The American University  
School of International Service  
International Peace and Conflict Resolution Program

“Research Seminar in Peace and Conflict Resolution”  
or  
“Qualitative Research Methods in IPCR”

SIS 612-001  
Fall 2017, Wednesdays 8:20 P.M. – 10:50 P.M., SIS 233

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Office Telephone: 202-885-2454  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 4-7 PM, or by appointment

Course Objectives:  
This course is designed to introduce a range of qualitative methods for social science research, especially for students in IPCR and EPGA who are planning research for SRP or thesis projects. We will discuss the relationship between honing a research question, performing a literature review, and selecting an appropriate methodology. Methods covered will include interviewing, focus groups, case studies, participant observation, content analysis, and action research. Issues discussed will include human subjects protocols, negotiating access, and the ethics of working with war affected populations. We will learn by doing, and will practice each of the methods here in Washington DC. IPCR and other professors will visit throughout the semester to share their research experiences with the class.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the course, students will be able to…

- Frame a doable research project, including an answerable question in the context of related literature with an appropriate method of investigation
- Distinguish among various qualitative research approaches, and select an approach appropriate to a question
- Identify ethical issues in research on human subjects and in conflict affected settings
- Practice interviewing, participant observation, and content analysis
- Write a research proposal

Grading:  
Your course grade will be based on class participation (10%) and the completion of five assignments throughout the semester.
Assignment 1: Literature Review (15%). 5 pages.

Assignment 2: Interview and analysis (15%). 5 pages of transcript, 2 pages analysis.

Assignment 3: Ethnographic fieldnotes (15%). 5 pages.

Assignment 4: Content Analysis (15%). 5 pages.

Assignment 5: A research proposal (30%). 10 pages.

You will receive more guidance on each of the assignments in class. For each assignment, you will be placed into a different small group. Each group will read the work of all its members. The general rule is that assignments are due to Blackboard on Mondays a week and a half after the class period in which we discuss the respective topics. During the Wednesday class meeting exactly two weeks after an assignment, the small groups will meet in class to reflect on their experiences and give a friendly critique of each other’s work. You will have longer to complete the fifth assignment, and you will have a chance for peer feedback before you turn in your final draft.

These are the dates:

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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Introduced Wednesday</th>
<th>DUE Monday</th>
<th>Discussed Wednesday</th>
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Final draft of Assignment #5 is due by e-mail 12/6

Required Texts:


In this course, students will use **Blackboard Learning Management System.** Participants will use their AU credentials to log in at [https://blackboard.american.edu](https://blackboard.american.edu). AU’s Blackboard Support team recommends using Chrome or Firefox to optimize your experience and avoid incompatibility issues that can occur when accessing Blackboard with other browsers. **DO NOT USE INTERNET EXPLORER.**

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1. There is a newer 9th edition but it costs around $200! Buy the cheaper 8th (or even 7th) edition.
Class meetings:

8/30/17: Introduction to the Course

9/6/17: How do we know? What is Evidence in the Social Sciences?
Readings:
Berg and Lune, Chapter 1

In-class assignment on Peace Research Journals.

9/13/17: What is Peace Research? What is Critical or Decolonizing Research?
Readings:

9/20/17: Research Question/Literature Review/Methodology
Readings:
Berg and Lune, Chapter 2
Literature Reviews: http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/literature-reviews/
Citing Online Sources: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/08/

Assignment #1: Select a research question and write an appropriate literature review.

9/27/17: Power and Ethics in Social Science Research
Readings:
Berg and Lune, Chapter 3
American University IRB Requirements (http://www.american.edu/irb/index.cfm) (If you have not already done so, take the university’s online ethics training.)

10/4/17: Interviews
Readings:
Berg and Lune, Chapters 4 and 5

Assignment #2: Interview someone from a conflict affected country now residing in the U.S.
Transcribe your interview (5 pages of it at least) and analyze your experience (in a further 2 pages). What went well? What might you have done differently?

10/11/17: Case Studies
Readings:
Berg, Chapter 10.

10/18/17: Ethnographic Method
Readings:
Berg and Lune, Chapter 6

Assignment #3: Go to a place where people from a conflict-affected country congregate and observe/participate. Write some ethnographic fieldnotes about your experience.
10/25/17: Action Research
Readings:
Berg, Chapter 7

11/1/17: Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis
Readings:
Berg and Lune, Chapter 11

Assignment #4: Analyze some content (handouts, websites, other media products, transcripts, etc.) related to a clear research question.

11/8/17: Program Evaluation
Readings:
11/15/17: How to Write a Research Proposal
Readings:
  SIS requirements for thesis and SRP proposals
  USIP requirements for research funding
  Some successful proposals

Assignment #5. Write a research proposal for your SRP, thesis, or external funding.

THANKSGIVING BREAK

11/29/17: personal safety and positionality
Readings:

Discuss Assignment #5 rough draft research proposals in small groups.

12/6/17: “Final Exam”
Final Draft of Assignment #5 due by e-mail.

See Blackboard information section -- “messages from our sponsors” -- for complete list of AU course policies and support resources.