

INST 381 Research Methods for International Studies

Spring 2018

Mondays & Wednesdays

3:00-4:15

Croft 107

Instructor

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Office hours: MWF 12:30–2:30

(or by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an introduction to research methods for International Studies majors, with the purpose of preparing them for the senior thesis. Emphasis is placed on the fundamentals of *social scientific research design*, as well as commonly used *qualitative* and *quantitative* research methods and techniques. Throughout the semester, students will develop a *research prospectus*, in addition to conducting practical exercises to demonstrate competency in various research skills. Finally, student will also learn how to give a brief oral *research presentation*.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Describe and define the vocabulary, structure, and process of *social science research*
- Clearly state a *research question*, and identify *data* and *methods* appropriate for answering that research question
- Discuss the similarities and differences between *quantitative* and *qualitative* research methods, as well as their respective strengths and limitations
- Identify and explain the key issues related to *research ethics*, and successfully complete an IRB research application
- Demonstrate working proficiency with *data management* and *quantitative analysis*, specifically by demonstrating abilities in MS Excel and Stata
- Demonstrate working proficiency in *survey construction* and *data collection*, specifically by demonstrating abilities with Qualtrics
- Design and present a concise, engaging, and informative original *research presentation*
- Construct a clear, executable *research design* through the successful completion of a *research prospectus*
- Develop a substantive *research bibliography* appropriate for a specific research project

COURSE MATERIALS

This course does not have a required textbook. Instead, we will use a *Research Methods Handbook* manuscript I have developed. It is available as a PDF file on Blackboard.

I am requiring each student to purchase a personal license for Stata, a statistical software package. You may purchase a 6-month license for \$45 directly from the Stata corporation through their website at: <https://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/student-pricing/>.

Although the *Handbook* and lectures provide overviews of Stata, students who want a deeper understanding of Stata (including things not covered in this course) may want to consider purchasing:

Acock, Alan C. 2016. *A Gentle Introduction to Stata*, 5th edition. College Station, TX: Stata Press.

In addition, you will want to bring a laptop computer (with Excel and a good word processing program, such as Word) to class on a regular basis.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Below is a summary of the course requirements, and their share of the final semester grade:

	Points	%
Attendance	50	10
IRB certification	25	5
In-class exercises	50	10
Written assignments (x10)	200	40
Oral presentation	25	5
Final research prospectus	50	10
Midterm exam	100	20
Total points	500	

I try to maintain the Blackboard gradebook up to date. The “weighted total” column should have your up-to-date grade. Be sure to check it periodically.

Attendance

Coming to class regularly and actively participating (especially asking questions) is important for success in any course – but especially in a research methods course. Unlike typical “content” courses, most of the material here will be highly abstract and conceptual. Be sure to read before class, try to understand the examples in the book, and develop ideas for how you could apply those ideas/concepts/methods in your own research.

I will take attendance at the start of every class. Each student will have THREE “personal” days he/she can use for any reason (including minor illnesses or important family commitments). After three absences, each absence will result in a 2-point deduction from attendance score.

IRB Certification

Each student must complete the online IRB certification course provide (free) by the University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board. The certification course is provided through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program, and can be accessed online at: <https://www.research.olemiss.edu/irb/education>.

We will go over some of the general issues related to research ethics early in the semester, but you are responsible to complete your IRB training on your own. You should complete two distinct IRB training modules:

- SBR Group 4A Social/Behavioral Undergraduate Students
- Supplementary Module for SBR Investigators Conducting International Research

Completing both modules should take about an hour. After you complete the modules, you can make a PDF of the certificate and submit it via email.

IRB certifications are valid for three years. If you previously completed an IRB certification, you can submit a copy of the certificate. If your IRB certification has expired, you can take the brief refresher course instead of the longer, “basic” course.

When you complete the certification, you will be automatically given full credit (100%) on the assignment. Be aware that IRB certification is required in order to allow you to participate in additional assignments for this course. So, although IRB certification is only worth 5% of the course grade, not completing it will negatively affect other parts of your course grade.

In-Class Exercises

Throughout the semester, we will participate in several in-class exercises meant to help you prepare for the out-of-class written assignments. Several of the in-class exercises are related to a class survey project, which will include collective (in-class) and individual (out-of-class) components.

The in-class exercises part of your semester grade is a running average of the completed assignments. Those will be graded on a simple 7-point scale (7=excellent; 6=good; 5=average).

Written Assignments

In order to demonstrate your understanding of and ability to apply the methodological concepts and techniques covered in the course, you will write weekly written assignments. Although there are 12 weekly assignments, only the 10 *highest* scores will count towards your semester grade. That means I drop the lowest two scores (even if they are zeroes). If you don't complete an assignment before the due date, you will earn a zero for that assignment (I will drop up to two zeroes, so keep up with the assignments!).

I will provide more detailed descriptions of each assignment individually, but below is a brief overview of each assignment.

- #1. *Draft research proposal.*** Write a brief research design prospectus (about two pages), stating a research question, case selection, and (very general) description of type of data and methods you *might* use.
- #2. *Critical evaluation of a data set.*** Write a brief critical evaluation of two popular democracy measures (Freedom House and Polity IV).

- #3. **Descriptive statistics report.** Select five variables from the course (cross-sectional) dataset, and write a brief report providing common and appropriate descriptive statistical measures of those variables.
- #4. **Report hypothesis tests (parametric and non-parametric).** Conduct at least three different types of hypothesis tests (at least one must be parametric and one non-parametric), and write a brief report of the results of the hypothesis tests.
- #5. **Report measures of association (Chi-square, Pearson's r , and others).** Conduct at least three different tests of association (at least one using interval-level and another using nominal or ordinal data), and write a brief report on the results of those tests.
- #6. **Report on two advanced inferential statistics tests (OLS and logit).** Use inferential statistics to test at least three different models (using either OLS or logistic regression), and write a brief report on the results of those tests.
- #7. **Content analysis report.** Conduct a content analysis of at least three different "texts" using both latent and manifest analysis, and write a report of that analysis.
- #8. **Ethnography.** Conduct a brief (at least 30 minutes) field observation and write an ethnographic report based on that observation.
- #9. **Survey report.** Collect survey data using Qualtrics, and write a brief report on some of the survey's findings.
- #10. **Interview.** Conduct a brief 'expert' interview (at least 15 minutes) with a faculty member of your choice who has particular expertise related to your proposed research project, and write a report of that interview.
- #11. **Case selection (for single and small-N design).** Write a brief description – and justification for – the case selection you use for your proposed research project.
- #12. **Research bibliography.** Assemble a research bibliography (using correct bibliographic format) relevant to your proposed research project.

Much of the preliminary analysis will be conducted in class, as part of in-class workshops.

Research Prospectus & Oral Presentation

Throughout the semester, each student will work on a research prospectus (or proposal) that includes a research question and rationale, as well as a *concise* but *comprehensive* research design that includes case selection, description of data to be collected, and type of analysis to be used. The research prospectus is due the week of final exams.

In addition to a written prospectus, each student will give a brief (5-7 minutes) presentation using PowerPoint (or other slideshow presentation) about his/her research prospectus. The oral presentations are scheduled for the last week of class (April 30 and May2).

Midterm & Final Exams

We will have two exams during this course. The midterm exam will cover the first half of the course (before spring break), focusing on general issues of social science, methodology, and research design, as well as the *quantitative* methods ('statistics') covered during that part of the

semester. The final exam will review basic issues of social science, methodology, and research design, but focus on *qualitative* methods and approaches. Both exams will include a mix of short answer, multiple-choice, and short essay components.

ADDITIONAL COURSE & UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Student Disability Services

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have verified disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations.

If you have a *documented* disability as described by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 933-112 Section 504) or the American s with Disabilities Act (ADA) and wish to request academic and/or physical accommodations, contact Student Disability Services at 234 Martindale (662-915-7128 or 662-915-7907 TTY). You may consult <http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/sds/> for more information on student disability services.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

Students are expected to adhere to the University of Mississippi Creed and the Standards of Honesty as described in Policy Code ACA.AR.600.001 and written in the *M Book*. If you violate the Standards of Honesty, you will be reported and subject to the appropriate sanction which may include expulsion from the University. You can download a copy of the *M Book* online from: <http://conflictresolution.olemiss.edu/m-book/>

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Below is the weekly course schedule. On the right are listed the readings for that week, which should be read *before* Monday's class. On the left are listed the assignments for that week. Note that some of them are due *later* in the semester.

Week 1: January 22 & 24	
<i>Handbook</i> , Chapter 1: Basic Elements	Complete IRB training certificate (due Feb. 5)
– Social scientific thinking	– Group 4A Social/Behavioral Undergraduate
– Basic components of scientific research	– Supplementary Module for Int'l Research
– The role of theory	

Week 2: January 29 & 31	
<i>Handbook</i> , Chapter 2: Research Design	Weekly assignment #1: Draft research design (due Monday, Feb. 5)
– Overview of basic research designs	
– The number of cases	
– The issue of time	Work on survey instrument (develop questions)
– Qualitative vs. quantitative research	

Week 3: February 5 & 7	
<i>Handbook</i> , Chapter 3: Working with Data	Weekly assignment #2: Critical evaluation of a data set (compare Freedom House and Polity IV; due Monday, Feb. 12)
– Conceptualization & operationalization	
– Levels of measurement	
– Measurement error	
– Measurement validity & reliability	Read: Munck & Verkuilen (on Blackboard)
– Ways of transforming data	

Week 4: February 12 & 14	
<i>Handbook</i> , Chapter 4: Descriptive Statistics	Weekly assignment #3: Descriptive statistics report (due Monday, Feb 19)
– Summary statistics	
– Measures of central tendency	
– Measures of dispersion	Work on survey instrument (set up in Qualtrics)
– How to report descriptive statistics	
* <i>Gentle Introduction to Stata</i> , Chapter 5	

Week 5: February 19 & 21	
<i>Handbook</i> , Chapter 5: Hypothesis Testing	Weekly assignment #4: Report hypothesis tests for parametric and non-parametric variables (due Monday, February 26)
– Parametric tests	
– Non-parametric tests	
* <i>Gentle Introduction to Stata</i> , Chapter 7	

Week 6: February 26 & 28	
<i>Handbook</i> , Chapter 6: Measures of Association	Weekly assignment #5: Report measures of association for interval, nominal, and ordinal variables (due Monday, March 5)
– For interval variables	
– For nominal variables	
– For ordinal variables	
* <i>Gentle Introduction to Stata</i> , Chapter 8	

Week 7: March 5 & 7 Midterm Exam (Monday)	Go over preliminary survey response data
Spring Break March 10-18	

Week 8: March 19 & 21 <i>Handbook</i> , Chapter 7: Advanced Inferential Statistics – Multivariate regression – Logistic regression – Rank correlation * <i>Gentle Introduction to Stata</i> , Chapter 10-11	Weekly assignment #6: Report on two different advanced inferential statistics tests
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Week 9: March 26 & 28 <i>Handbook</i> , Chapter 8: Content Analysis – Latent analysis – Manifest analysis	Weekly assignment #7: Content analysis report (due Monday, April 2)
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Week 10: April 2 & 4 <i>Handbook</i> , Chapter 9: Ethnography – Participant observation – Key informant interviewing	Weekly assignment #8: Ethnography report (due Monday, April 9)
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Week 11: April 9 & 11 <i>Handbook</i> , Chapter 10: Interviews & Surveys	Weekly assignment #9: Interview and survey report (due Monday, April 16)
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Week 12: April 16 & 18 Case studies and comparative (small-N) studies * <i>Handbook</i> , Chapter 2: Research Designs	Weekly assignment #10: Case selection justification for single case study or small-N (“comparative”) study (due Monday, April 23)
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Week 13: April 23 & 25 <i>Handbook</i> , Chapter 11: Bibliographic Research	Weekly assignment #11: Research bibliography (due Monday May 7)
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Week 14: April 30 & May 2 Oral presentations	7-minute presentations on Monday & Wednesday
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Final Exams Week: May 7-11 Final Exam: Thursday, May 10 @ 4:00	
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Ethnographic methods

<https://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/anthropology/courses/122/module1/methods.html>

Additional Readings

Munck, Gerardo L. and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. "Conceptualizing Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices." *Comparative Political Studies* 35 (1): 5-34.