Extended Dissertation Course Descriptor

Course Title	Extended Dissertation	Faculty	Politics & IR
Course code	NCHPIR780	Course Leader	Dr Xuechen Chen
Credit points	60	Teaching Period	Either
FHEQ level	7	Date approved	January 2021
Compulsory/ Optional	Compulsory		
Pre-requisites	NCHPIR779 Research Methods		
Co-requisites	None		

COURSE SUMMARY

The Extended Dissertation enables students to deepen their understanding of a particular area of international politics, political science, or political theory. Students will choose their topic independently and be supported by a supervisor to produce a work of academic research of approximately 15,000 words in length. The dissertation prepares students for independent research and further postgraduate study. Dissertations can take a variety of forms. Students can opt for an empirical, theoretical, comparative, or blended approach, in keeping with the programme's diverse offerings. Approaches are agreed between supervisors and students in the early stages of the dissertation process. Supervisors will ensure that the topic and approach fall within the discipline of Politics and IR, even if they draw on other disciplines and methodologies. The dissertation must be written in a style appropriate to academic work in Politics and International Relations.

COURSE AIMS

- To develop a substantial piece of written work, incorporating advanced research methods and, where relevant, original research.

- To introduce students to complex analyses via the application of research methods within international relations, political science, and/or political theory.

- To develop conceptual, methodological, and empirical frameworks in which to study global politics.

- To foster the technical skills involved in research and the writing of substantive pieces of work to the highest standard.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

K1d   Synthesise and critically review a variety of resources, and build bibliographies suited to their research and advanced scholarship.

K2d   Devise their own research project and communicate their ideas and research to both specialised and non-specialised audiences.

K3d   Understand the ways in which the theoretical cornerstones of the module on the programme intersect with one another.

SUBJECT SPECIFIC SKILLS

S1d   Demonstrate a systematic knowledge of themes in international politics, such as sustainability and security.

S2d   Situate these themes within complex theoretical issues surrounding global politics, sustainability and security today.

S3d   Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the frameworks within which scholars approach these concepts.

S4d   Show their ability to effectively gather, manage, synthesize and employ relevant data in support of their written argument.

TRANSFERABLE AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

T1d   Develop research and analysis that incorporates a variety of texts, theoretical perspectives and modes of analysis.

T2d   Gain an appreciation for interdisciplinary collaboration.

T3d   Learn how to analyse texts in depth; to contextualize those texts; and to synthesise primary and secondary sources into a framework of explanation.

T4d   Deepen their awareness of methodological and empirical issues within political science, political theory, and/or international relations.

T4d   Consistently apply an excellent level of technical proficiency in written English, using an advanced application of scholarly terminology, that demonstrates the ability to deal with complex issues both systematically and with sophistication.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and learning strategies for this course will include:

- Minimum of three dissertation supervisor meetings per student based on an approved research proposal (pre-requisite assessment of Research Methods course).

Course information and supplementary materials are available on the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Students are required to attend and participate in all the formal and timetabled sessions for this course. Students are also expected to manage their directed learning and independent study in support of the course.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

- Work independently, creatively, and to deadlines
- Conduct independent research and explore relevant existing knowledge
- Analyse, contextualise, and interpret complex policy issues and multiple sources of evidence
- Synthesise and evaluate information against a backdrop of uncertainty
- Develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Present findings and opinions in a clear, structured manner, whether orally or in writing
- Engage in collaborative and constructive discussion

ASSESSMENT

FORMATIVE

Students will be formatively assessed during the course by means of set assignments. These do not count towards the end of year results, but will provide students with developmental feedback.

SUMMATIVE

AE	Assessment Activity	Weighting (%)	Online submission	Duration	Length
1	Extended Dissertation	100%	Yes	Duration of course	15,000 words

All assignments will be assessed in accordance with the assessment aims set out in the Programme Specification.

FEEDBACK

Students will receive formal feedback in a variety of ways: written (including via email correspondence); oral and indirectly through for example, discussion during group tutorials. Students will also attend the formal meeting, Collections, in which they will receive constructive and developmental feedback on their performance.

Feedback is provided on summative assessment and is made available to the student either via email, the VLE or another appropriate method.

INDICATIVE READING

Note: Comprehensive and current reading lists for courses are produced annually in the Course Syllabus or other documentation provided to students; the indicative reading list provided below is used as part of the approval/modification process only.

BOOKS

Biggam, J., *Succeeding with your Master's Dissertation: a Step by Step Handbook*, OpenUniversity Press, 2011 (2nd edition).

Bryman, A., *Social Research Methods*, Oxford University Press, 2012 (4th edition).

Cottrell, S., *Dissertation and Project Reports: a Step by Step Guide*, Palgrave 2014.

Gorge, A.L. and Bennett, A., *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 2005, Cambridge: MIT Press.

Halperin, S. and Heath, O., *Political Research Methods and Practical Skills*, Oxford 2017 (2nd edition).

Marsh, D. and Stoker, G., *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 (3rd edition).

Monroe, A.D., *Essentials of Political Research*. Essentials of Political Science, Boulder: Westview Press, 2000.

Rudestam, K.E. and Newton, R.R., *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*, London: Sage, 2007 (3rd edition).

Smith, M.J., *Social Science in Question*, London: Sage, 2003.

Van Evera, S., *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, Cornell: Cornell University, 1997.

Wisker, G., *The Postgraduate Research Handbook: Succeed with your MA, MPhil, EdD and PhD*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007 (2nd edition).

INDICATIVE TOPICS

Students will undertake a directed independent study of a designated area, in conjunction with their supervisor, identified from an area of strength of the faculty (where inter-disciplinary collaboration is available, then from an area of expertise from within the College).

Title: NCHPIR780 Extended Dissertation					
Approved by: Academic Board					
Location: Academic Handbook/Programme specifications and Handbooks/ Postgraduate Programme Specifications/MSc Digital Politics and Sustainable Development Specification/Course Descriptors					
Version number	Date approved	Date published	Owner	Proposed next review date	Modification (As per AQF4) & category number
2.0	February 2022	May 2022	Dr Xuechen Chen	January 2026	Category 3: Changes to Learning Outcomes
1.0	January 2021	May 2021	Dr Xuechen Chen	January 2026	