

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEW SOUTH WALES



Australian School of Business  
Information Systems, Technology and Management

**INFS4887 AND INFS5987  
RESEARCH TOPICS IN INFORMATION SYSTEMS 2**

**COURSE OUTLINE  
SESSION 2, 2007**

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## 1. COURSE STAFF

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Consultation times, Tue, 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 an urgent 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: Goldstein G04  
Time: Tuesday 17:00 – 20:00

### 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, discussing 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 individual and collective learning. While the course is planned in advance to cover a set of topics and issues in IS research, the detailed content and depth may be adapted to meet student needs. Moreover additional topics of interest to students may be introduced (e.g. additional workshops or seminars) for all or a group of students.

As this is an advanced research methods course that is essential for designing, planning, and executing honours, masters or PhD research, 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 review, 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 exercising rational argumentation.

#### **3.2 Student Learning Outcomes**

After the completion 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, methodologies, 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.

### 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 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:

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend class/workshops                          | <b>3 hrs</b> per week |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation & reading                           | <b>3 hrs</b> per week |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Group meetings/discussions in addition to class | <b>1 hrs</b> per week |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual research and assignment work         | <b>3 hrs</b> 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, seminars and workshops is expected in this course. Coming late to classes disturbs the teaching and learning processes and will not be tolerated. 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 coming late to the class, ringing or talking on mobile phones, using laptop to do unrelated work or games, 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](http://www.my.unsw.edu.au)

#### 4.4 Keeping informed

You should take note of all announcements made in lectures, tutorials or on the course WebCT. 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   |
|--|---|-----------------|----------------------------|--|
| Formulating research question                          | Assignment #1 (individual)  | 10%             | 2                          | Well formulated question(s) in the IS field, grounded in the literature  |
| Reasoned argumentation about research approaches in IS | Assignment #2<br>Group debate:<br>Advocates and opponents (individual making) | 20%             | 1                          | Ability to understand, interpret and discuss research approaches, methods, outcomes and contributions; development of an argument; quality of presentation and critical thinking |
| Research design  | Assignment #3<br>Individual research project                                  | 70%             | 2, 3, 4                    | Demonstrated capacity to formulate research questions, justify research approach and research method(s) and/or technique(s); quality of the presentation                         |

Detailed specification and timing of the assignments will be determined after discussion with students in class 1 and will be available on WebCT.

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 Special Consideration

Students are expected to participate in all classes and prescribed activities (e.g. over WebCT). 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= Current Policies](http://www2.sistm.unsw.edu.au/nps/servlet/portalservice?GI_ID=System.LoggedOutInheritableArea&maxWnd= Current Policies)

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.

#### 5.4 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](http://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 and readings:

In this course selected papers will be provided for each week from the list below and sometimes references will be made to the textbook used in RT1:

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

### Reference list:

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

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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.
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- 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, No. 3, pp. 155-168.
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- 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, Vol. 1, 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, *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 237-246.
- Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*, Allen & Unwin.
- 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.
- Darke, P., Shanks, G. & Broadbent, M. (1998) Successfully Completing Case Study Research: Combining Rigour, Relevance and Pragmatism, *Information Systems Journal*, Vol. 8, Vol. 4, pp. 273-289.
- Deetz, S. (1996) Describing Differences in Approaches to Organization Science: Rethinking Burrell and Morgan and their Legacy, *Organization Science*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 191- 207.
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- Gefen, D., Straub, D. and Boudreau, M. (2000) Structural Equation Modelling and Regression: Guidelines for Research Practice, *Communications of the AIS*, Vol. 4, Article 7, pp. 1-77.
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- Orlikowski, W. (1993) CASE Tools as Organizational Change: Investigating Incremental and Radical Changes in Systems Development, *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 3. pp. 309-340.
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### Other Resources, Support and Information

<http://www.isworld.org>

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_apa.html](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**
  - Faculty Education Development Unit (<http://education.fce.unsw.edu.au>)
  - UNSW Learning Centre (<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au>)
  - 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](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

Course schedule will be discussed in the first class but will be subject to change depending on student progress and requests for discussions or workshops on special topics. 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.