

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY-AFRICA
SEMESTER:
IRL 2150: RESEARCH METHODS FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
COURSE SYLLABUS
INSTRUCTOR:
LECTURE DAYS/TIME:
CONSULTATION HOURS:
VENUE:
CREDIT; 3 UNITS

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Study of major types and methods of research and data collection; methods of data analysis, and mechanics of writing research reports and scholarly works (essay, term paper, dissertation, publishable articles).

2. COURSE OBJECTIVE

The objective of this course is to introduce students to social science research methods with a particular focus to International Relations. By the end of the course the student is expected to have acquired basic intellectual skills and competencies in social and IR research.

3. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Explain and use research methodology in IR
2. Understand the practical application of social sciences research methodology.
3. Collect, Collate, analyse and respond critically to information.

4. COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course the students should be able to:

1. Competently explain scientific research and basic concepts in social and IR research
2. Understand the application and use of social sciences research methodology in IR.
3. Understand how to collect, analyse and evaluate social data with special reference to IR.
4. Proficiency in the use of USIU library facilities to conduct scholarly research.
5. Formulate researchable IR questions and operationalize how to tackle them.
6. Relate different research methods to various theoretical perspectives.

Personal Transferable Skills

On successful completion of this course you should be able to...

- Work independently, displaying initiative and time management; use communication and information technology to gather and appraise information.

5. COURSE CONTENT

Week 1

Introduction

Learning Outcomes

- Define research, scientific research and methodology
- Explain scientific methods in conducting research and objectives of research
- Discuss the aims of social research

Discussion Topics

- Introduction to Research
- Aims of Social Research
- The scientific method of enquiry

Assigned Readings

- Lecture notes
- Silverman David & Amir Marvasti (2008) *Doing Qualitative Research: A Comprehensive Guide*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications (Chapter 1).

Week 2

Scientific Research

Learning Outcomes

- Identify the different types of scientific research
- Explain the steps involved in scientific research

Discussions Topics

- Types of Scientific Research
- Steps in Scientific Research

Assigned Readings

- Lecture notes
- Silverman David & Amir Marvasti (2008) *Doing Qualitative Research: A Comprehensive Guide*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications (Chapter 1).

Week 3

Using the University Library

Learning Outcomes

- Understand and explain how to find books in USIU library

Practical Sessions

- Students will attend a session on USIU library facilities and how to search for materials (books, journals, magazines) using electronic resources.

Week 4

Essay and Scholarly Writings

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the meaning and objectives of essay and scholarly writings in social sciences education
- Acquire useful skills for structuring and writing essays and other scholarly works
- Application of acquired skills in writing their first essays

Discussion Topics

- The meaning and essence of essay and scholarly writing
- Basic scholarly writing skills
- The structure of a good essay
- Referencing methods (footnotes, endnotes, Harvard style) and bibliography

Assigned readings

- Lecture handout
- Omeje, K. (2007) "Challenges to State Legitimacy and Institutional Channels of Political Participation in Africa," *Africa Insight*, 37/4, pp. 183-191 (Sample of an academic writing)

Week 5

Strategies for Social Research

Learning Outcome

- Critical reflection on the broad conceptual and practical strategies for social research

Discussion Topics

- Ethnography
- Phenomenology
- Grounded theory
- Action Research

Assigned Readings

- Denscombe, Martyn (2003), *The Good Research Guide for small-scale research projects*, Philadelphia, Open University Press. Part I, pp.73-10
- Lecture Notes

Week 6

Research Design

Learning Outcomes

- Identify the characteristics and phases of Good Research Design
- Understand the advantages of designing research
- Discuss the stages for outlining a research proposal

Discussions Topics

- Function/Goals
- Characteristic of Good Research Design
- Phases in Research Designing
- Designing for different types of research
- Advantages of designing research
- Stages for outlining a research proposal

Assigned Readings

- Lecture notes
- Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant & Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics*, Basingdtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004 (Chapter 2).

Week 7

(MID-TERM EXAMS)

Week 8

Dominant Methods of Primary Data Collection in Social Research

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the dominant paradigms and methods of primary data collection in social research,
- Knowledge of the applications, advantages and disadvantages of the 2 dominant methods

Discussion Topics

- Questionnaire data
- Important considerations for use of questionnaire
- Planning and designing a questionnaire
- Sample of a good questionnaire
- Advantages & disadvantages of questionnaire
- Interview Data
- Types of Interviews
- Interview skills
- Conducting interviews: The stage and facilities
- Advantages & disadvantages of interviews

Assigned Readings

- Denscombe, Martyn (2003), *The Good Research Guide for small-scale research projects*, Philadelphia, Open University Press, pp. 144-190.
- Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant & Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics*, Basingdtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 95-105.

Class Assignments

Week 9

Observation and Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the meaning and use of Observation and Focus Group Discussion in research.
- Understand the limitations of Observation and Focus Group Discussion in research.

Discussion Topics

- Observation
- Types of observation
- Observation methods: Advantages & disadvantages
- Definition and use of Focus Group Discussion
- Planning FGD
- Limitations of FGD

Assigned Readings

- Denscombe, Martyn (2003), *The Good Research Guide for small-scale research projects*, Philadelphia, Open University Press, pp.192-210.
- Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant & Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics*, Basingdtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 105-113.

Assignment

- Second take home assignment

Week 10

Use of Secondary Data & information in Social Research

Learning Outcomes

- Identify the types, sources and use of secondary data
- Discuss the strength and limitations of secondary data

Discussion Topic

- Definition of secondary data
- Sources & types of secondary data
- Evaluating secondary data and information
- Advantages of secondary data research
- Disadvantages, limitations and abuse of secondary data

Assigned readings

- Denscombe, Martyn (2003), *The Good Research Guide for small-scale research projects*, Philadelphia, Open University Press, pp.212-228.
- Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant & Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics*, Basingdtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 165-202;.

Week 11

Analysis of Primary Data

Learning Outcomes

- Appropriate judgment on how to match methods of data collection with data analysis
- Understand how to analyse and present primary data in research and academic writings

Discussion Topic

- Quantitative and qualitative methods
- Application of descriptive statistics to research data
- Presenting descriptive statistics (bar chart, histogram, pie chart)
- Content analysis
- Types of content analysis
- Strengths and Limitations of Content Analysis

Assigned readings

- Denscombe, Martyn (2003), *The Good Research Guide for small-scale research projects*, Philadelphia, Open University Press, pp.239-265.
- Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant & Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics*, Basingdtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 236-242.

Week 12

Ethical Issues & Safety Considerations in Social Research

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the meaning and rationale for ethical and safety considerations in research
- Application of ethical and safety considerations in designing a research project

Discussion Topics

- Meaning and nature of ethical and safety issues in social research
- Basic ethical principles
- Gatekeeping and gatekeepers in research
- The problem of fraud in social research

Assigned reading

Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant & Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics*, Basingdtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp.250-269.

Week 13

Ethical Issues & Safety Considerations in Social Research

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the meaning and rationale for ethical and safety considerations in research
- Application of ethical and safety considerations in designing a research project

Discussion Topics

- Meaning and nature of ethical and safety issues in social research
- Basic ethical principles
- Gatekeeping and gatekeepers in research
- The problem of fraud in social research

Assigned reading

Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant & Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics*, Basingdtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp.250-269.

Week 14

FINAL EXAMS

6. COURSE TEXTS

Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant & Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics*, Basingdtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Denscombe, Martyn, *The Good Research Guide for small-scale research projects*, Philadelphia, Open University Press. 2003.

7. ADDITIONAL READINGS

Silverman David & Amir Marvasti (2008) *Doing Qualitative Research: A Comprehensive Guide*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Barzun Jacques and Henry F. Graff (2004), *The Modern Researcher*, USA, THOMSON WADSWORTH.

8. TEACHING/LEARNING METHOD

- The course will be conducted using lectures, interactive class discussion and group presentations.
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Participatory learning and independent study

9. UNIVERSITY POLICY

Attendance to lectures and class sessions is compulsory and will be strictly monitored. Students are expected to attend all classes. Upon being absent from five classes, an **“F” grade will be awarded automatically**. If you have to be absent for any reasons, please contact the Lecturer through his email address (komeje@usiu.ac.ke) in advance. You are responsible for any assignment due for submission once you return to class and for any course work missed while absent. If you miss classes because of ill health, you need to provide an official verification from a doctor, stamped and signed on letter head paper.

NB: PLEASE SWITCH OFF YOUR MOBILE PHONES DURING CLASS SESSION

10. COURSE EVALUATION

Attendance and Participation	- 10%
3 Class assignments	- 30%
Mid-Term Examination	- 20%
Final Examination	- <u>40%</u>
Total	100%

11. GRADING SYSYEM

A	90 - 100
A-	87 - 89
B+	84 - 86
B	80 - 83
B-	77 - 79
C+	74 - 76
C	70 - 73
C-	67 - 69
D+	64 - 66
D	62 - 63
D-	60 - 61
F	0 - 59