BOSTON UNIVERSITY
PARDEE SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES
RESEARCH METHODS FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS

GRS IR 702, SPRING 2017
Fridays 11:15-2
MUG 204

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OBJECTIVES:
This course provides students with the basic tools for designing and researching rigorous research and policy papers in international relations M.A. programs. Its principal aim is to help the student become a discerning consumer and effective producer of international relations research. The field of international relations spans a broad range of disciplines, each of which embraces multiple research principles, methods and styles of written presentation. At the same time, important commonalities exist in the ways in which scholars and practitioners marshal evidence to make a strong and coherent argument. This course will provide students with a broad overview of and hands-on experience with the main approaches to IR research, with the goal of improving their ability to make a logical argument based on solid evidence. To this end it will provide answers to a few basic questions: How do you find and evaluate a good research puzzle? How do you write a good literature review and how do you use it to propose research hypotheses? How do you compare cases and how do you select them to extract maximum analytical leverage? How do you make causal and interpretive arguments? What do you need to know to do a good interview or carry out an online survey? What are the best ways to do an in-depth textual analysis? When do you use descriptive statistics and regression analysis and how do you interpret the results?

The course is organized into four modules. The first part of the course will focus on the philosophy of science, the field of international relations, and general principles of theory, concepts and research design. The second addresses the idea of causation and inference, and the primary qualitative and quantitative methods for understanding causation and correlation. The focus will be on case study research design, such as methods of structured and focused comparisons of cases, typological theory, case selection, process tracing, and the use of counterfactual analysis. The third module details concrete research techniques, including descriptive statistics, regression analysis, archival research and interviews. We will be also working through a statistics module throughout the entire course. The concluding module is a workshop for presenting the final research design projects and constructive critiques of these designs by seminar participants towards the goal of MA thesis preparation.

A passing grade in this class satisfies the statistics requirement in the IR graduate program.

REQUIREMENTS:
Grades will be based on 1) class participation, online (piazza) and in class; 2) a midterm, 3) a series of weekly assignments and exercises; and 4) a final research design paper of no more than 5000 words.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

All work for this class is expected to be individual, i.e., not the result of collaboration or a group project. It is imperative that any and all sources used in papers be cited properly. Assigned papers will be submitted through the SafeAssign function on Blackboard, which screens for internet plagiarism. For guidance, see the guideline for source citation on page three of this syllabus and the GRS Academic Discipline Procedures (available at GRS or at http://www.bu.edu/grs/academics/resources/adp.html). Cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean's office.

GRADING: 100 points total
- General Participation (in class and piazza): 10
- Hypotheses: 5
- Concepts assignment: 5
- Peer Review assignment: 5
- Midterm: 15
- Case Assignment: 5
- IR Dataset Assignment: 5
- Field Research Assignment: 5
- Content and Discourse Assignment: 5
- Policy Analysis Assignment: 5
- Statistics team exercises (5 pts x 3): 15
- Written research design and presentation of research design: 20

Guidelines: The midterm will be 2500 words, single-spaced, without bibliography while the final Research Design will be 5000 words without bibliography.

The midterm will contain a research puzzle (+ hypotheses and concepts), the literature review and a section talking about the importance of your work. The final will be a research design paper. It will be based around the revised midterm but will consist mostly of detailed methodological sections, considerations of feasibility and structure of the thesis, chapter by chapter and section by section.

Assignments should be brought as drafts to class for discussion. They will be due online on Blackboard Mondays at 5 pm (3 days after the class session concludes). This will allow students to revise and refine their thoughts after the seminar discussion.

Research Design Paper and Presentation. Students will be required to submit copies of a research design paper to all seminar participants one week in advance of presenting this design in the seminar. Each student will present their design in the seminar for a constructive critique of 15 minutes, with a short introduction from the student and/or advance reading questions suggesting issues or methodological dilemmas upon which participants should focus.

ADMIN NOTES

--No laptops and mobile devices are allowed in class.
--Online Class Participation –We will be using Piazza for class discussion. Piazza is designed to get you quick and efficient crowdsourced answers from classmates and from me. Rather than emailing individual questions to the professor, you are encouraged to post your questions on Piazza. It is likely that you will get an answer to your question much faster if you post it in piazza.com rather than if you email me. Participating in the online discussions in piazza is very important, particularly to encourage student-to-student interaction through the system. In order to receive participation credit, you must have at least one meaningful (paragraph+ length) discussion contribution

(question, answer, follow-up comment) in every week the course is taught. Find our class page at: piazza.com/bu/spring2017/ir702

--It is imperative that any and all sources used in papers be cited properly. Assigned papers will be submitted through the SafeAssign function on Blackboard, which screens for internet plagiarism. For guidance, see the guideline for source citation on page three of this syllabus and the GRS Academic Discipline Procedures (available at GRS or at http://www.bu.edu/grs/academics/resources/adp.html). Cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean's office.

ABSENCES AND LATE WORK:
Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to hand in assignments at the scheduled times, unless documentation is given excusing an absence for medical, religious or personal reasons, or for official university business. Every effort should be made to notify the instructor as soon as possible (in advance) of the reason for the absence. Late papers will be penalized five (5) percentage points for the first day late, and three (3) points each day thereafter.

READINGS:
Students are required to complete all reading assignments before class. This is a working seminar, and discussions will require a thorough understanding of the readings.

The following required texts are required for the course. They will also be on reserve at the library.

- Van Evera, Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science (Cornell, 1997)
- Bailey, Michael A. 2015. Real Stats: Experiments, Data, Policy, Politics and Law. Oxford University Press **https://global.oup.com/academic/product/real-stats-9780199981946?cc=us&lang=en&#**
- Wheelan, Charles. 2013. Naked Statistics: Stripping the Dread from the Data. WW Norton. (ISBN 9780393071955)

*Other readings are available online via the Blackboard or the library

COURSE OUTLINE

MODULE I: THEORY, CONCEPTS AND DESIGN

1/20 Introduction: Scientific method vs. Opinion + What is International Relations?

Assignment: PICK A RESEARCH PROPOSAL TOPIC (+ Puzzle) FOR YOUR RESEARCH DESIGN. You will be building a research design over the semester, piece by piece, and I need you to select a topic now. It can be a future thesis idea (why not start now?) or it can just be a major area of inquiry for you. But you should not switch topics halfway through the semester. We don't want to redesign the plane while you are flying it. There are no bad topics, as long as you are curious and interested in them.

- BB Fearon, J. D. (1991) 'Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science', World Politics, 43, 169-95.
- BB Frieden, Jeffry A., and David A. Lake. "International relations as a social science: rigor and relevance." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 600.1 (2005): 136-156.
- BB Gelman, Andrew. Quantitative Tour of the Social Sciences, preface + Chapters 1–3

1/27 PROBLEM-DRIVEN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Assignment: Choose a particular research question of interest to you. Start with the topic, and determine what puzzles might be unanswered about that topic. Write a response paper that brainstorms the problem and be prepared to discuss it in class. The puzzle should be important and interesting to you, something not as well understood as it could be, and an answerable question with potentially available data. The puzzle could be some outcome that varies (amongst units or over time), some difference between rhetoric and reality or prescriptions and reality, or some phenomenon that simply doesn't fit what you would expect. It could come from your coursework literature or some puzzle you have read or experienced in the real world. Your puzzle might also me some anomaly or outlier of data. A great way to frame a puzzle is to provide a representative quote, basic statistical data, a narrative overview, or short comparison. (1 page, bring draft to class).

- BB Van Evera, 1997. pp. 89-95.
- BB Zinnes, Dina A. 1980. "Three Puzzles in Search of a Researcher." International Studies Quarterly 24(3): 315-42.
- BB Jeffrey Knopf. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science* 39(1):127-132
- BB Howard S. Becker. 1986. "Terrorized by the Literature." In Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article. University of Chicago Press, pp. 135-149.
- Barbara Geddes, Paradigms and Sandcastles Ch. 2
    - http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.bu.edu/lib/bostonuniv/reader.action?docID=10381353

2/3 HYPOTHESES and THEORY CONSTRUCTION

Assignment: Think about possible answers to the research question you proposed last week. These answers might come from the literature, from policy makers, journalists, or from many other sources. Construct three hypotheses and their implications for your puzzle. Make a list of the information you need to collect to (a) know whether your explanation is wrong (to disconfirm your hypotheses), (b) make a compelling case that your argument is correct, and

(c) dismiss the major alternative plausible hypotheses. What would be 'ideal' data to assess each hypothesis? What would be a good substitute/proxy for ideal data? 1 page, be prepared to share draft in class.

- Van Evera, 1997. "Hypotheses, Laws, and Theories: A User's Guide." In Guide to Methods, p. 7-48 + appendix
- BB Developing a Hypothesis and Answering Research Questions – The Essentials of Political Analysis, Pollock (Chapter 3, pages 48-58)
- Barbara Geddes, Paradigms and Sandcastles Ch. 2, 6

2/10 CONCEPTS + VARIABLES

Assignment: Define some possible key independent and dependent variables and how they vary. Second, describe how you will structure and operationalize these variables consistently and discuss the tradeoffs, if any, involved in the operationalizations that you propose (2-3 pages, bring draft to class, post online 2/16).

- Goertz, Social Science Concepts, chapters 1, 2, 3 (Blackboard)
- Wheelan, Chapters 1-2

2/17 Case Studies + Case Selection
Assignment: Identify a relevant universe of cases for your research design (2-3 pages) using Van Evera's criteria.

- Van Evera, 1997. "What are Case Studies? How should they be performed?" P. 49-77 + p. 77-88
- Barbara Geddes, Chapters 3 + 4
- BB Steinberg. Paul F. 2007. "Causal Assessment in Small-N Policy Studies." Policy Studies Journal 35, pp. 181-204.
- BB David Edelstein, "Occupational Hazards: Why Military Occupations Succeed or Fail," International Security Vol. 29 No. 1 (Summer 2004) pp. 49-56, 80-91.

2/24 NO CLASS. Assignment (5 points): provide peer feedback (through blackboard) on 1) 3 other hypotheses assignments and 2) 3 other concepts assignments.

MODULE II: CORRELATION, CAUSATION, + STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

3/3 Causal Analysis

- Bailey, Real Stats, Chapters 1 & 2
- BB Charles Tilly, "Mechanisms in Political Processes," (Columbia University, September 2000).
- BB Albert Yee, "The Effects of Ideas on Policies," International Organization vol. 50, no. 1 (Winter, 1996) brief excerpt pp. 82-85.

Midterm due on blackboard on March 5, 5 PM.

3/10 SPRING BREAK NO CLASS

3/17 Data + Descriptive Statistics
Assignment: Analyze and critique the coding rules of an existing IR dataset (such as Freedom House, POLITY, COW, MAR, etc.). 2-3 pages.

In class team statistics assignment

Whelan, Naked Statistics, Chapters 1, 4-10
Klein and Stockley, Quantitative Tour, Chapters 4–7.

3/24 OLS

In class team statistics assignment

Bailey, Real Stats Chapters 3-7

3/31 Regression

In class team statistics assignment

Bailey, Real Stats Chapters 8-11
Whelan, Chapter 11-12

MODULE III: SPECIFIC RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

4/7 Policy Analysis

Assignment: Policy analysis memo

- BB Bardach, Practical Guide for Policy Analysis
- BB A Policy Sciences View on Policy Analysis, Bert Enserink, Joop F. M. Koppenjan and Igor S. Mayer

4/14 Field Research Techniques: Archives, Interviews, and Ethnography

Assignment Option I: For your main theoretical argument, identify the key individuals or organizations involved and describe the sequence (if any) in which they interact. What choices have they faced? What might they have observed that is not obvious from other sources? What outcomes were under their control? Explicitly state the choices available to those actors at each stage in their interaction. Draft five questions for possible interviews or ten survey questions for a possible survey. Link the survey or interview questions back to concepts, hypotheses, and variables.

Assignment Option II: Describe a case (which might be a country, state, city, piece of legislation, party platform, group, individual, etc.) that you intend to use to trace historically and theorize how the independent variables will impact the dependent variables. How will you know when you find evidence for this causation in archives/news/interviews, etc? What might evidence look like, and how will you know when it is definitely not there? How will you use this case to understand process and what might you be able to infer from a close examination of cases (e.g., supporting an argument or ruling out alternative explanations or both)?

- Lustick, I. (1996) 'History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias', American Political Science Review, 90:3, 605-18
- Thies, Cameron G. 2002. "A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations." International Studies Perspectives 3(4): 351-72.
- Biernacki, Patrick, and Dan Waldorf. 1981. "Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling." Sociological Research and Methods 10, pp. 141-163.

- David Collier, "Data, Field Work, and Extracting New Ideas at Close Range," APSA -CP Newsletter Winter 1999 pp. 1-6.
- Symposium on interview methods in political science in PS: Political Science and Politics (December, 2002), articles by Beth Leech ("Asking Questions: Sampling and Completing Elite Interviews"), Kenneth Goldstein ("Getting in the Door: Sampling and Completing Elite Interviews"), Joel Aberbach and Bert Rockman ("Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews"), Laura Woliver ("Ethical Dilemmas in Personal Interviewing"), and Jeffrey Barry ("Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing), pp. 665-682.

4/28 Content and Discourse Analysis

Assignment: In class Content and discourse analysis of a chosen set of texts.

- Content analysis reading TBD
- Krippendorff, Klaus. *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology.* Sage, 2012.
- Prentice, Sheryl, et al. "Analyzing the semantic content and persuasive composition of extremist media: A case study of texts produced during the Gaza conflict." *Information Systems Frontiers* 13.1 (2011): 61-73.
- Joachim, Jutta, and Andrea Schneiker. "Of 'true professionals' and 'ethical hero warriors': A gender-discourse analysis of private military and security companies." *Security Dialogue* 43.6 (2012): 495-512.

MODULE IV: Student Research Design Presentations

Final Exam Session (DATE TBD): STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Students will be required to submit copies of a research design paper to all seminar participants one week in advance of presenting this design in the seminar. Each student will present their design in the seminar for a constructive critique of 15 minutes, with a short introduction from the student and/or advance reading questions suggesting issues or methodological dilemmas upon which participants should focus.