

ARCH 7201**RESEARCH METHODS****Seminar for Research Postgraduate Students in Architecture**

Instructor: Cecilia L. Chu (clchu@cuhk.edu.hk) (Rm 406)

Date: Tuesdays, 10:00–12:00

Venue: ARC Building Meeting Room

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Research Methods introduces students to the basic parameters of a PhD thesis and equips them with the necessary skills for carrying out their research. The course provides an overview of common practices of qualitative and quantitative research in architecture and its allied built environment disciplines. Course assignments are designed to help students to define the scope of their thesis, frame relevant research questions and arguments, and become familiar with the types and usage of reference materials for their projects. Importantly, the course enables students to articulate a critical intellectual position through the development of their thesis topics and, by doing so, deepen their understanding of the significant role of research in architecture and the built environment.

This is principally a seminar course with the instructor serving as discussion leader. The course comprises lectures, discussions, and other in-class activities. Weekly readings are provided as references to help students complete their coursework.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Acquire the fundamentals of research methods in architecture and its allied built environment disciplines.
- Be able to define the scope of a PhD research thesis and frame relevant research questions.
- Be able to locate and utilize different types of sources and materials for PhD research.
- Develop a critical intellectual position as required for PhD research.
- Be able to complete a thesis proposal and present it to an academic audience.

III. SCHEDULE

Dates		Session Topic	In-class Activities & Assignments
WK1	Sept 3	Defining the Field Introduction to course topics. Defining key elements of a PhD thesis. Types and boundaries of research in architecture and cognate disciplines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Assignment 1</u>: Preliminary Research Statement. Due on Sept 9.
WK2	Sept 10	Defining Research, Formulating Questions The nature of research questions and how to formulate effective arguments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of Assignment 1 • <u>Assignment 2</u>: Finding the Question. Due on Sept 23.

WK3	Sept 17	Finding and Evaluating Sources Usage of reference materials to identify and refine research topics and sub-topics. The basics of literature review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing of PhD research experience by current and former students.
WK4	Sept 24	Making Sense of Theories & Methods Application of theories and methodological approaches in PhD theses. Understanding the relationships between the sciences, social sciences and humanities in built environment studies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of Assignment 2. <u>Assignment 3</u>: Identifying the Method. Due on Oct 7.
WK5	Oct 1	Public holiday - No class	
WK6	Oct 8	Style and Argumentation How to read and analyze different kinds of argumentation in built environment research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of Assignment 3 <u>Assignment 4</u>: (Re)structuring the Question. Due on Oct 14.
WK7	Oct 15	Ethnography and Interviews Techniques of interviews, participant observation and questionnaires. Methodological issues in the study of local communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of Assignment 4 <u>Assignment 5</u>: The Art of Argumentation. Due on Oct 21.
WK8	Oct 22	Writing a Research Grant Proposal Introduction to the key elements of a research proposal. The art of writing effective proposals for specific audiences and institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of Assignment 5 <u>Assignment 6</u>: Research Proposal and Presentation. 1st draft due on Nov 4. Refer to separate assignment brief for submission details.
WK9	Oct 29	No class this week	
WK10	Nov 5	Publishing and Applying for Research Grants Introduction to academic publishing. Identification of different types of research outputs and the basics of research grant applications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of progress of Assignment 6.
WK11	Nov 12	Thesis Consultation Students meet with instructors in groups to discuss their research proposals.	Note: this class will be extended from 9:30-12:30.
WK13	Nov 19	Thesis Proposal Presentation Students present their research proposals in a formal conference setting.	Note: this class will be extended from 9:30-12:30.
WK14	Nov 26	Course Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of Assignment 6.

VI. ASSESSMENT

Assignment 1-5	50%
Assignment 6	50%

V. REFERENCES

Note: Additional reference materials for each assignment will be provided on Blackboard.

Books

- Becker, H. (1986). *Writing for Social Scientists*. University of Chicago Press.
- Booth, W. (1995). *The Craft of Research*. University of Chicago Press.
- Cranz, G. (2016). *Ethnography for Designers*. Routledge.
- Cresswell, J.W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Crysler, G., Cairns, S. and Heynen, H. (2012). *Sage Handbook of Architectural Theory*. Sage Publications.
- Groat, L. and Wang, D. (eds) (2013). [*Architectural Research Methods*](#). Wiley.
- Lu, D. (ed) (2023). *Routledge Companion to Contemporary Architectural History*. Routledge.
- Mullaney, M. and Christopher Rea (2022). *Where Research Begins: Choosing a Research Project that Matters to You (and the World)*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Przeworski, A. and Solomon, F. (1988). [*On the Art of Writing a Proposal*](#). Social Science Research Council.
- Tufte, E. (1990). *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*. Graphics Press.
- Turubian, K.L. (2018). *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. University of Chicago Press.
- Verba, C. (2013). [*Scholarly Pursuits: A Guide to Professional Development During the Graduate Years*](#). Harvard University.
- Ward, K. (2014). *Researching the City*. Sage Publications.
- Watts, M. (2001). [*The Holy Grail: In Pursuit of the Dissertation Proposal*](#). University of California, Berkeley.

Web Resources

- American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). <https://www.acls.org/recent-awardees/>
(with examples of good research statements of dissertation projects awarded with ACLS fellowships)
- Canadian Centre for Architecture: <https://www.cca.gc.ca/en/about-overview>
(good resources on latest debates, research initiatives and grant programs in architecture)
- Hong Kong Research Grants Council Electronic System: <https://cerg1.ugc.edu.hk>
(consists of the full list of research abstracts and objectives of past and current projects of Government Research Grants (GRF) and Early Career Schemes (ECS) awarded by the Government Research Grants and abstracts)