Objectives

This course introduces students to issues of research design and research methods in International Relations (IR). The course will focus on two main methodological approaches: qualitative case studies and quantitative methods. Apart from examining the principles guiding the choice of methods (and the trade-offs involved in that choice), the course will examine how these methods have been applied to the study of three major sub-fields of international relations: international political economy, security studies, and international environmental regimes. It also aims to provide the students with basic knowledge on how to apply these methods to their own research.

The course will begin with a discussion of philosophy of science and epistemological issues. The first part of the course will also introduce students to the social scientific research method and the main elements in the social research process. The second part will focus on qualitative approaches, and particularly on the case-study method. The topics that will be covered include: the different types of case study research designs, the relationship between theory and case studies, as well as the comparative method and small-n designs. The third and final part of the course will cover statistical analysis, and multi-method strategies. Students will be introduced to the SPSS statistical software.

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

• Identify and distinguish among the different methods used in scholarly work.

• Identify a research question on a topic of their interest and prepare a research design paper/proposal, explaining how (and through which methods) they plan to address it.

Requirements

(1) Homework assignments (30%).

(2) Take-home midterm exam (30%): Due on October 14.

(3) Final research design paper (40%): Due on December 11.
Readings

Readings will consist of a combination of chapters from the required textbooks (see below), journal articles and book chapters. Required books may be purchased at the bookstore. Articles and book chapters will be posted on blackboard. Some articles can be downloaded through the library’s online catalogue and sources. Students are expected to complete all required readings before each class. In addition, a list of recommended readings is provided for each topic.


(3) Phillip Pollock, An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis 2e- Package (CQ Press, May 2005). (Pollock B)

Outline

I - INTRODUCTION

Week 1 (Aug. 27) Introduction

Overview of the course. Discussion of objectives, syllabus and assignments.

Sept. 2 NO CLASS

Schutt, Ch. 1.

Homework #1 (due Sept. 9): Schutt, Ch. 1: SPSS Exercises (1); (3) and (4).

Week 2 (Sept. 4) Philosophy of Science and Epistemological Issues

Theories and philosophies for social science research. The relationship between ontology, epistemology, theory and methods.

Schutt, 2 (read from pg 39 on).
N. Woods, Explaining International Relations since 1945, Ch. 1.
Week 3 (Sept. 9 & 11) Introduction to Social Research

The scientific method. Elements in the research process: the research question, literature review, hypotheses, concepts and variables, techniques for data collection and analysis.

Schutt, Ch. 3, 6.

Homework #2 (due on Sept. 16): Schutt, Ch. 3: SPSS Exercises (1) & (3).

II- QUALITATIVE METHODS

Week 4 (Sept. 16 & 18) The Case Study Method

What is a case study? Different types of case studies. Comparative cases: Mill's methods of agreement and difference, and the method of structured focused comparison. Single-case study designs (crucial cases: least-likely, most-likely, deviant, etc.) Techniques for within-case analysis (process-tracing, congruence analysis, etc). Examples from the IR and IPE literatures.

Schutt, Ch. 12.
A. George and A. Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), Ch. 1.
J. Mahoney, “Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, 40: 2 (February 2007).

Recommended Readings (Examples)

Homework #3 (due on Sept. 30): Schutt, Ch. 12: Web Exercises (1); SPSS Exercises (1) & (2).

Week 5 (Sept. 23 & 25) Data Collection: Interviewing and Fieldwork

Data collection for qualitative research. Participant and non-participant observation. Interviewing elites. The planning and organization of fieldwork. Ethical issues.
Schutt, Ch. 9-10.


### III- QUANTITATIVE METHODS

**Week 6 (Sept. 30 & Oct. 2)  Survey Research**

Uses. Advantages and disadvantages. Public opinion research in IR. Questionnaire design.

Schutt, Ch. 8.


How Americans responded: Survey Methodology. Available at: http://www.isr.umich.edu/cps/hat/combined_topline.pdf


**Homework #4** (due on Oct. 14): Schutt, Ch. 8: Web Exercises (1) & (3).

**Week 7 (Oct. 7 & 9)  Quantitative Analysis in International Studies**

Advantages and potential drawbacks of using quantitative analysis in social science research. Overview of main quantitative research programs in IR and IPE.

Sprinz & Wollinsky, Ch. 6-9.

Marsh & Stoker, Ch. 10.


**Week 8 (Oct. 14 & 16)  Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement**

Operationalization and measurement of main concepts in IR, IPE and CP: power, democracy, conflict, peace, policy reform, globalization, economic integration, institutional independence, etc. Multi-item indexes. Types of variables. Levels of measurement.

Schutt, Ch. 4.

Pollock, Ch. 1.


**Homework #5 (due on Oct. 21):**
Q: Are important concepts in social research always defined clearly? Are they defined consistently? Search the literature for 4 research articles that focus on “globalization,” “power,” “development” or “democracy.” Is the concept defined clearly in each article? How similar are the definitions? Write up what you have found in a short report (1-2 pages).

**Week 9 (Oct. 21 & 23) Univariate Data Analysis: Describing Variables**

Descriptive statistics: central tendency and dispersion.

Schutt, Ch. 14.
Pollock, Ch. 3.

**Homework #6 (due on Oct. 30): Pollock B, Ch. 1 & Ch. 2 [All exercises in each chapter].

**Week 10 (Oct. 28 & 30) Sampling and Inference**

Pollock, Ch. 5.
Schutt, Ch. 5.

**Homework #7 (due on Nov. 6): Schutt, Ch. 5: SPSS Exercises (1) & (2) a) and b) (only).**

**Week 11 (Nov. 4 & 6) Bivariate Data Analysis I**

Comparisons and controlled comparisons Crosstabulations. Hypothesis testing with chi-square.

Pollock, Ch. 3 & 4.
Schutt, Ch. 14.

**Homework #8 (due on Nov. 13): Pollock B, Ch. 3 & Ch. 5 [All exercises in each chapter].**

**Week 12 (Nov. 11 & 13) Bivariate Data Analysis II**

Measures of association.

Pollock, Ch. 6.
Schutt, Ch. 14.

**Homework #9 (due on Nov. 20):** Pollock B, Ch. 6 [All exercises in chapter].

**Week 13 (Nov. 18 & 20)  Bivariate Data Analysis III**

Correlation analysis and simple linear regression. Dummy variables. Introduction to multiple regression.

Pollock, Ch. 4, 5.
Schutt, Ch. 14.

**Homework #10 (due on Dec. 2):** Pollock B, Ch. 8 [All exercises in chapter].

**Week 14 (Nov. 25)  Combining Methodological Approaches**

Advantages and disadvantages of multi-method work. Examples from the IR and IPE literatures.


**Week 15 (Dec. 2 & 4)  Reporting Research & Review Session**

Schutt, ch. 15.
Pollock B, ch. 11.
# HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS: Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homework</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due on</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Schutt, Ch. 1: SPSS Exercises (1); (3) and (4).</td>
<td>September 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Schutt, Ch. 3: SPSS Exercises (1) &amp; (3).</td>
<td>September 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Schutt, Ch. 12: Web Exercises (1); SPSS Exercises (1) &amp; (2).</td>
<td>September 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>Schutt, Ch. 8: Web Exercises (1) &amp; (3).</td>
<td>October 14</td>
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<td>#5</td>
<td>See syllabus</td>
<td>October 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>Pollock B, Ch. 1 &amp; Ch. 2 [All exercises in each chapter].</td>
<td>October 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>Schutt, Ch. 5: SPSS Exercises (1) &amp; (2) [(a) and (b) only]</td>
<td>November 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>Pollock B, Ch. 3 &amp; Ch. 5 [All exercises in each chapter].</td>
<td>November 13</td>
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<td>#9</td>
<td>Pollock B, Ch. 6 [All exercises in chapter]</td>
<td>November 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>#10</td>
<td>Pollock B, Ch. 8 [All exercises in chapter]</td>
<td>December 2</td>
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RESEARCH PROPOSAL (Final Paper)
Guidelines

Select a topic or issue in International Studies and/or Comparative Politics. Identify a relevant research question. Write a research proposal/research design paper explaining how you would address this question.

The proposal should include the following sections:

(1) Define the research question and objectives: 1-1.5 pages

• What is the aim of your proposed research?
• What is your research question(s)? Why is it a “good” research question?
• Why is this interesting and relevant question?
  o If there are several people who have worked on this topic, what will your “unique” contribution to this scholarship be?
  o If few people have worked on this topic, why do you think it is an interesting and viable topic?

(2) Literature review: 3-4 pages

• Review previous work on the same/similar question (at least 6 sources).
  • For example: “A number of scholars have looked at the effects of international institutions on democratization. Two main perspectives on this issue can be identified….” Etc.).
    i. Try to classify the articles/books according to their theoretical orientation (e.g., Realist, Liberal, Marxist), or their methodological approach (qualitative vs. quantitative).

• Discuss how your question and proposed research relates to other work in the field. Emphasize your contribution to these debates.
  • Are you going to try to address a “gap” in the extant literature?
  • Are you going to try to show that previous work underestimated/overestimated the role of certain factors?
  • Are you going to expand the empirical focus of previous work? For example, look at a previously neglected region? Or a different set of institutions?

(3) Theoretical framework and Hypotheses: 1.5-3 pages.

• Place your question in its relevant theoretical framework.
• For example, if you are dealing with an International Relations issue, the three basic perspectives will be Realism, Liberalism, Marxism. What would each of these have to say about your question? In other words, derive competing hypotheses (proposed explanations or answers to your question) from each theoretical approach.

• Specify (if you can) your preferred hypothesis. Identify the dependent and independent variables.

• If your paper will be of an interpretivist nature/approach, discuss why you believe the positivist focus on testing hypotheses and thinking in terms of “variables” is inadequate/misleading.

(4) Methods: 2-3 pages.

• What methods will you use to test your hypotheses empirically? Justify your choice (Remember that the choice of methods depends crucially on the type/nature of your question!).

Qualitative

• If you will rely on qualitative methods, will this be a single-case study design? Or will you compare two or more cases?
  
  • If single case study, will this be an instrumental or an intrinsic case study?
  
  • If you will compare cases, will you rely on Mill’s methods of difference/agreement or will you use the comparative historical approach (structured, focused comparison)?
    
    i. If the latter, what types of questions will guide your analysis of each case?

• How will you choose your cases? Explain.

• Data collection: will you rely on interviews, survey research, observation, or document analysis (or a combination of these)?
  
  • If interviews, who will you interview? What will you ask them? How will you prepare for these interviews?
  
  • If survey research, how will you select your population and sample? Can you give me examples of the questions you will ask?
  
  • If observation, participant or non-participant? What difficulties do you anticipate and how will you deal with them?
  
  • If document analysis, what primary and secondary sources will you use? How will you gain access to these?

  • Discuss potential threats to the validity and reliability of your data and how you will deal with these.

Quantitative
• If you will use quantitative methods, please begin (again) by specifying your hypothesis/es and identifying your dependent and independent variables.
  
  • What is your unit of analysis (e.g: countries, people, wars, institutions, revolutions, etc.)?
  
  • What is the level of measurement of each of your variables (nominal, ordinal, interval-ratio)?
  
• How will you operationalize your dependent and independent variables? How will you measure them?
  
  • Will you rely on conventional measurement strategies and indicators or will you create your own?
  
• Data collection: how will you construct your data set? What sources will you use?

• Data analysis: Which statistical techniques will you use to test your hypothesis empirically? (See Statistical Roadmap, Berman, Ch. 1)
  
  • Which descriptive statistics will you look at to analyze your variables?
  
  • Which type of inferential statistics will you use to examine whether there is an association between your dependent and independent (s) variables (contingency tables, correlation coefficient, regression analysis)?

• If you plan to combine both qualitative and quantitative methods, then in addition to answering the questions in each section, discuss the advantages of triangulation.

(5) Expected results/conclusions: 0.5-1 page.

• Summarize the main goal of your project.

• If possible, discuss the results you expect to obtain.