RESEARCH METHODS FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS

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

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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.

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:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>80-82</td>
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<td>77-79</td>
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<td>73-76</td>
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<td>70-72</td>
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<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>Below 60</td>
<td>F</td>
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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 (3rd floor).


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/](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

Sep. 22: Research questions, puzzles, and prior research
• Manheim: Chapters 3, 4
• Brians: Chapter 4
• Turabian: Chapters 3, 4

Sep. 29: Theories and hypotheses
• Manheim: Chapter 2
• Brians: Chapters 1, 2
• Turabian: Chapter 5

Oct. 6: Concepts, measurement, and design
• Manheim: Chapters 5, 6, 9
• Brians: Chapters 3, 14

MODULE II: QUANTITATIVE AND STATISTICAL METHODS

Oct. 14: Data sampling and preparation
• Manheim: Chapters 7, 11, 14
• Brians: Chapters 5, 7

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

**MODULE III: RESEARCH TECHNIQUES**

Nov. 3: *Surveys, experiments, and focus groups*
• Manheim: Chapters 8, 20
• Brians: Chapter 13

Nov. 10: *Case studies and comparative research*
• Manheim: Chapter 12 and pp. 322-31
• Brians: Chapter 9
• *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

Nov. 24: *Direct observation; archival research; interviewing*
• Manheim: Chapters 19, 21
Module IV: Conclusions and the Research Report

Dec. 1: Preparing the research report
• Manheim: Chapters 22, 23
• Turabian: Chapters 6, 7, 9-12

Dec. 8: What’s next? Moving forward
• Turabian: Chapters 13, 14