

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES



Faculty of Commerce and Economics
School of Information Systems, Technology and
Management

**INFS 4887 AND INFS 5987
RESEARCH TOPICS IN INFORMATION SYSTEMS 2**

**COURSE OUTLINE
SESSION 1, 2006**

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1. COURSE STAFF

Lecturer in charge:

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QUAD 2096

Consultation times, Dubravka, Thurs, 3-5pm

1.1 Communication with Staff

Outside the class sessions and consultations the preferred mode of communication between students and LIC is via WebCT message system. If a student has a question of wide interest, the answer will be provided so that all students can see it. All messages and announcements for students will be posted on WebCT as well. In case of a personal matter a student may send an email to LIC or call by phone.

2. INFORMATION ABOUT THE COURSE

2.1 Teaching times and Locations

Lectures and seminars

Room: **QUAD 2093**

Time: **Thursday 5-8pm**

2.2 Units of Credit

UOC value for the course is 6

2.3 Relationship of this course to other course offerings

Building on Research Topics in IS 1 this course aims to extend and deepen the understanding of different research approaches and methodologies in order to prepare students for their own research projects in the IS discipline. This course will prepare students for undertaking – designing, planning and conducting – their research projects competently and effectively. This course will also assist students in identifying and formulating a research problem, in selecting and applying appropriate research approaches and methods of inquiry (both quantitative or qualitative), and in presenting their results.

2.4 Approach to learning and teaching

This course adopts the principles of adult education and student-centred learning. It is based on the assumption that (unlike information) knowledge cannot be 'transferred' from one head to another but instead needs to be co-created and experienced in a social context. This has implications for teaching strategies and assessment (discussed below) as well as for students' role, responsibilities and expected contribution to knowledge creation. Students are active participants and take responsibility for their own learning. While the course is planned in advance to cover a set of topics and issues in IS research, the detailed content and depth can be adapted to meet student needs. Moreover additional topics of interest to students may be introduced (e.g. additional workshops or seminars).

As this is an advanced research methods course that is essential for designing, planning, and executing honours, masters or PhD research thesis, students are

typically highly motivated to learn and share their knowledge with others. However, motivation is just one prerequisite for successful participation in and completion of this course. Students are also expected to actively participate in all learning activities and take responsibility for their own learning. Responsibility in this context means responsibility for individual learning as well as for knowledge sharing and co-creation and collective learning. Reflection on learning processes, the way we learn or the factors that impede learning – individual and/or collective – would therefore be part of our learning practice.

3. COURSE AIMS AND OUTCOMES

3.1 Course Aims

The course aims to:

- ❑ Achieve deeper understanding of philosophical perspectives and epistemological assumptions underpinning different research approaches and methodologies in IS research
- ❑ Advance knowledge in research approaches, IS theories, methodologies, specific methods and techniques of data collection and analysis, theory building or testing, etc.
- ❑ Assist students in formulating research questions and selecting a research approach, methodology and specific methods and techniques appropriate for answering the questions
- ❑ Develop research skills required for conducting research projects, such as literature reviews, articulating research questions, justifying a research approach and methodology, designing and planning a research project, conducting data collection, analysing data and presenting research results.

This course also aims to provide an enjoyable learning experience. Consistent with the principles of adult education and student-centred learning, the course is designed to provide a stimulating and exciting atmosphere for exploring, questioning, and debating issues and for arguing and defending propositions and counter-propositions.

3.2 Student Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the course you should be able to:

1. identify and discuss different epistemological perspectives found in IS research publications; identify and reflect on your own epistemological perspective in your research proposal;
2. identify and describe the appropriate and applicable research approaches, methods and techniques for a research problem and epistemological perspective;
3. understand the meanings of and the relationships between theory and methodology in IS research and be able to discuss and apply different research approaches and methodologies;
4. construct and document an appropriate research design, including argumentation for data collection and analysis methods/techniques, and instrumentation and protocols in line with your selected research approach and methodology;
5. pilot (when feasible) your research methods, instrumentation and protocols with appropriate subjects; interpret the findings from the pilot study and document these.

3.3 Teaching Strategies

This course adopts a seminar format that includes lectures, public discussions, group work, workshops, and student presentations. It assumes active students' participation and contribution to knowledge co-creation. Therefore, participants are expected to have read the assigned chapters and papers as well as other related materials of their choice, before coming to class each week. 'Reading' means a thorough study that enables discussion and active participation during class time. Students are expected to contribute to class discussion on a regular and frequent basis.

Guest speakers will be invited to give a lecture/workshop which may cause some adjustments of the planned schedule.

4. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONDUCT

4.1 Workload

It is expected that you will spend at least **ten hours** per week studying this course, including approximately following activities:

Students are expected to invest minimum 10 hours per week in:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| ☐ Attend class | 3 hrs per week |
| ☐ Preparation & reading | 3 hrs per week |
| ☐ Group meetings in addition to class | 2 hrs per week |
| ☐ Individual research and assignment work | 2 hrs per week |

Over-commitment has been a cause of failure for many students. You should take the required workload into account when planning how to balance study with industrial training and other activities.

4.2 Attendance

Your regular and punctual attendance at lectures and seminars is expected in this course. University regulations indicate that if students attend less than eighty per cent of scheduled classes they may be refused final assessment.

4.3 General Conduct and Behaviour

You are expected to conduct yourself with consideration and respect for the needs of your fellow students and teaching staff. Conduct which unduly disrupts or interferes with a class, such as ringing or talking on mobile phones, is not acceptable and students may be asked to leave the class. More information on student conduct is available at: www.my.unsw.edu.au

4.4 Keeping informed

You should take note of all announcements made in lectures, tutorials or on the course web site. From time to time, the University will send important announcements to your university e-mail address without providing you with a paper copy. You will be deemed to have received this information.

5. LEARNING ASSESSMENT

5.1 Formal Requirements

To receive a pass grade in this course, you must meet ALL of the following criteria:

- ❑ Attain an overall mark of at least 50%.
- ❑ Attend at least 80% of all scheduled classes.
- ❑ Attain a satisfactory performance in each component of the course (see below). A mark of 45 percent or higher is normally regarded as satisfactory.

5.2 Assessment Details

Course Component	Assessment element	% of total mark	Learning outcomes assessed	Criteria for assigning marks
Research approaches and assumptions	Assignment #1 (group seminar paper of 3000 words) (submission week 6)	30%	1, 2	Ability to understand, interpret and compare research approaches, methods, outcomes and contributions; development of an argument; quality of presentation and writing; critical thinking
Research proposal	Assignment #2 (individual assignment) (submission week 14)	70%	2, 3, 4, 5	Demonstrated capacity to formulate research questions, justify a research approach, design and execute a research project; quality of the research proposal presentation

- 1) The assignment #1 **Research approaches and assumptions** is a group paper (up to 3,000 words) which discusses and compares assumptions underlying positivist, interpretivist and critical research approaches in IS research. The discussion should be based on three IS research papers (each representing a good example of one research approach) that students select from recognised IS journals (MISQ, ISR, ISJ, IT & People, JMIS, JAIS, etc.). The purpose of the assignment is to stimulate students to examine and reflect on differences and similarities of research approaches employed in investigating IS phenomena. Such examination should focus on assumptions regarding the purpose of research, the nature of reality, the nature of Information Technologies (IT) and IT-based information systems, assumptions about creation of valid knowledge and the relationship between knowledge and empirical world. In researching and writing this assignment students should read first four chapters in Neuman (2006) (in particular Chapter 4) and a classic paper by Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991). Assignment descriptions and a cover page are provided via WebCT.

The successful completion of this seminar paper will demonstrate that students achieved course objectives 1 and 2 (as defined above).

The following considerations apply:

- ❑ For assignment #1 students work in groups of 3 (exceptionally less than 3).
- ❑ Due date for submission is week 6 in class. Submission procedures are covered in section 3.2 of this outline. Failure to comply will generally attract a penalty.
- ❑ Students that commit to a group and then do not honour their commitments will lose marks. Group members are expected to work in a harmonious and professional fashion. This includes adequate management of non-performing members and conflict management. A group leader can be selected to help organise group activities.
- ❑ Students should report any problems to the lecturer-in-charge as early as possible. Confidential peer assessments may be used for group assignments if individual contributions vary. The Lecturer-in-Charge will have the final discretionary authority to alter individual marks, based on information provided in the peer assessments and/or direct consultation with involved parties.

2) The purpose of the assignment #2 **Research proposal** – individual paper up to 5,000 words including references – is to assist and prepare honours, PhD and MPhil students to

- write their Research proposal and
- plan, conduct and complete their thesis.

Research proposal typically involves the description of a research problem and its significance, short literature review, clear formulation of research question(s), argumentation for a particular approach and research methodology, research design, expected results (preliminary results when available) and their significance/relevance, discussion and implications for IS practice and/or research. Assignment descriptions and a cover page are provided via WebCT.

The completed assignment is due in Week 14.

The successful completion of this assignment will demonstrate that students achieved the objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Continuous Assessment

Students are expected to complete all readings assigned for a week and actively participate in the discussions and class activities. Students are encouraged to raise problems, propose discussion topic, bring/post a copy of an interesting paper, etc. Active participation in the class will demonstrate students learning progress.

5.3 Assignment Submission Procedure

Assignments are to be submitted in class on due date.

5.4 Late Submission

Late submission of assignments will incur a penalty of 10 percent of the maximum assessment mark per day. An extension in the time of submission will only be granted under exceptional circumstances by the lecturer-in-charge. In all cases,

documented evidence must be provided. In determining unsatisfactory performance the penalty will be ignored.

5.5 Special Consideration

Students are advised that the School have policies on course administrative matters such as special consideration. These guidelines can be viewed at

http://www2.sistm.unsw.edu.au/nps/servlet/portalservice?GI_ID=System.LoggedOutInheritableArea&maxWnd=CurrentPolicies

UNSW Policy and information on special consideration, can be found at:

<https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/SpecialConsideration.html>

UNSW policy and process for Special Consideration applies (see <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/SpecialConsideration.html>). Specifically:

- Applications for special consideration must go through UNSW Central administration (within 3 working days of the assessment to which it refers) – applications will **not** be accepted by teaching staff;
- Applying for special consideration does not automatically mean that you will be granted additional assessment or that you will be awarded an amended result;
- If you are making an application for special consideration (through UNSW Central Administration) please notify your Lecturer in Charge;
- Please note: a register of applications for Special Consideration is maintained. History of previous applications for Special Consideration is taken into account when considering each case.

5.6 Assignment Format

Will be provided on the course WebCT.

6. ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

The University regards plagiarism as a form of academic misconduct, and has very strict rules regarding plagiarism. For full information regarding policies, penalties and information to help you avoid plagiarism see:

<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism/index.html>

Plagiarism is the presentation of the thoughts or work of another as one's own.* Examples include:

- direct duplication of the thoughts or work of another, including by copying work, or knowingly permitting it to be copied. This includes copying material, ideas or concepts from a book, article, report or other written document (whether published or unpublished), composition, artwork, design, drawing, circuitry, computer program or software, web site, Internet, other electronic resource, or another person's assignment without appropriate acknowledgement;
- paraphrasing another person's work with very minor changes keeping the meaning, form and/or progression of ideas of the original;
- piecing together sections of the work of others into a new whole;

- presenting an assessment item as independent work when it has been produced in whole or part in collusion with other people, for example, another student or a tutor; and,
- claiming credit for a proportion a work contributed to a group assessment item that is greater than that actually contributed.†

Submitting an assessment item that has already been submitted for academic credit elsewhere may also be considered plagiarism.

The inclusion of the thoughts or work of another with attribution appropriate to the academic discipline does *not* amount to plagiarism.

Students are reminded of their Rights and Responsibilities in respect of plagiarism, as set out in the University Undergraduate and Postgraduate Handbooks, and are encouraged to seek advice from academic staff whenever necessary to ensure they avoid plagiarism in all its forms.

The Learning Centre website is the central University online resource for staff and student information on plagiarism and academic honesty. It can be located at:

www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism

The Learning Centre also provides substantial educational written materials, workshops, and tutorials to aid students, for example, in:

- correct referencing practices;
- paraphrasing, summarising, essay writing, and time management;
- appropriate use of, and attribution for, a range of materials including text, images, formulae and concepts.

Individual assistance is available on request from The Learning Centre.

Students are also reminded that careful time management is an important part of study and one of the identified causes of plagiarism is poor time management. Students should allow sufficient time for research, drafting, and the proper referencing of sources in preparing all assessment items.

* Based on that proposed to the University of Newcastle by the St James Ethics Centre. Used with kind permission from the University of Newcastle

† Adapted with kind permission from the University of Melbourne.

7. STUDENT RESOURCES

Texts

The major textbook for this course is:

Neuman, W.L. (2006) Social Research Methods—Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 6th ed., Allyn and Bacon, Boston.

Recommended readings:

Baroudi, J. and Orlikowski, W. (1989) The Problem of Statistical Power in MIS Research, *MISQ*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 87-106

- Baskerville, R.L. (1999) Investigating Information Systems with Action Research, *CAIS*, Vol. 2, Article 19.
- Baskerville, R. and Wood-Harper, A. (1996) A Critical Perspective on Action Research as a Method for Information Systems Research, *Journal of Information Technology*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 235-246.
- Benbasat, I., Goldstein, D. and Mead, M. (1987) The Case Research Strategy in Studies of Information Systems, *MISQ*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 369-386.
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- Benbasat, I. and Zmud, R.W. (1999) Empirical Research in Information Systems: The Practice of Relevance, *MISQ* (Issues and Opinions paper), Vol. 23, No. 1, pp.3-16.
- Boland, R.J. and Hirschheim, R.A. (Eds.) *Critical Issues in Information Systems Research*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester.
- Bunker, D. and MacGregor, R. (2002) The Context of Information Technology and Electronic Commerce Adoption in Small/Medium Enterprises: A Global Perspective, *AMCIS*, Dallas, pp. 1685-1684.
- Burns R.B. (2000) *Introduction to Research Methods*, 4th ed., Longman.
- Burnstein, F. and Gregor, S. (1999) The Systems Development or Engineering Approach to Research in Information Systems: An Action Research Perspective, *Proceedings of the 10th Australasian Conference on Information Systems*, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, pp. 122-33.
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- Cavana, R.Y., Delahaye, B.L. and Sekaran, U. (2001) *Applied Business Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*, John Wiley & Sons Australia.
- Cavaye, A. (1996) Case Study Research: A multi-faceted Research Approach For IS, *Information Systems Journal*, Vol. 6, No.3, pp. 227-242.
- Cecez-Kecmanovic, D. (2001) Doing Critical IS Research: the Question of Methodology, in E. Trauth (Ed.), *Qualitative Research in Information Systems: Issues and Trends*, pp. 142-163, Idea Group Publishing.
- Cecez-Kecmanovic, D. (2004) A Sensemaking Model of Knowledge in Organisations: A Way of Understanding Knowledge Management and the Role of Technology, *Journal of Knowledge Management Theory and Practice*, Vol 2, pp. 155-168.
- Cecez-Kecmanovic, D. (2005) "Basic Assumptions of the Critical Research Perspectives in Information Systems", Chapter 2 in D. Howcroft and E. Trauth (Eds.), *Handbook of Information Systems Research: Critical Perspectives on Information Systems Design, Implementation and Use*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK, pp. 19-46.
- Cecez-Kecmanovic, D., Janson, M. and Brown, A. (2002) The Rationality Framework for a Critical Study of Information Systems, the *Journal of Information Technology*. Vol. 17, No.4, pp. 215-227.
- Cecez-Kecmanovic, D., Moodie, D., Busuttil, A. and Plesman, F., (1999) "Organisational Change Mediated by E-mail and Intranet – An Ethnographic Study", *Information Technology and People*, 12, 1, pp. 9-26.

- Cegielski, C.G., Rebman, C.M. and Reithel, B.J. (2003) The Value of Certification: An Empirical Assessment of the Perceptions of End-Users of Local Area Networks, *Information Systems Journal*, Vol. 13, pp. 97-107.
- Chevalier, A. and Ivory, M.Y. (2003) Web Site Designs: Influences of Designer's Expertise and Design Constraints, *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, Vol 58, pp. 57-87.
- Chin, W. and Todd, P. (1995) On the Use, Usefulness, and Ease of Use of Structural Equation Modelling in MIS Research: A Note of Caution, *MISQ*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 237-246.
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- D'Ambra, J. and Rice, R.E. (2001) Emerging Factors in User Evaluation of the World Wide Web, *Information & Management*, Vol. 38, pp. 373-384.
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- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd Ed., Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.
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- Hirschheim, R., Klein, H., and Newman, M. (1991) "Information Systems Development as Social Action: Theoretical Perspectives and Practice," *Omega*, Vol.19, No.1, pp. 587-602.
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- Janson, M. and Cecez-Kecmanovic, D. (2005) "Making Sense of eCommerce as Social Action", *Information Technology & People*, 18, 4, pp. 311-342.

- Jarvenpaa, S. (1988) The Importance of Laboratory Experimentation in Information Systems Research, (Technical correspondence) *Communications of the ACM*, Vol. 31, No. 12, pp. 1502-1504.
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Other Resources, Support and Information

<http://www.isworld.org>
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html

Library training and support services - <http://info.library.unsw.edu.au>

- **Learning and study support**
 - o FCE Education Development Unit (<http://education.fce.unsw.edu.au>)
 - o UNSW Learning Centre (<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au>)
 - o EdTec – WebCT information (<http://www.edtec.unsw.edu.au>)
- **Counselling support** - <http://www.counselling.unsw.edu.au>
- **Library training and support services** - <http://info.library.unsw.edu.au>
- **Disability Support Services** – Those students who have a disability that requires some adjustment in their teaching or learning environment are encouraged to discuss their study needs with the Course Coordinator or the Equity Officer (<http://www.equity.unsw.edu.au/disabil.html>). Early notification is essential to enable any necessary adjustments to be made.

In addition, it is important that all students are familiar with University policies and procedures in relation to such issues as:

- **Examination procedures** and advice concerning illness or misadventure <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/academiclife/assessment/examinations/examinationrules.html>
- **Occupational Health and Safety** policies and student responsibilities; <http://www.riskman.unsw.edu.au/ohs/Policies%20&%20Procedures/UNSW%20OHS%20Accountability.pdf>

8. CONTINUAL COURSE IMPROVEMENT

Each year feedback is sought from students and other stakeholders about the courses offered in the School and continual improvements are made based on this feedback. UNSW's Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) Process (http://www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/ref4-5-1_catei_process.cfm) is one of the ways in which student evaluative feedback is gathered. Significant changes to courses

and programs within the School are communicated to subsequent cohorts of students.

9. COURSE SCHEDULE

The following course schedule is subject to change in response to your progress as well as in case we need to accommodate guest speakers. Therefore regularly check the schedule posted on WebCT which will be up-to-date. Additional readings (papers) will be prescribed for each week in advance as well.

Wk	Presentation	Presenter	Discussion	Neuman textbook
1	Course overview: learning objectives and outcomes; approach to learning and teaching; literature; assignments and assessment criteria Introduction to IS research: different approaches and research paradigms	Dubravka	Group formation for assignment #1 Students' research interests, expectations and needs – a questionnaire	Ch 1, 2
2	Research approaches in IS: positivist, interpretivist and critical	Dubravka	Group discussion: selection of papers for assignment #1	Ch 2-4
3	Research approaches in IS: positivist, interpretivist and critical- cont Ethics in IS research Literature review	Dubravka	Group discussion: analysis of selected papers for assignment #1 An example of a quantitative honours research project Honours thesis presentation: Melissa Raptis	Ch 5

4	Quantitative and qualitative research design; From a research question to method(s) selection Data collection and analysis methods – an overview • surveys • experiments • case studies • field studies and ethnographies • action research	Dubravka Guest presenter Rebecca Abrahall	An example of a qualitative honours research project Honours thesis presentation: Rebecca Abrahall	Ch 6, 7, 8
5	Field research and analysis of qualitative data	Dubravka Guest lecture Karl Heinz Kautz	Zenobia Pereira's case study Workshop on grounded theory and thematic coding	Ch 13, 15
6	Quantitative research methods and analysis • surveys • experiments	Dubravka	Assignment #1 submission Workshops: Survey design	Ch 9, 10
7	Case study research (quantitative and qualitative)	Dubravka Guest lecture tba	<u>Submission of assignment #1</u> Analysis of qualitative data and discussion	Ch
8	Action research	Dubravka Guest lecture tba	Workshops: Interviewing techniques	Ch

9	Multi-paradigm and multi method research: issues and challenges	Dubravka	Discussion: Mingers (2001)	tba
10	Design science (Engineering type) research in IS –	guest lecture by A/Prof Fethi Rabhi	Design science – group discussion/workshop	tba
11	Writing the research report	Dubravka	Presentations of research proposals	
12		Dubravka	Presentations of research proposals	tba
13		Dubravka	Presentations of research proposals	tba
14	Review of the Course	Dubravka	<u>Submissions of assignment #2</u> Administrative Issues Course Wrap-Up	