

Title: Research Methods in Peace & Conflict Studies

Course Code: PCS-832

Credit Hours: 3

Objectives of the Course

- To equip students to critically engage with core research philosophies (decolonial, constructivist, poststructural) and paradigms (positivist, interpretivist) in PCS.
- To develop proficiency in designing qualitative-dominant research (narrative, CDA, ethnography, etc.) and integrating quantitative/mixed methods for conflict contexts.
- To enable students to formulate research problems, construct literature reviews (MEAL), and design ethical methodologies for (post-) conflict zones.
- To cultivate an ability to critique research designs, use of EndNote software, analyze data using SPSS, MAXQDA/NVivo, and evaluate epistemological assumptions in PCS scholarship.
- To train students to navigate ethical challenges (danger zones, plagiarism) and ethical use of technology in peace and conflict research.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, the students should be able to:

- Distinguish between positivist, interpretivist, and decolonial paradigms, justifying their implications for PCS research design.
- Describe and compare the major quantitative and qualitative research methods in PCS research.
- Construct rigorous qualitative studies (e.g., narrative inquiry, CDA) and basic quantitative/mixed-methods proposals addressing peace/conflict problems.
- Develop literature reviews using the MEAL approach and theoretical frameworks aligned with research questions/hypotheses.

- Evaluate methodological strengths/limitations in PCS literature and perform descriptive statistical or thematic analysis using relevant software.
- Formulate context-specific safety protocols, ethical safeguards, and anti-plagiarism practices for fieldwork in fragile settings.
- Defend research proposals orally, integrating methodological justification and critical self-reflection.

Course Contents

- Course Introduction
- Contextualizing Research in PCS: Origins, past, present and the future
- Historicities, Epistemology, Ontology, Methodology, decoloniality
 - Paradigms: Positivism, Post-positivism, Interpretivism
- Introduction to Select Research Philosophies (Constructivism, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism, Posthumanism)
 - Qual/Quant/Mixed, Inductive/Deductive
- Selecting and Defining a problem (Research Questions and Hypothesis)
- Literature Review (MEAL Approach)
- Research Design Components of Quant (Selecting Sample, Measuring Instrument(s), Survey, Correlational, Causal-Comparative, Experimental, and single-subject-experimental Research)
 - Qual (interviews, FGDs, Observation, Archives/Records)
- Six Approaches in Qual PCS Research (Narrative Research, Phenomenological Research)
- Six Approaches in Qual PCS Research (Grounded Theory, Case Study)
- Six Approaches in Qual PCS Research (Ethnography/Virtual Ethnography, Critical Discourse Analysis, (and DA)
- Descriptive Statistics, Inferential Statistics/Analysis Software (SPSS, & MAXQDA, or NVivo)
- Action Research + Mixed Method Research in PCS (Exploratory Sequential, and Convergent Parallel Designs). Qual Research Data Analysis and Interpretation (steps & Strategies)
- Reporting & Critiquing, and Evaluating Research

- Research in (post) Conflict/danger Zones + Use of Technology (EndNote), ethical considerations + Avoiding Plagiarism

Nature of Assessment

Nature of Exam	Duration	Frequency	Weighting (%age)
End semester exam	3 hours	1	30 – 50
Mid Term	2 hours	1	15 – 25
Quizzes	-	Minimum: 3	05 – 15
Class Participation	-	-	0 – 5*
Assignments / Project(s) / Case Studies	Own time	-	10 – 40

- a. *Shall be allocated only if there are no case studies.

Reading Material

- Acar, Y. G., Moss, S. M., & Uluğ, Ö. M. (2020). *Researching peace, conflict, and power in the field: Methodological challenges and opportunities*. Springer.
- Akinyoade, D. (2012). Ontology and epistemology for peace and conflict studies. In the Institute of African Studies, Apresentado na International Conference on the Security Sector and Conflict Management, Abadan, Nigeria.
- Autesserre, S. (2021). *The frontlines of peace: An insider's guide to changing the world*. Oxford University Press.
- Cárdenas, M. (2023). Decolonizing perspectives in peace research. In C. Cohrs, N. Knab, & G. Sommer (Eds.). *Handbuch Friedenspsychologie (Handbook of Peace Psychology)*. University of Marburg.
- Cooper, R., & Finley, L. L. (Eds.). (2014). *Peace and conflict studies research: A qualitative perspective*. IAP.

- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications
- Cruz, J. D. (2021). Colonial power and decolonial peace. *Peacebuilding*, 9(3), 274-288.
- Dulal, T. D. (2025). Application of Positivism and Post-Positivism Approach in Contemporary Research. *International Journal of Applied Research and Sustainable Sciences*, 3(4), 305-314.
- Dunn, D. J. (2018). *The first fifty years of peace research: A survey and interpretation*. Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2023). Critical discourse analysis. In *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 11-22). Routledge.
- Höglund, K., & Öberg, M. (2011). *Understanding peace research*. Routledge London.
- Iftikhar, W. (2018). Philosophical trilogy in critical visual analysis—Case of refugee discourse. *Discourse, context & media*, 26, 127-134.
- Iftikhar, W. (2018). Critical Discourse Analysis of Use of Human Shield in India: A Perspective from Pakistan. *NDU Journal*.
- Khalaf, H. M. (2024). The Methodological and Epistemological Developments in Conflict and Peace Studies. *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, (47).
- McCandless, E. (2007). Selected research perspectives and paradigms. *Peace Research for Africa*, 11.
- Nakhid, C., Nakhid-Chatoor, M., Santana, A. F., Wilson-Scott, S., & Butcher-Lashey, J. (2023). *Affirming methodologies*. London, Available: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781003196969>.
- Robins, A. (2020). Youth peacebuilding programs in post-conflict societies: An interpretivist study.
- R Gay, L., E Mills, G., & W Airasian, P. (2021). Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application. *Pakistan Journal of Educational Research and Evaluation (PJERE)*, 3(2).
- Shinko, R. E. (2008). Agonistic peace: A postmodern reading. *Millennium*, 36(3), 473-491.
- Simons, C., & Zanker, F. (2012). Finding the Cases That Fit: methodological challenges in peace research.

- Skelly, J. M. (2002). A constructivist approach to peace studies. *Peace Review*, 14(1), 57-60.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2015). Critical discourse analysis. *The handbook of discourse analysis*, 466-485.
- Vriens, L. (2014). Postmodernism, Peace Culture, and Peace Education. In *Three Decades of Peace Education Around the World* (pp. 341-358). Routledge.
- Wallensteen, P. (2011). The Origins of Contemporary Peace Research. In K. Höglund & M. Öberg (Eds.), *Understanding peace research* (pp. 14-32). Routledge
- Wilkinson, D. (2018). *Deadly quarrels: Lewis F. Richardson and the statistical study of war*. University of California Press.
- Wodak, R. (2004). Critical discourse analysis. *Qualitative research practice*, 185, 185-204.
- Zehfuss, M. (2013). Critical theory, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism. *Handbook of international relations*, 2, 145-169.