Overview of the Course

1 General Description

The central goal of this course is to provide an introduction to a variety of research approaches and methods in the social sciences. The aim of the course is to enable students to develop their own research designs as well as be able to critique the research designs of others. Students will be exposed to different research methodologies (quantitative and qualitative), and data analysis techniques.

Student in this course will be required: to read course materials, to interact with fellow participants and instructors, listen to weekly presentations by the instructors and most importantly, to critically self-reflect.

At the end of the course, students will have a research design (research proposal) that can be conducted as part of their professional work or is an academic requirement for a course.

For students enrolled in the online MA in Sustainable Peace in the Contemporary World: It is expected that the research proposal becomes the initial document for the final research project in the programme, which is a graduation requirement in the online MA programme.

2 Intended Participants

UPEACE MA students, and professionals interested in the area of research in peace and conflict studies

3 Pre- or Co-requisites

No pre- or co-requisites are set for the course. However, students should have the ability to read complex material and to write in English.

4 Class Format

4.1 Number of credits: 3

4.2 Number of sessions and length of course: 9 sessions.

4.3 Methodology

This course will be run through Forums. The sessions will have a mixture of lectures, online discussion, and applied skills training. Reading materials will be assigned for
each session; however, students may read ahead according to the syllabus. All materials will be available online. Active participation by all students is expected and required.

5 Requirements

Students will be required to complete all readings on the syllabus, and participate in the forum discussions. There will be two written assignments (a quiz and a research proposal).

6 Assessment

a. For Credit Students

20% Participation through Forum Postings
Participation will be assessed according to the following criteria: active participation in online discussions and activities; and, quality of participation. Quality participation involves respect for other seminar participants, serious engagement with the views of others, articulation of your thoughts on the issues, making contributions to discussions, and mastery of the seminar readings.

20% Quiz on Research Concepts
Students will have to complete a quiz on the research terminology and concepts that they will be learning from sessions 1-6. The quiz will be available during session 6, and will be due at the end of session 7.

60% Research Proposal
The research proposal should address the following: 1) the research question; 2) where your research question fits in the current literature; 3) the independent and dependent variables; 4) the selection of method (and if using case study methods, selection of cases); 5) data requirements; 6) how data will be collected; 7) data analysis methods; and 8) a discussion of any foreseen challenges to completing the research project, were you to actually carry it out.

The proposal will be developed over the nine weeks of the course. The professors will provide ongoing instructions and guidance on completing the weekly components of the research proposal. Students will be required to post a copy of their ongoing work to both Professors every week, and provide feedback to one other student on their work of the week before. This process of weekly posting research components publicly, and giving/receiving feedback from classmates and the professors will enhance the development of research proposals.

The final research proposal should be 3,500 – 5,000 words. It will be due on the last day of class, March 15, 2013.

b. For Non-Credit Students
Non-credit students will be required to:
- Participate through forum postings
- Take the quiz on research concepts
Provide feedback to other students on their weekly submission of research proposal components
On a voluntary basis, they may develop their own research proposal following the same guidelines and timeline specified above.

7 **Intended Learning Outcomes**

➢ Awareness of different research approaches and methods
➢ Understanding of key differences between research approaches
➢ Understanding of key differences between quantitative and qualitative methods
➢ Ability to conduct qualitative research
➢ Ability to develop rigorous research designs

8 **Course meeting times and place**

The course meets over nine weeks using the UPEACE online platform.

9 **Instructors**

Dr. Amr Abdalla, Vice-Rector UPEACE, Costa Rica

Course Sessions and Readings

10 **Detailed outline of instructional sessions**

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<td>Introduction: terminology and concepts; Quantitative and Qualitative methods</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Research Approaches: Positivism, Interpretivism, Constructionism, Feminism, and Critical Theory</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Research Conceptualization, Literature Review and assumptions/ hypotheses</td>
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<td>Research Design and Operationalization</td>
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11 Readings

For each lecture there will be a series of readings of articles and book excerpts assigned by the Professors. The readings are assigned to prepare the students for the discussions in class the following session, and to enable them to actively participate in these discussions.

12 Professors’ Biographical Information

Amr Abdalla is Professor and Vice-Rector at UPEACE. Before joining UPEACE, Dr. Abdalla was a Senior Fellow with the Program on Peacekeeping Policy, School of Public Policy, at George Mason University. He was also a Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences.

Both his academic and professional careers are multi-disciplinary. He obtained a law degree in Egypt in 1977 where he practiced law as a prosecuting attorney from 1978 to 1987. He then emigrated to the U.S. where he obtained a Master's degree in Sociology and a Ph.D. in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University.

He has been teaching graduate classes in conflict analysis and resolution, and has conducted training, research and evaluation of conflict resolution programs in Egypt, Switzerland, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Italy, Rwanda, Ireland, Iraq, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Zambia. He also pioneered the development of the first conflict resolution training manual for the Muslim communities in the United States (“…Say Peace”). He authored, and co-authored, several research and evaluation teaching manuals including: Doing What You Want With Your Data, A Step-by-Step Guide to Planning and Implementing Evaluation Strategies, and Qualitative Evaluation: The What and Why.