Subject Outline

MGMT 3707/8
History & Philosophy of IR Research/ HRM
**Overview and Aims of the Subject**

IROB 3708 *Research Methods in Employment and Management* is a required course for students intending to undertake the fourth year Honours program in the areas of Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management. It is also designed as a List B option in the Industrial Relations, Management and Human Resource Management majors, for students who would like to refine their research skills, without necessarily intending to proceed to the Honours year.

The subject is designed to provide a practical foundation for research and for writing a thesis or major report. It allows students to clarify their research philosophy, and to acquire and/or evaluate the strategies and skills needed for the design and execution of a significant research project.

Topics include:

- Disciplinary perspectives on employment and management - paradigms, fads and debates over values and evidence
- Philosophical foundations of social science research,
- How to define a research topic,
- How to design a research project, and how to select the strategies for carrying it out,
- Research methods:
  - How to conduct a literature search
  - How to conduct a literature review
  - Case-study and field research,
  - Comparative methods,
  - Historical analysis,
  - Document and textual analysis,
  - Interviewing and focus groups,
  - Survey design and analysis,
  - Overview of quantitative methods and their conceptual basis
- Development of a research proposal and planning the management of a research project, (Pre-Honours students) or evaluation of the published outcomes of a substantial research project. (Pass degree students)

At the end of this subject students should:

(i) have clarified their own theories of knowledge and its production
(ii) have acquired an overview of theories of social, work and organisational relations,
(iii) have undertaken a critical evaluation of relevant literature by locating concepts and arguments within their paradigms;
(iv) have an understanding of different research methodologies employed in social & organisational analysis; and,
(v) have prepared a research proposal (Pre-Honours students) or evaluated a substantial research report (Pass degree students)
# Administrative Details

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<tr>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Anne Junor (Room 4.104, Rupert Myers Bldg, Tel. 9385 7141)</th>
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<td>Consultation Times</td>
<td>MON: 9.30-11.30 am or by appointment.</td>
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| Lectures, Workshops & Seminars | MON 13.00 – 16.00 WEBSTER 301  
An average of 3 hour class each week. This will be divided amongst: a series of interactive lectures covering specific topics, and a range of workshops. On occasion, the third contact hour will be replaced by an activity such as participation in a seminar run by the Faculty, School or Industrial Relations Research Centre. Such participation is integral to the process of becoming a researcher.  |
| Assessment        | Assessment for this course will consist of the following:  |
|                   | Two research tasks 50% of total marks.                    |
|                   | Pre-Honours students: Research Proposal  
Presentation of a research proposal 20%  
2500 word written research proposal 30%  |
|                   | Pass degree students: Critical Analysis of a Research Report  
A 3000 word review of a published book based on a research report, analysing and evaluating each stage of the research and writing process.  |
| Texts & readings  | There is no set text, although students are strongly advised to read:  
A study kit will be issued, covering weekly readings and exercises.  |
<p>|                   | The additional references listed in this guide are intended as an aid to your own research or for those interested in locating their work within specific current debates in industrial relations, management or HRM.  |</p>
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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
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<tr>
<td>WEEK 1</td>
<td>July 28</td>
<td><strong>Introduction: Dr Sarah Gregson, Honours Coordinator</strong>&lt;br&gt;Administrative Necessities&lt;br&gt;Course outline and objectives&lt;br&gt;Overview of research process and research methods&lt;br&gt;Reading workshop: Identifying key concepts and debates</td>
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<td>WEEK 2</td>
<td>August 4</td>
<td><strong>a) Seminar: Dr Chris Warhurst, University of Strathclyde:</strong> ‘Making Knowledge Work: What would really create a knowledge driven workplace?’&lt;br&gt;<strong>b) Becoming a researcher: What do you want to find out, and how will you know when you’ve found it?</strong>&lt;br&gt;Getting your epistemology clear.&lt;br&gt;Social facts – ideas or realities?&lt;br&gt;Society – a bunch of individuals? A collective? A set of relations?&lt;br&gt;Agency or structure – which shapes which?&lt;br&gt;Explanations: Patterns of coincidence or causal tendencies?</td>
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<td>WEEK 3</td>
<td>August 11</td>
<td><strong>IR, HR and Organisations: Concepts, Paradigms and Models</strong>&lt;br&gt;What is the difference between abstraction and generalisation?&lt;br&gt;Locating concepts within paradigms&lt;br&gt;Applying competing models to IR/HR/organisational analysis&lt;br&gt;Building a new theory by new blends of concepts/paradigms&lt;br&gt;What makes a theory good or bad?</td>
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<td>WEEK 4</td>
<td>August 18</td>
<td><strong>Literature Searches and Writing a Literature Review</strong>&lt;br&gt;Dr Sarah Gregson and Dr Anne Junor&lt;br&gt;Sourcing your concepts and mapping paradigms.&lt;br&gt;Finding and extending a theoretical framework;&lt;br&gt;Locating yourself in a debate&lt;br&gt;Deciding what is relevant</td>
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<td>WEEK 5</td>
<td>August 25</td>
<td><strong>Producing a Thesis or Research Report:</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>The Question of Method</strong>&lt;br&gt;Writing an Honours thesis: Tales from the trenches – Alison Barnes&lt;br&gt;Overview: Mapping the steps and managing the project&lt;br&gt;From key question to researchable questions:&lt;br&gt;From researchable questions to research strategy&lt;br&gt;From research to writing</td>
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<td>WEEK 6</td>
<td>September 1</td>
<td><strong>Hands-on Training – Advanced Literature Search Techniques:</strong> Library Training Room 349&lt;br&gt;Library training program&lt;br&gt;Searching, retrieving and filing&lt;br&gt;Choosing and using styles; Importing bibliographical references</td>
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<td>WEEK 7</td>
<td>September 8</td>
<td><strong>Qualitative Methods 1 – Case Study and Other Local Approaches</strong>&lt;br&gt;A brief overview of participant observation and action research&lt;br&gt;Case study methodology: A case of what? Hypothesis testing or grounded theory-building?</td>
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<td>WEEK 8</td>
<td>September 15</td>
<td>Qualitative Methods 2 - Historical and Comparative Research</td>
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<td>Historical, archival and oral history methods in IR/HR/Organisational Research – Associate Professor Lucy Taksa</td>
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<td>1st Research Task Due</td>
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| WEEK 9 | September 22 | Qualitative Methods 3 – Focus Groups and Interviews |
|        |              | Design issues: How much structure? Selecting your interviewees, constructing your interview schedule, ethics of interviewing – Dr John O’Brien |
|        |              | Convergent interviewing - Prof Phil Bohle |
|        |              | Recording and analysing interview data; Uses and misuses of interviews – generalising or explaining? |

| Mid-Session Break |

| Week 10 | October 6 | Labour Day Public Holiday |
| Week 11 | October 13 | Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods 1 |
|        |            | Using databases and comparative methods – Prof Michael Quinlan (Rupert Myers South Room 4.085) |
| Week 12 | October 20 | Quantitative Methods 2 – Conceptual Understandings |
|        |            | Conceptual understandings of quantitative analyses – Dr David Kennedy |
|        |            | Measurement, modelling and statistical analysis |
|        |            | Reading research reports containing statistics |

| Week 13 | October 27 | Quantitative Methods 3: Informed Decision-Making - Design and Use of Surveys |
|        |            | Using Surveys to Analyse Work and Organisations |
|        |            | Numbers? Issues of questionnaire design |
|        |            | Entering data and interpreting results |
|        |            | Using secondary statistics – ABS, administrative by-product data |
|        |            | Latest submission date - 2nd Research Task |

| Week 14 | November 3 | Honours: Preparation for Thesis Workshop |
|        |            | Elements of a research proposal |

| Week 15 | November 10 | Honours: Thesis Proposal Presentation |
Assignments

A) Research Tasks
The two research tasks are together worth 50% of the total assessment for this course.

Research Task #1  Reading Journal
DUE DATE: Monday, 15 September. Reading Journal
LENGTH: 3500 words
VALUE: 30%

Using the discussion questions in the Study Kit as a guide, provide a Reading Journal consisting of:

- Brief notes on the key conceptual and methodological issues covered in any FOUR weeks between Week 1 and Week 8; (2000 words)
- An analysis of one of the conceptual framework, research strategies and use of supporting evidence underpinning the argument in one of the illustrative journal articles included in the Study Kit between Weeks 1 and 8. (1500 words)

Research Task #2: Research Strategy
DUE DATE: Monday, 14 October
LENGTH: 1500 words
VALUE: 20%

Seminar/Colloquium Report
Write a critical review of the research presented in one or more seminars/colloquium sessions you have attended, or of a research report, article or thesis you have analysed

Identify and evaluate:
1. The project objectives
2. The theoretical paradigm and assumptions
3. The methodological approach and its epistemological assumptions
4. The research design and strategies
5. The argument and supporting evidence

In your discussion you may compare and contrast the approach taken with one or more possible alternative approaches.

B) Pre-Honours Students: Thesis Proposal – Oral and Written Presentation
OR
Pass Students: Evaluation of a substantial research report

1) Presentation
DATE: Monday 10 November 1.00 to 4.00pm
PLACE: Webster 301
FORMAT: 20-minute presentation by the student, followed by 15 minutes of discussion and feedback from audience
VALUE: 20%
2) Written proposal
DUE DATE: Monday, 17 November
LENGTH: 3000 words
VALUE: 30%

Suggested Format:

1. **Title page** – Thesis title; your name, student ID and degree candidacy

2. **Abstract** – 200-300 words. Aims and main elements of proposal summarised

3. **Introduction** – Background or context, trigger for the proposed research, how the research fits into current knowledge or debates, proposed approach, what will be distinctive about your work

4. **Statement of problem** - Central research question and operationalising questions; key issue, contradiction or gap in current knowledge

5. **Conceptual framework** – The literature review, identifying disciplinary bases, dominant paradigms, what you will draw on, how you will combine existing concepts in new ways, any contradictions or explanatory gaps which you will try to address

6. **Method** – Research design and strategy;
   - theory testing or theory building,
   - your preferred model of qualitative or quantitative research;
   - multi-method approach if relevant;
   Data collection method – type, data sources, scope, ethics considerations, time frame
   Data analysis – statistical methods (quantitative) or method of coding, analysing and interpreting interview or textual data or field notes

7. **Discussion** – How your data will be related to the literature; how it will be used to answer the questions
   Likely limitations of the study
   Expected significance of the study

8. **Conclusion** – Why the study is worth undertaking and the main desired outcome

9. **Bibliography**

B) Pass Students: Evaluation of a Substantial Research Report
DUE DATE: Monday 10 November
FORMAT: Review essay
LENGTH: 4000 words
VALUE: 50%

**Review essay**
Choose one or more books that report on a significant research project conducted by the author(s), in the area of work/employment relations/organisation study. If you choose more than one book, they will need to be on a related theme, so that you can compare and contrast the approaches and methodologies. Review and evaluate the research projects and outcomes which they record.
Note: This is a different way of reading from that to which you are accustomed. You are reconstructing and assessing the research project on which the publication(s) was/were based.

**Suggested Format:**

1. **Title page** – Title of book(s) being reviewed; your name, student ID and degree candidacy

2. **Abstract** – 200-300 words. Condense your analysis to 200-3000 words

3. **Introduction** – Background or context, significant of your book(s), how the research fits into current knowledge or debates, approach of author(s), what is distinctive about the study/ies; if more than one, what are the key contrasts?

4. **Statement of problem** - Central research question(s) that the research was designed to answer; and operationalising questions; the key issues, contradictions or gaps in current knowledge that the study/ies attempted to address

5. **Conceptual framework** – Summarise for yourself the literature within which your chosen book(s) is/are located. Using the bibliography as a starting point, do your own literature search and reading in the field and assess for yourself the issues, themes, debates, paradigm(s). What is new about the author’s/authors’ approach?

6. **Method** – Research design and strategy;
   - theory testing or theory building,
   - qualitative or quantitative research;
   - inductive, deductive or retroductive;
   - multi-method approach if relevant;
   Data collection method – type, data sources, scope, ethics considerations,
   Data analysis – statistical methods (quantitative) or method of coding, analysing and interpreting interview or textual data or field notes

7. **Discussion** – key findings; how the findings related to existing literature; how adequately the research questions were answered; Limitations of the study/ies
   Expected significance of the study

8. **Conclusion** – Significance of the study/ies; possible practical outcomes; suggestions for further research.

9. **Bibliography**

**Suggested Publications:**


