



Faculty of Arts
& Social Sciences

School of the Arts and Media

ARTS4100

RESEARCH METHODS AND THESIS WRITING SKILLS

Session 1, 2014

UNSW Course Outline

1. Location of the course

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
School of the Arts and Media
Honours
Arts4100
Research Methods and Thesis Writing Skills
Session 1, 2014

Class Times & Venues:

- 1. First 3 sessions (O Week):** Tuesday 25 February, Wednesday 26 February and Thursday 27 February – 10 a.m – 12 noon, 306 Robert Webster building.
- 2. Weeks 4–12:** Thursdays, 1 – 3 pm, Webster 332 Dance Studio (K-G14-332)

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3. Staff Contact Details

Position	Name	Email	Availability; times and location	Phone
Course Convenor	Prof. R. Harindranath	r.hari@unsw.edu.au	Tuesdays 9 – 11 a.m, Room 222, Robert Webster.	9385 6674

4. School of the Arts and Media Contact Information

Room 312, level 3 Robert Webster Building

Phone: 9385 4856

Email: sam@unsw.edu.au

5. Attendance Requirements

- A student is expected to attend all class contact hours.
- A student who attends less than 80% of class contact hours without justification may be awarded a final grade of UF (Unsatisfactory Fail).
- A student who arrives more than 15 minutes late may be penalised for non-attendance.
- If a student experiences illness, misadventure or other occurrence that makes absence from a class/activity unavoidable, they should seek permission from the Course Authority. The application should be accompanied by an original or certified copy of a medical certificate or other form of appropriate evidence.
- A Course Authority may excuse a student from classes for up to one month. A student seeking approval to be absent for more than one month must apply in writing to the Dean.
- A student who has submitted the appropriate documentation but attends less than 66% of the classes/activities will be asked by the Course Authority to apply to discontinue the course without failure.
- For more information about the FASS attendance protocols, see the SAM policies and guidelines webpage: <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>
- Attendance will be taken at each seminar/workshop session. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you are deemed not to have attended. It is your responsibility to ensure your name has been marked off at each class.

6. Essential Information For FASS/SAM Students

For essential student information relating to: attendance requirements; requests for extension; review of marks; occupational health and safety; examination procedures; special consideration in the event of illness or misadventure; student equity and disability; and other essential matters, see the SAM Policies and Guidelines webpage:

<https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

7. Course details

Credit Points:

6 Units of Credit

Summary of the Course

This course is taught through a combination of seminars and workshops. It is designed to introduce students to higher-level research and writing skills. It will extend the research and analysis skills developed in the first three years of your degree in order to support the preparation and completion of your first major piece of independent research – your Honours thesis or
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Course Code

Session 1, 2014

CRICOS Provider Code: 00098G

production. It will introduce you to core issues, processes and approaches to theoretical and empirical research, which will enable you consolidate and extend your understanding of your chosen discipline and of the place of your research project in it. The course is organized around a structured progression from beginning research, through processes of managing your research and thesis writing.

As an Honours course, Research Methods and Thesis Writing Skills focuses on developing higher level research skills in order to help you work independently on demanding research tasks, and to present your work formally. At the completion of this course you will be familiar with relevant research practices and will have produced a detailed research proposal and plan for your Honours thesis or production.

Students are expected to:

1. attend all seminars and workshops;
2. come prepared each week to contribute to group discussion and other forms of active participation;
3. engage with the material presented in class;
4. approach the research tasks and seminar discussions in a spirit of openness and intellectual generosity;
5. prepare and complete all assessment tasks.

Aims of the Course

This course will encourage students to:

1. develop their own critical perspective on the nature of theoretical and empirical research in their discipline, and to refine their understanding of relevant epistemological issues in their discipline;
2. conceive a research project and consider appropriate research methods;
3. develop appropriate writing and oral skills in presenting their work, including the ability to engage with and respond appropriately to presentation of work by peers and colleagues.

Student learning outcomes

At the conclusion of this course students will be able to:

1. work independently to develop complex research projects;
2. critically analyse the structure, argumentation and quality of a thesis or practical project, and to assess the methodological approaches employed;
3. present an outline of specific research questions and identify appropriate research methods;
4. develop a formal research proposal in the disciplinary area of their thesis or production.

Graduate Attributes

This course will enable students consolidate the following attributes:

1. the ability to engage in independent and reflective learning;
2. the ability to independently conduct relevant and high quality research;
3. the capacity for analytical and critical thinking, and for creative problem solving;
4. the skills of effective and precise academic communication.

8. Rationale for the inclusion of content and teaching approach

This course is based on the premise that Honours students require specific skills in order to conceive and carry out a piece of independent research, and to write a thesis that meets certain academic standards and protocols. The approach is informed by principles of interactive and collaborative learning, student agency, and the pleasures of conducting independent scholarly research. The aim here is to not only enhance the students' ability to engage creatively with epistemological issues within their own disciplines, but also offer them the opportunity to learn from approaches to research in disciplines other than their own.

9. Teaching strategies

ARTS4100 will begin in intensive mode with three two-hour classes in O-Week, and then continue in regular mode, with two-hour workshops and/or seminars each week. Classes are designed to enable students learn the skills of conceiving a research project, including locating their research within relevant academic literature, managing the research process, and considering appropriate research methods. At the workshops students will work with peers from other disciplines on specific tasks such as sharpening their research question(s), brainstorming ideas, presenting their methodology, working on their timeline, and presenting a critique of old theses. The seminars will cover topics such as the literature review, online databases, research methodology, authoring a thesis, and planning and writing the thesis.

Advice concerning special consideration in the event of illness or misadventure is available in the document "Essential Information for all SAM Students", which can be found at:

http://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/media/File/ESSENTIAL_INFORMATION_FOR_ALL_STUDENTS.pdf

10. Assessment

In order to pass this course, you must make a serious attempt at ALL assessment tasks. This is a SAM requirement.

Assessment task	Length	Weight	Learning outcomes assessed	Graduate attributes assessed	Due date
Thesis critique	1500 words	25%	2	1, 3, 4	Friday 11 April
Formal research proposal	3500 words	65%	1, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4	Friday 9 May
Research presentation (oral)	5 – 10 minutes	10%	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4	Thursday 29 May

Details:

1. Thesis critique:

Choose ONE recent (post–2005) Honours thesis in your discipline. You can borrow a thesis from Jennifer Beale (Room 248, Level 2, Robert Webster; email: j.beale@unsw.edu.au). Please ensure that you return the thesis after you submit the critique. Failure to return the thesis that you borrow may jeopardise the finalization of your Honours results.

Your task is to submit a critical evaluation of the thesis you have chosen. Your critique could consider the following:

- a) Thesis topic – does the author justify their research topic and explain the relevance of the research project? Do they explain how the topic relates to broader issues and debates within their discipline?
- b) Literature review – does the author cover relevant debates in the field or discipline, and how sound is the critical evaluation of relevant literature? Does the author successfully locate their thesis topic and research question within on-going debates in the field / discipline? What awareness of other relevant research is displayed? How wide is the range of literature covered in the review, and how accurate and relevant is the critique of this literature?
- c) Thesis structure – does the thesis follow a logical structure? How does the structure of the thesis relate to the research question and the analysis of relevant material? How well do the various chapters / sections relate to each other, and to the whole thesis? Is there an irrelevant section, or a chapter / section that is insufficiently developed?
- d) Argument – how original and valid is the central argument? What, in your estimation, does it contribute to the discipline? How effectively does the author articulate their contribution to the discipline? Is this accurate? Are there any identifiable gaps or jumps in the argument?
- e) Quality of writing – is the writing clear and appropriate for its academic purpose? How skillfully does the author construct their argument? Does the writing display an engaging and original ‘voice’? Is there an identifiable narrative that runs through the thesis? Is the referencing proper and accurate? Does the thesis meet academic standards regarding appropriate acknowledgement of sources?

2. Research Proposal:

Your research proposal must cover the following:

- a) Tentative title: this should reflect the precise research question you intend to investigate or explore in your thesis.
- b) Rationale: what are you seeking to research, or what problems do you intend to address in your thesis? Why is the topic of interest to you, and why do you think this research is necessary? How does it relate to existing, on-going debates in your discipline / field?
Production students: describe in detail the project you are going to undertake and how it relates to your research questions.
- c) Literature review: this will form the major part of the research proposal, and will establish both the broad academic context of your research topic and its academic rationale. It will provide a succinct and critical evaluation of relevant literature and its bearing on your topic, demonstrate your understanding of the area of your research topic, and locate gaps in the existing literature that justifies your topic.

- d) Methodology: what approach will you use to address your topic? If your research involves data, what methods will you use to collect and analyse data? What conceptual, methodological or scholarly approach have you chosen to complete your carry out your analysis or production?
- e) Tentative chapter outline: what are your chapter/section titles, and how do they relate to the topic and your research questions? Outline how they develop the argument of your thesis.
- f) Timeline: outline your timeline for conducting your research and writing and redrafting your chapters.
Production students: provide details of your production timeline for the completion and exhibition of your Honours project, as well as the timeline for the writing and redrafting of your thesis. Please provide a list of technical requirements for your project and the resources you will need to show/performance the project.
- g) References: provide a list of references relevant to this assignment, and an indicative bibliography of other sources that you intend to use in your thesis.

3. Research Presentation:

Your research presentation will be 5 to 10 minutes in duration, and will provide a summary of your research proposal, covering the research topic and rationale, literature review, and methodology.

All the assessments will be discussed in detail in class. You will have the opportunity to present a short thesis critique in Weeks 4 and 5 (Thursday 27 March and 3 April), and there will be time for individual consultations regarding the Research Proposal in class in Week 8 (Thursday 1 May).

Submission of Assessment Tasks

Assignments 1 and 2 (Thesis Critique and Research Proposal) - Please submit an electronic copy to Turnitin, AND a hard copy to the appropriate SAM Assessment Box. Both copies must be submitted on or before the relevant deadlines.

Late Submission

PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE RULES APPLY FOR ALL COURSES IN SAM.

If your assignment is submitted after the due date, a penalty of 3% per day (including Saturday, Sunday and public holidays) will be imposed for up to 2 weeks. For example, if you are given a mark of 72 out of 100 for an essay, and your essay were handed in two days late, it would attract a penalty of 6% and the mark would be reduced to 66%. If the same essay were handed in seven days late (i.e. a penalty of 21%) it would receive a mark of 51%. If your assignment is not submitted within 2 weeks of its due date, it will receive a mark of 0. For more information on submission of late work, consult the FASS assessment protocols at <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

Extension Procedure

- A student seeking an extension should submit a SAM extension application form to the Course Authority before the due date.
- The Course Authority should respond to the request within two working days.

- The Course Authority can only approve an extension of up to five days. A student requesting an extension of more than five days should complete an application for Special Consideration.
- The Course Authority advises their decision through the online extension tool.
- If a student is granted an extension, failure to comply will result in a penalty. The penalty will be invoked one minute past the approved extension time.
- A student who missed an assessed activity held within class contact hours should apply for Special Consideration via myUNSW.
- This procedure does not apply to assessment tasks that take place during regular class hours or any task specifically identified by the Course Authority as not subject to extension requests.
- For more information, see the FASS extension protocols on the SAM policies and guidelines webpage: <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

Special Consideration

In the case of more serious or ongoing illness or misadventure, you will need to apply for Special Consideration. For information on Special Consideration please go to this URL:

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

Students who are prevented from attending a substantial amount of the course may be advised to apply to withdraw without penalty. This will only be approved in the most extreme and properly documented cases.

11. Academic honesty and plagiarism

Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of others and presenting them as your own. It can take many forms, from deliberate cheating to accidentally copying from a source without acknowledgement.

UNSW groups plagiarism into the following categories:

- **Copying:** using the same or very similar words to the original text or idea without acknowledging the source or using quotation marks. This also applies to images, art and design projects, as well as presentations where someone presents another's ideas or words without credit.
- **Inappropriate paraphrasing:** changing a few words and phrases while mostly retaining the original structure and information without acknowledgement. This also applies in presentations where someone paraphrases another's ideas or words without credit. It also applies to piecing together quotes and paraphrases into a new whole, without referencing and a student's own analysis to bring the material together.
- **Collusion:** working with others but passing off the work as a person's individual work. Collusion also includes providing your work to another student before the due date, or for the purpose of them plagiarising at any time, paying another person to perform an academic task, stealing or acquiring another person's academic work and copying it, offering to complete another person's work or seeking payment for completing academic work.
- **Duplication:** submitting your own work, in whole or in part, where it has previously been prepared or submitted for another assessment or course at UNSW or another university.

Details of what plagiarism is can be found on the Learning Centre's Website [Plagiarism & Academic Integrity website \(http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism\)](http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism), in the myUNSW student A-Z: Guide <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/Plagiarism.html> and in Appendix A of the [Student Misconduct Procedure \(pdf-https://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/studentmisconductprocedures.pdf\)](https://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/studentmisconductprocedures.pdf).

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

- 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 proper referencing of sources in preparing all assessment items.

UNSW makes use of the similarity detection tool Turnitin. For this course you are required to submit an electronic version of your written assignments so they may be reviewed using this procedure.

12. Course schedule

Date	Time	Location	Seminar/Workshop content
Tuesday 25 February	10 a.m – 12 noon	Webster Room 306	Introduction to the course, expectations, organization, assessments; Your research ideas – what are you interested in researching, and why?
Wednesday 26 February	10 a.m – 12 noon	Webster Room 306	Conceiving a research topic, turning research ideas into research questions; Writing a literature review.
Thursday 27 February	10 a.m to 12 noon	Webster Room 306	Literature review – finding and managing archives and sources; Using source material; Presentation by Maryanne Bokan, Outreach Librarian, UNSW Library.
Thursday 27 March	1 pm – 3 pm	Webster 332 Dance Studio	Prof. Tom Watson – workshop on Academic Writing
Thursday 3 April	1 pm – 3 pm	Webster 332 Dance Studio	Thesis critique oral presentation & feedback
Thursday 10 April	1 pm – 3 pm	Webster 332 Dance Studio	Writing your research proposal – research methodology; mapping the research process – 1. Thesis Critique Due This Friday 11 April
Thursday 17 April	1 pm – 3 pm	Webster 332 Dance Studio	Oral presentation of draft outline of research proposals, and feedback.
Mid semester break			
Thursday 1 May	1 pm – 3 pm	Webster 332 Dance Studio	Individual consultations on your research proposal.
Thursday 8 May	1pm – 3 pm	Webster 332 Dance Studio	Writing as Method; authoring your thesis. Research Proposal Due This Friday 9 May
Thursday 15 May	1 pm – 3 pm	Webster 332 Dance Studio	Mapping your research process – 2; conceiving and managing your thesis and the supervision process, organizing your time.
Thursday 22 May	1 pm – 3 pm	Webster 332 Dance Studio	What we look for in a thesis; key characteristics of a good thesis.
Thursday 29 May	TBC	TBC	Research Presentations.

13. Course evaluation and development

Periodically student evaluative feedback on courses is gathered, using among other means, UNSW's Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI). Your feedback is extremely important and is taken seriously, and continual improvements are made to the course based in part on such feedback. You will also have the opportunity to provide informal feedback during the class in Week 11.