 -12 noon and 1-4pm, KK202
Weeks 5 – 8 consecutive Fridays,
9 -1pm, KP20-101

COURSE DETAILS

Weeks 1-3

The first three weeks of this course are taught in conjunction with SSRE 511 – Processes and Organisation of Research and SSRE 521 – Strategies and Techniques of Research. These are the two core papers of the MA (Applied) in Social Science Research.

This component of the course explores philosophical approaches to social science research, ethical issues and quantitative research methods.

Weeks 4-8

Involve seminars and workshops to explore the theory, principles of and approaches to research design.

COURSE READINGS

The reading notes can be purchased from the Student Notes Centre in the Student Union Building for approx \$35.

SET TEXT

Grbich, C., 2005: *New Approaches in Social Research*, Sage: London.

The text can be purchased from the Victoria University Book Centre in the Student Union Building for approx. \$59.

COURSE AIMS

- To critically examine the fundamental assumptions that inform approaches to social science research design
- To explore a variety of quantitative and qualitative social science research methods and techniques

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To develop skills to understand and critically appraise:

- the relationship between research theory and research design
- the ethical implications of various approaches to social research
- alternative approaches/perspectives to social research

To develop skills and understanding of:

- research conception
- research design
- methods of data collection and analysis in social science research

CLASS FORMAT

This paper is taught in block mode. The sessions will involve a mix of lectures, seminar discussions and workshops as detailed in the timetable. Students are required to actively participate in each session.

COURSE WORKLOAD EXPECTATIONS

This course is worth 30 points. The workload expectation, including scheduled contact time, is approx 10 hours per week during teaching weeks and study and examination period. This workload is in accordance with the guidelines put forward by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for courses at the 400-level.

Note: Because this paper is taught in the first trimester only the work load will be compressed into the first half of the academic year.

ASSESSMENT

1) Reading notes

5% of the total assessment

Reading discussions or seminars are an integral aspect of the course programme and are designed to complement the lecture material and to foster critical thinking abilities. All required readings are included in the Student Notes.

Each student is expected to:

- *have read the set readings prior to the class*
- *hand in reading notes for one of the readings set for each class, in addition to all set readings from the Grbich (2004,) the set text, during the allocated class period*
- *actively participate in the reading discussion.*

Full marks will only be awarded if the notes for each reading are handed during the allocated class time and fulfil the following criteria:

- *are fully referenced*
- *clearly identify the focus/aim and/or argument of the reading*
- *clearly identify **three** key points*
- *justify the selection of each key point*
- *identify any findings/conclusions*
- *identify page number in the left hand margin source of material being referred to*

The purpose of the reading notes is to familiarise students with the content of the readings in preparation for class discussion. This exercise is also designed to foster critical appraisal skills through comparison of various social research perspectives, approaches, and/or techniques.

Please note, you are **not** required to write an essay on each reading. The emphasis is on developing the ability to critical read, identify and understand the salient points presented. Bulleted notes are quite acceptable for this exercise.

2) Reading seminars

5% of total assessment

The reading seminars are central to the course programme, and are designed to complement the lecture material and to foster critical thinking abilities. All required readings are from the set text, *Grbich (2004): New Approaches in Social Research, Sage, London.*

All students are expected to have read the material **prior** to the class and to actively participate in discussion.

A timetable assigning each student joint responsibility for a seminar presentation of a total of **two** chapters from Grbich (2004) will be drawn up during the first class meeting.

Please note that once the timetable has been drawn up it is the student's responsibility to negotiate with other students any required change to the scheduled presentation. Failure to fulfil this course requirement will result in loss of marks except in the case of illness or extreme emergency.

Students assigned a particular reading are required to work together to prepare the seminar which must include the following:

- a joint *Power Point* presentation of the key aspects of the set reading - **not to exceed 15 minutes**
and either
- a minimum of **four** questions/points raised in the reading to stimulate a class discussion
or
- a class exercise/demonstration which illustrates/explains/develops/clarifies the content of the set reading (45 minute time allocation)
- a glossary of any definitions/specialised terms (preferably in your own words) to circulate among the class
- an electronic copy of the *Power Point* slides to be circulated to the class and lecturer as part of the course assessment **prior to** the specified class.

PowerPoint guidelines

- Don't over overload/over-animate the slides - less is more!
- Rule of thumb – maximum of 5 lines per slide, maximum of one line per point
- Focus – use key words, phrases - avoid PowerPoint karaoke ie verbatim reading of the text
- Limit data slides to no more than 8 for a 15 minute presentation
- Include a summary slide of key words, concepts or points/findings etc
- Number and title slides
- Minimum font size 28 pt – larger for titles
- Avoid using the mouse as a pointer

Written assessment

This paper is internally assessed through a total of three assignments plus the reading notes and seminar presentation.

Please note that ***all assignments are due at 4pm*** on the date indicated.

1. Questionnaire design and critique	25%
<i>Due 4pm, Friday 11 April/Monday 28 April</i>	
2. Research perspectives	30%
<i>Due 4pm, Monday 19 May</i>	
3. Formulating a research design	35%
<i>Due 4pm, Tuesday 8 July</i>	
4. Reading notes	5%
5. Reading seminars	5%

EXTENSIONS AND LATENESS

An important aspect of the graduate learning process is an ability to manage workloads so that deadlines can be met. This means that **no extensions will be granted** unless illness or another extreme emergency prevents you from submitting an assignment.

Note: *Any extension must be arranged **before the due date** and extension will not be extended beyond the period of certified illness or emergency.*

Assessment work will not be accepted for marking more than 7 days after the due date or 7 days after an approved extension date. However, work must still be submitted to meet the mandatory course requirements.

LATE PENALTIES

Late submissions for student assignments are subject to a penalty. The exact deduction will be calculated on the basis of one half mark per day late for each 10 marks, i.e. 1 mark will be deducted each day for an assignment worth 20% of the total course mark.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Attendance at scheduled lectures unless previously arranged.
- Completion of all assignments, including reading notes
- Participation in reading discussions

GRADES

Letter grades are given for all internally assessed work. The following table sets out the range of marks within which each letter grade is assigned. As is common with all Honours courses your final grade is subject to external moderation.

Pass	A+	85% or over	Evidence of familiarity with relevant reading, sound understanding of relevant theoretical/methodological issues, plus individual interpretation and insights of a higher order. An A grade will not be achieved without such insight. Work well presented with logical structure that includes an introduction and a conclusion in addition to clarity of expression.
	A	80%-84%	
	A-	75%-79%	
	B+	70-74%	As above, but less individual insight and preparation. High level of understanding exhibited. Assignment well presented.
	B	65%-69%	
	B-	60%-64%	
	C+	55%-59%	Work lacks originality, individual insights and not strong on understanding. However, material used is relevant and presentation is satisfactory.
	C	50%-54%	
Fail	D	40%-49%	Little evidence of reading or comprehension. No insight. Poor presentation.
	E	Below 40%	A clear failure to reach an adequate standard on the criteria set out.
	F	Overall failure.	
	K	Failed due to not satisfying mandatory course requirements.	

COURSE TIMETABLE 2008

Wk	Date	Room	Time	Topic	Lecturer	Reading
1	29 Feb	KK202	9-10am 10-12noon	Course Intro T1 Philosophical assumptions Discussion	Annette Beasley	Sacks (1995)
		KK202	1-2.30pm 2.30-4pm	T2 The research process Lecture/discussion T3 Ethics Film and discussion	AB	Crotty (1998) Chpt 1 Kirkman (2001)
2	14 Mar	KK202	9-10am 10-12noon	T4 Maori research Reading discussion Guest lecture	AB Laurie Porima	Ball (2005) Smith (2005)
		KK202	1-2 pm 2-3.30pm 3.30-4pm	T5 Pacific perspectives Reading discussion Guest lecturer <i>Assignment 1, Research perspectives, guidelines</i>	AB TBA	Sanga & Pasikale (2002)
3	28 Mar	KK202	9-11am 11.00-12noon	T6 Surveys Lecture T7 Positivism Reading discussion	Jenny Neale AB	Neale (n.d) Dillman (1978) Frey and Oishi (1995) Dept of Stats Crotty (1998) Chpt2
			1-30pm 3-4pm	T8 Coding and presentation of quantitative data Reading discussion Coding exercise	AB	Feilding (1993) Desrosières (2001)

WK	Date	Room	Time	Topic	Lecturer	Reading
4	11 Apr		Assignment 1 due Part A swap	Questionnaire design due class time		
4	11Apr	KK202	9.00-1pm	<i>T9 Research orientations</i>	AB	Grbich 2004 Chpt 2 & 3
	28 Apr 4pm		Assignment 1 due Part B	Questionnaire Design and Critique		
6	9 May	KP20-101	9-1pm	T10 Quantitative research design Workshop	AB	Black (2002) Fink (1995) Litwin (1995)
	16 May	KP20-101	9-1pm	T11 Qualitative Research Design Workshop		Kvale (1996) Waldegrave (1999) Thomson (1999) Beasley (2006) Patton (2002)
	19 May 4pm		Assignment 2 due	Research perspectives		
7	23 May	KP20-101	9-1pm	T12 Mixed methods design Workshop	AB	Greene & Caracelli (2002) Bernard (2000)
	8 July 4pm		Assignment 3 due	Formulating a research design		

ASSIGNMENT 1

Questionnaire Design and Critique

Due: 4pm, Friday 11 April and Monday 28 April Weighting: 25%

This assignment is due in two parts. On 11 April students will bring to class the questionnaire they have developed - maximum 20 items that looks at 'use of public spaces'. Each student will take home another student's questionnaire to critique. A critique on this questionnaire is due in on 28 April.

Each part of the assignment is worth 12.5%

Hint: In formulating the questionnaire, you will need to provide an explanation about the context in which it is being administered so that there is a basis from which to judge its appropriateness and whether or not it meets its objectives.

In addition to the general grading criteria presented on page 6 to obtain a high grade in assignment 1, you will need to take into consideration in formulating both the questionnaire and the critique the following:

- Does the questionnaire cover the relevant information?
- Are the questions worded appropriately?
- Is the order of the questions appropriate?
- Were the respondents capable of providing the information asked of them?
- What features relate to its mode of delivery? (a telephone interview, self-administered questionnaire, face-to-face interview)

If for any reason you are unable to drop off your questionnaire on 2 May your questionnaire MUST be handed in before this date.

ASSIGNMENT 2

Research Perspectives

Word Count: 2500 max

Due: 4pm, Monday 19 May

Weighting: 30%

Crotty (1998:7) points out that we bring a number of assumptions to our chosen methodology and that we need to state as best as we can what these assumptions are. Referring to Crotty (1998:4-5) Figure 1 and Table 1 identify the key assumptions an objectivist epistemology employing a positivist theoretical approach brings to research. Discuss the strengths and limitations, including ethical considerations, of this research perspective when conducting research among a selected minority or ethnic group.

In addition to the general grading criteria presented on page 6 to obtain a high grade in assignment 2, it must feature the following:

- a clear introduction which states the focus and aim of your essay and identifies how you intend to explore the assignment question
- identification of the assumptions of the perspective and justification of choice of perspective
- critical reflection on the particular strengths and limitations of your perspective when conducting research with your selected group of people, *including ethical considerations*.

Note: Critical reflection considers power relationships in the context of social interactions and seeks to identify how these relationships may contribute to and/or alleviate conflict, oppression and bring about social change

ASSIGNMENT 3

Formulating a Research Design

Word Count: 5000 max

Due: 4pm, Tuesday 8 July

Weighting: 35%

Formulate a research design to explore a topic of interest to you. Identify your research question, aim and objectives. Drawing on course material and the relevant literature, identify and justify your choice of research design, its components and their linkages in terms of your research question, aim and objectives. What other research design did you consider and why did you reject it?

The aim of this assignment is to demonstrate that you have an understanding of:

- the principles of research design
- approaches to research design
- the rationale behind the choice of a research design
- the relationship between the components of a research design
- a range of research methodologies/methods and their strengths/limitations
- the rationale behind the choice of a methodology
- the relationship between methodology and method

In addition to the general grading criteria presented on page 6 to obtain a high grade in Assignment 3 it must address the following:

1) Formulating the research question, aim and objectives

- Provide a brief background to contextualise your research question.
- Briefly explain:
 - Where did the idea come from?
 - Why is the topic of interest to you?
 - What is the relevance of the topic for yourself, others, society etc?
- Identify your research question, aim and objectives in clear, concise, and researchable statements
- Justify the research aim/objectives in terms of how/what they will contribute to exploring the research question?

2) Research design and rejected designs

Demonstrate your familiarity with and ability to draw on a range of relevant literature *that goes beyond course material*, to describe and justify the research design, its components, and your rationale for rejecting an alternative design. The discussion should include a description of the methodologies/methods considered and their strengths and limitations. You should also explore the operational strengths and limitations of the components of your design eg time frame, available resources etc.

4) Conclusion

This should include the following:

- Reiterate the focus of essay and what the essay set out to do
- Restate the proposed research question, aim and objectives
- Present a brief overview of the proposed research design
- Reach a conclusion on the effectiveness of the proposed research design in exploring the research question.

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* 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>

- 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.

Plagiarism is **prohibited** at Victoria.

The University defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not.

'Someone else's work' means **anything** that is not your own idea, even if it is presented in your own style. It includes material from books, journals or any other printed source, the work of other students or staff, information from the Internet, software programmes and other electronic material, designs and ideas. It also includes the organization or structuring of any such material.

Plagiarism is not Worth the Risk!

Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct (www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct) and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

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

Find out more about plagiarism and how to avoid it, on the University's website at:

www.victoria.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html

OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION

Head of School:	Assoc. Professor Jenny Neale, MY1013 Tel: 463 5827 E-m: jenny.neale@vuw.ac.nz
International Student Liaison:	Dr Hal Levine MY1023 Tel: 463 6132 E-m: hal.levine@vuw.ac.nz
Maori and Pacific Student Liaison	Dr David Pearson, MY1020 Tel: 463 6748 E-m: david.pearson@vuw.ac.nz
Students with Disabilities Liaison:	Dr Russil Durrant, MY1120 Tel: 463 9980 E-m: russil.durrant@vuw.ac.nz
School Manager:	Carol Hogan, MY918 Tel: 463 6546 E-m: carol.hogan@vuw.ac.nz
School Administrators:	Monica Lichti, Adam Meers, MY921 Tel: 463 5317, 463 5258 E-m: sacs@vuw.ac.nz

ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS

All written work submitted for assessment must have a School Assignment Cover sheet, see sample following page. Further copies can be located on the reception counter at the Administration Office, and on the Assignment Box, on level 9 of Murphy building. You may wish to have a front sheet of your own, but a School Cover sheet must be used. This is critical for accurate identification and recording of your work.

Office use only

Date Received:

(Date Stamp)

School of Social and Cultural Studies

Te Kura Mahinga Tangata

ANTHROPOLOGY

CRIMINOLOGY

SOCIOLOGY & SOCIAL POLICY

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Assignment Cover Sheet

(please write legibly)

Full Name: _____

Student ID: _____ Course (eg ANTH 101): _____

Tutorial Day: _____ Tutorial Time: _____

Tutor's Name (if applicable): _____

Assignment No.: _____ Due Date: _____

CERTIFICATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I certify that this paper submitted for assessment is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signed: _____ Date: _____