

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

***RESEARCH METHODS FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS***

GRS IR 702  
FALL 2008  
MONDAY 1-4:00PM  
IRC 220

STROM THACKER  
EMAIL: [sthacker@bu.edu](mailto:sthacker@bu.edu)  
WEB SITE: <http://www.bu.edu/sthacker/>

OFFICE: 152 Bay State Road, No. 446  
TELEPHONE: 617.353.7160  
OFFICE HOURS: Tues. 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. & by appt.

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.

The course is organized into four interconnected modules. The first considers general principles of theory, concepts and design. These considerations will provide the foundation for everything that follows in the course. The second addresses a number of quantitative research methods and statistical techniques. The emphasis here, as elsewhere, rests firmly on practical considerations and hands-on approaches to these methods, rather than on mathematical proofs and statistics theory. The third module details a number of concrete research techniques, with an emphasis on qualitative tools and comparisons to their quantitative counterparts. The concluding module ties together loose ends and looks forward to the process of writing the M.A. research or policy paper with a discussion of the practical aspects of preparing research reports.

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

REQUIREMENTS:

Grades will be based on 1) class participation; 2) a series of exercises based on the lab manual, textbook and other assignments; and 3) a final paper of 15-20 pages. Students will hand in a three-page, typed reaction to the week's readings at the beginning of each class that applies the ideas put forth in the Manheim text to the other assigned readings (if applicable). These short papers will be checked but not graded, and will count toward class participation. They must be complete to receive full credit.

Students will choose between one of two options for the final paper: 1) a fully developed proposal for a substantial (even if hypothetical) research or policy paper in the field of international relations, or 2) a collegial methodological critique/appraisal of the research design and methods of a paper written by another student in the class that applies the lessons learned in this class to this particular real-world example of student research. In order to facilitate the second option, all students will be required to submit electronic copies of one or two of their best papers from their current or prior academic work to the instructor to be made available for anonymous use by other students.

Email and Internet access is required.

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. For guidance, see the guideline for source citation on page three of this syllabus or at <http://www.bu.edu/sthacker/source.htm>, 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:

- 25% Class participation, including weekly reaction papers
- 25% Exercises, due at the beginning of the following class
- 50% Final paper, due at the beginning of class on December 8
- Improvement over the course of the semester and exceptional class participation can raise a borderline grade.

Grades are calculated on a 100-point scale, converted to letter grades as follows:

93-100	A	90-92	A-	87-89	B+	83-86	B	80-82	B-
77-79	C+	73-76	C	70-72	C-	60-69	D	Below 60	F

### 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 (preferably in advance) of the reason for the absence. Late papers will be penalized five (5) 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 available for purchase at Barnes and Noble at Boston University. Some may be available on reserve at Pardee Library, SMG, 595 Commonwealth Avenue (3<sup>rd</sup> floor).

- Brians, Craig Leonard. 2008. *Quantitative Analysis Lab Manual*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Pearson Longman. ISBN-13 9780205576678.
- Manheim, Jarol B, Richard C. Rich, Lars Willnat, and Craig Leonard Brians. 2008. *Empirical Political Analysis: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods*. New York: Pearson Longman. ISBN 9780205576401.
- *SPSS for Windows 16.0 Student Version*. New York: Allyn and Bacon. ISBN 9780205661350.
- Turabian, Kate L. 2007. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ISBN 9780226823379.

Note that the first three titles are available at a discount in a package (ISBN 9780205630998) at the bookstore, or at <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/>.

\*Other readings are available on-line via [http://courseinfo.bu.edu/courses/08fallgrsir702\\_a1/](http://courseinfo.bu.edu/courses/08fallgrsir702_a1/) (click Course Documents, then Course Packet) and marked by an asterisk (\*).

## USE OF SOURCE MATERIALS\*

Correct use and acknowledgment of source materials is vital to any research project. Only through accurate documentation can the reader distinguish the writer's original contribution from those of others. This allows the reader (1) to consult the source of a fact or opinion if he or she so desires and (2) to assign credit or blame judiciously — to the writer or to the writer's sources. Moreover, failure to acknowledge source material properly constitutes plagiarism and is subject to the appropriate penalties.

The basic rule is this: If you use material drawn from something beside your own first-hand experience, and the material is not “common knowledge,” that is, something that “everybody knows,” give credit to your source.

If you quote directly, even a word or phrase, use quotation marks and footnote.\*\*

If you paraphrase (i.e., take the ideas and put them into your own words), footnote.

If you organize material in the unique manner of someone else, give that person credit in the text and, usually, in a footnote as well.

A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself: “Could a reader who consulted the works listed in my bibliography recognize in my paper sentences, phrases, and even striking words; patterns of organization; interpretations or attitudes or points of view or whole ideas or facts, as deriving from any one of these sources?” If the reader could, you must footnote those passages. Any clear parallels between your paper and any of its sources that a reader would discover from consulting these sources, you should already have told him or her through footnotes or informal acknowledgments.

If you borrow everything in your paper, footnote everything in your paper!

Once your paper is turned in, the reader has the right to assume that whatever appears in the paper, unless otherwise indicated, is your own work or is “common knowledge.”

It should be noted that a paper that is merely a patchwork of other people's words and ideas is a poor paper. Because of the particular slant on the topic you have been asked to consider; because of the particular combination of sources you have consulted; because of the independence of your own creative mind, your paper should be organically different from any of the various sources that have contributed to it.

---

\* This statement is adapted from a document entitled “Use of Source Materials,” Pomona College Department of Government, Claremont, CA.

\*\* Parenthetical references [e.g., (Smith 1991, 234)] may be substituted for footnotes.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### **MODULE I: THEORY, CONCEPTS AND DESIGN**

Sep. 8: *Introduction: research design, methods, IR M.A. papers, and you*

Sep. 15: *Explanation and causation*

- Manheim: Chapter 1, Appendix B
- Brians: Preface, Introduction
- Turabian: Chapters 1, 2
- \*Gerring, John. 2005. "Causation: A Unified Framework for the Social Sciences." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17(2): 163-98.

Sep. 22: *Research questions, puzzles, and prior research*

- Manheim: Chapters 3, 4
- Brians: Chapter 4
- Turabian: Chapters 3, 4
- \*Zinnes, Dina A. 1980. "Three Puzzles in Search of a Researcher." *International Studies Quarterly* 24(3): 315-42.
- \*Putnam, Robert D. 2003. "APSA Presidential Address: The Public Role of Political Science." *Perspectives on Politics* 1(2): 249-55.

Sep. 29: *Theories and hypotheses*

- Manheim: Chapter 2
- Brians: Chapters 1, 2
- Turabian: Chapter 5
- \*Van Evera, Stephen. 1997. "Hypotheses, Laws, and Theories: A User's Guide." In *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 7-48. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- \*Krasner, Stephen D. 1976/2000. "State Power and the Structure of International Trade." In *International Political Economy: Perspectives on Global Power and Wealth*, 4th edition, ed. Jeffrey A. Frieden and David A. Lake, 19-36. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Oct. 6: *Concepts, measurement, and design*

- Manheim: Chapters 5, 6, 9
- Brians: Chapters 3, 14
- \*Bowman, Kirk, Fabrice Lehoucq and James Mahoney. 2005. "Measuring Political Democracy: Case Expertise, Data Adequacy, and Central America." *Comparative Political Studies* 38(8): 939-70.

### **MODULE II: QUANTITATIVE AND STATISTICAL METHODS**

Oct. 14: *Data sampling and preparation*

- Manheim: Chapters 7, 11, 14
- Brians: Chapters 5, 7
- \*Salkind, Neil J. 2008. "Statistics or Sadistics? It's Up to You." In *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 5-16. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Oct. 20: *Summarizing and presenting data; distributions*

- Manheim: Chapters 15, 16
- Brians: Chapters 6, 8
- Turabian: Chapter 8

Oct. 27: *Bivariate and multivariate data analysis*

- Manheim: Chapters 17, 18
- Brians: Chapters 10, 11, 12
- \*Thacker, Strom C. 1999. "The High Politics of IMF Lending." *World Politics* 52(1): 38-75.

### MODULE III: RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Nov. 3: *Surveys, experiments, and focus groups*

- Manheim: Chapters 8, 20
- Brians: Chapter 13
- \*Herrmann, Richard K., Philip E. Tetlock and Matthew N. DiScro. 2001. "How Americans Think About Trade: Resolving Conflicts Among Money, Power, and Principles." *International Studies Quarterly* 45(2): 191-218.
- \*Tomz, Michael. 2007. "Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach." *International Organization* 61(4): 821-40.

Nov. 10: *Case studies and comparative research*

- Manheim: Chapter 12 and pp. 322-31
- Brians: Chapter 9
- \*Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2(1): 131-50.
- \*Gerring, John. 2004. "What is a Case Study and What is it Good for?" *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 341-54.
- \*Bennett, Andrew and Colin Elman. 2007. "Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield." *Comparative Political Studies* 40(2): 170-95.
- \*Mahoney, James. 2007. "Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics." *Comparative Political Studies* 40(2): 122-44.

Nov. 17: *Content analysis; social networks; historical analysis; nested analyses*

- Manheim: Chapters 10, 13
- \*Lawson, Chappell and James A. McCann. 2005. "Television News, Mexico's 2000 Election and Media Effects in Emerging Democracies." *British Journal of Political Science* 35(1): 1-30.
- \*McKeown, Timothy J. 1983. "Hegemonic Stability Theory and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Tariff Levels in Europe." *International Organization* 37(1): 73-91.
- \*Lieberman, Evan S. 2005. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99(3): 435-52.

Nov. 24: *Direct observation; archival research; interviewing*

- Manheim: Chapters 19, 21
- \*Geertz, Clifford. 1973/1994. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture." In *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, ed. Michael Martin and Lee C. McIntyre, 213-32. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- \*Thies, Cameron G. 2002. "A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations." *International Studies Perspectives* 3(4): 351-72.
- \*Thacker, Strom C. 1999. "NAFTA Coalitions and the Political Viability of Neoliberalism in Mexico." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 41(2): 57-89.

## MODULE IV: CONCLUSIONS AND THE RESEARCH REPORT

Dec. 1: *Preparing the research report*

- Manheim: Chapters 22, 23

- Turabian: Chapters 6, 7, 9-12

- \*Campbell, Steve. 1999. "Forty Awful Examples." In *Statistics You Can't Trust: A Friendly Guide to Clear Thinking about Statistics in Everyday Life*, 241-59. Parker, CO: Think Twice Publishing.

Dec. 8: *What's next? Moving forward*

- Turabian: Chapters 13, 14