

University of Mississippi
Spring 2016

INST 381: Research Methods for International Studies

MW 3:00-4:15
Croft 207

Instructor

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Course Description and Goals

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, which can be used for the senior thesis. Finally, students will also learn how to give a brief oral *research presentation*.

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, students will:

- Understand the vocabulary, structure, and process of social science research
- Be able to clearly state a research question, and identify data and methods appropriate for answering that research question
- Be able to write a clear, well-organized, and thorough literature review using the correct citation conventions commonly used in the social sciences
- Understand similarities and differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as their respective strengths and limitations
- Understanding the key issues related to research ethics, and be able to successfully complete a full IRB research application
- Be able to give a concise, engaging, and informative original research presentation
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to construct a clear, executable research design through successful completion of a research prospectus

Course Textbooks

Baglione, Lisa. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods*, 3rd ed. Los Angeles: Sage, 2015.

Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava, David Nachmias, and Jack DeWaard. *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 8th ed. New York: Worth McMillan, 2015.

Lange, Matthew. *Comparative-Historical Methods*. London: Sage, 2012.

Additional readings will be made available in handouts and/or web links. Students are responsible for all readings, as listed in the course schedule.

Course Requirements

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

| | Points | Percent |
|--|--------|---------|
| Attendance | 50 | 10 % |
| Article summary | 20 | 4 % |
| Annotated bibliography | 20 | 4 % |
| IRB form & survey instrument | 30 | 6 % |
| Draft literature review | 20 | 4 % |
| Draft research design | 20 | 4 % |
| Draft case selection statement | 20 | 4 % |
| Comparative-historical analysis report | 20 | 4 % |
| Database construction assignment | 20 | 4 % |
| Descriptive statistics report | 20 | 4 % |
| Inferential statistics report | 20 | 4 % |
| Bivariate analysis report | 20 | 4 % |
| Multivariate analysis report | 20 | 4 % |
| Oral research presentation | 50 | 10 % |
| Thesis proposal | 150 | 30 % |
| <hr/> | | |
| Total | 500 | 100 % |

Grading Scale

This course uses the +/- grading scale. The corresponding percentages and point scores for each letter grade are outlined below:

| Letter Grade | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|
| A | 93-100 |
| A- | 90-92 |
| B+ | 87-89 |
| B | 83-86 |
| B- | 80-82 |
| C+ | 77-79 |
| C | 73-76 |
| C- | 70-72 |
| D | 60-69 |
| F | 0-59 |

Attendance and Participation (50 pts)

All students are expected to attend class regularly, on time, and observe proper classroom decorum. That means turning off and putting away all cellphones. You should also treat class as a *professional* meeting and behave appropriately. That means coming to class prepared and ready to participate in class discussions. This includes asking questions related to class readings and/or discussions.

Attendance is taken at the start of class. Each class period is worth 2 points, for a total possible 50 points over the course of the semester. You may notice that there are more class days in the semester than there are attendance points. You can miss class three times before incurring any penalties. I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Exceptions will only be made for extreme circumstances. If you will be absent for university-sanctioned events, please see me in the first few weeks of the semester.

Active in-class participation is an essential part of learning—particularly in methods courses. We will cover a wide range of methodological issues, concepts, and techniques. And we will move through them rapidly. If you don’t understand something, ask. Asking questions is not a sign of a bad student—it is a sign of a confident, curious, and engaged student.

IRB Application & Survey Instrument (30 pts)

Every student will develop a research proposal, including a survey instrument (or interview protocol) to be submitted to the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. Prior to submitting an IRB application, students must first complete the online Human Subjects Research Educational Program offered through the university-affiliated Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI).

Because this assignment also includes a survey instrument (or interview protocol), the assignment also serves to assess students’ ability to conduct survey and/or interview research. Additional details will be provided in class.

Thesis Proposal and Related Components (170 pts)

A key objective of this course is to prepare students to write a Croft senior thesis. Although this course is structured as a survey of different qualitative and quantitative research methods and strategies, you should constantly engage with the course materials with your own future (or current) Croft thesis project in mind. Ideally, the research proposal you write for this course would guide your research field work and/or thesis project.

Preparing for the research proposal involves completing a number of small assignments:

Article Summary (20 pts). Every student will write a brief (1-2 paragraph) summary of a scholarly article of his or her choice. The purpose of the summary assignment is to learn how *briefly* summarize an article, connect it to a broader theoretical framework, and relate it to a narrow research topic. Additional details will be provided in class.

Annotated Bibliography (20 pts). Every student will compile a list of bibliographic references related to a research topic of their choice. The bibliography must be formatted according to *Chicago Manual of Style (CMS)* “author-date” conventions. Each bibliographic entry should be followed by a brief description of the source (2-3 sentences). Additional details will be provided in class.

Draft Literature Review (20 pts). Every student will write a brief (4-5 pages) literature review on a research topic of their choice. The literature review should be a stand-alone essay that discusses relevant theories and research, organized around a “theoretical framework” that addresses a scholarly debate. Additional details will be provided in class.

Draft Research Design (20 pts). Every student will write a brief (1-2 pages) research design that will describe the kind of research design selected for the project, using the language of social science research design presented in chapters 5 & 6 of *Research Methods in the Social Science (RMSS)*. Additional details will be provided in class.

Draft Case Selection Statement (20 pts). Every student will write a brief (1-2 pages) case selection statement that concisely, but explicitly describe the number and type of cases selected, as well as a justification for the selection procedure. Additional details will be provided in class.

Each of the above components will be incorporated—*with revisions*—into a final research proposal. Students are expected to expand on “draft” components and develop them into a coherent document that reflects competence in the various elements of social science research. Additional details will be provided in class.

Oral Research Report (50 pts)

Oral presentations are critical components of a Croft senior thesis. In this course, each student will give a brief (10-minute) oral presentation modeled on the presentations at the Croft thesis writers’ conference, based on the research proposal. Additional details will be provided in class.

Comparative-Historical Analysis Report (20 pts)

A common tool in comparative or area studies research includes comparative-historical methods, which includes single- and multi-case studies. Although these are not incompatible (and are often combined with) quantitative approaches, comparative-historical methods often involve a significant qualitative component and a strong emphasis on careful case selection.

Every student will write a brief comparative-historical analysis report (2-3 pages), in which he or she will outline how a research question could be approached using one of these methods. Additional details will be provided in class.

Quantitative Research Skills (aka “Statistics”; 100 pts)

Another important goal of this course is to familiarize students with quantitative statistical analysis methods commonly used in social scientific research, as well as various professional fields. We will focus on a number of basic descriptive and inferential statistical approaches.

Database Construction Assignment (20 pts). Every student will assemble a cross-national database covering the 193 UN member states. Each student will select six variables from a variety of existing databases. We will merge the databases into one combined class database. Additional details will be provided in class.

Descriptive Statistics Report (20 pts). Every student will write a brief descriptive statistics report (2-3 pages, including appropriate tables) using the class database. Additional details will be provided in class.

Inferential Statistics Report (20 pts). Every student will write a brief inferential statistics report (2-3 pages, including appropriate tables) comparing samples from the class database. Additional details will be provided in class.

Bivariate Statistics Report (20 pts). Every student will write a brief bivariate statistics report (2-3 pages, including appropriate graphs and tables) using at least two different pairs of variables drawn from the class database. Additional details will be provided in class.

Multivariate Statistics Report (20 pts). Every student will write a brief multivariate statistics report (2-3 pages, including appropriate tables) using several variables drawn from the class database testing at least two different models. Additional details will be provided in class.

Although the above assignments are not *specifically* incorporated into the final research proposal assignment, students are encouraged to use them (if appropriate) in their final product.

Office Hours and Email Communication

If you have any questions or concerns about class or related matters, notify me as soon as possible. If you wait, it may limit my ability to help you resolve any issues. When in doubt, ASK!

The best way to communicate with any professor is face-to-face. I invite you to come speak to me during my posted office hours (Mon-Thu 10:00-11:50 am). If those times do not work for you, you may email me to schedule an appointment.

I try to respond to all emails promptly (as should you). However, I do not respond to student emails outside normal business hours (8:00 am to 5:00 pm). Still, if you have a question or concern, email me right away. I clear my inbox first thing every morning, and will respond as soon as I can.

Check your email regularly. I occasionally send notifications to the class or (if a situation warrants it) to individual students. When I do, I will use your university (go.olemiss.edu) account. If you have not activated your university account, you should do so right away. The IT help desk located in Weir Hall (662-915-522 or helpdesk@olemiss.edu) can help you set up university your email account on any device (including Android and iOS smartphones and tablets).

Here are some email etiquette tips to keep in mind:

- Use your university email account whenever possible. The University of Mississippi provides you a FREE email account. Whenever possible, you should use it (it's more "professional").
- Remember to keep your messages *professional* and *respectful*.
- Use salutations such as "Professor Centellas" or "Dr. Centellas."
- Sign your email. Do *NOT* assume that I know who sent the email (especially if you did not use your university account).
- Try to write clear and grammatically correct emails. If your writing is unclear, I may not understand your question.
- Do *NOT* ask "Did you get my email?" the next time you see me if you haven't checked your email recently. I may have answered your email already; your question must not have been that important if you did not check to see if I had responded to it.

- Wait at least six hours before sending another email. Like you, I have many responsibilities and may not be able to answer you immediately—but I will respond as soon as I can.

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 Americans 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 also 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.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

The following is a weekly schedule. I will provide additional information in class.

| | | |
|---------------|---|---|
| Week 1 | January 25-29 <i>Introduction</i> Introduction to the content and goals of the course, as well as the basics of developing a thesis project | Baglione, Chapters 1-2 |
| Week 2 | February 1-5 <i>The Literature Review</i> Overview of primary and secondary scholarly works and their role in research project; particular attention will be given to developing a research framework and finding and using appropriate scholarly sources | Baglione, Chapters 3-4 |
| Week 3 | February 8-12 <i>Foundations of Social Science Research</i> Introduction to the basic concepts used in social science research, particularly the importance of the scientific method in empirical research; particular attention given to understanding the role of theory and methodology | RMSS, Chapters 1-3 Baglione, Chapter 5 Lange, Chapter 1 Article summary due |
| Week 4 | February 15-19 <i>Research Ethics & Survey Research</i> Overview of the ethics of research on human subjects, as well as the process for obtain IRB approval; introduction to survey- and interview-based research | RMSS, Chapters 4, 10-11 Annotated bibliography due |
| Week 5 | February 22-26 <i>Research Design</i> Introduction to the basics of research design, including experimental, quasi-experimental, cross-sectional, and case studies, as well as the principle of causal inference | RMSS, Chapters 5-6 Baglione, Chapter 7 IRB form & survey instrument due |
| Week 6 | February 29-March 4 <i>Measurement & Case Selection</i> Overview of how to operationalize and measure variables and how to select cases | RMSS, Chapters 7-8 Lange, Chapter 7 Draft literature review due |
| Week 7 | March 7-11 <i>Observational & Qualitative Research Methods</i> Introduction to observational and qualitative research methods, such as those associated with “field” research; particular attention given to ethnography and participant observation methods | RMSS, Chapters 9 & 12 Research design due |
| | Spring Break March 14-20 | |

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|----------------|--|---|
| Week 8 | March 21-25 <i>Within-Case Studies</i> Introduction to comparative-historical methods, with a focus on within-case comparative approaches, such as causal narrative, process tracing, and pattern matching; special focus on the process of selecting cases | Lange, Chapters 2-4 Case selection statement due |
| Week 9 | March 28-April 1 <i>Comparative Case Studies</i> Overview of cross-case comparative approaches, and the similarities and differences between large-N and small-N comparisons; discussion of large-N approaches includes introduction to Boolean approaches | Lange, Chapters 5-6, 8 |
| Week 10 | April 4-8 <i>Data Collection & Data Processing</i> Overview of how to collect and work with secondary data (data collected and organized by others into existing data sets); special attention given to teaching students how to curate their own datasets using spreadsheet applications | RMSS, Chapters 13-14 Comparative-historical analysis report due |
| Week 11 | April 11-15 <i>Basic Statistics</i> Introduction to statistics, with a focus on basic descriptive and inferential statistics; overview of measures of central tendency and dispersion, as well as simple hypothesis testing and measures of statistical significance | RMSS, Chapters 15 & 19 Database assignment due |
| Week 12 | April 18-22 <i>Bivariate Analysis</i> Overview of statistical measures of association between two variables, including those for nominal, ordinal, and interval measures | RMSS, Chapter 16 Descriptive & inferential statistics reports due |
| Week 13 | April 25-29 <i>Multivariate Analysis</i> Overview of statistical measures of association between multiple variables, including partial correlation and multivariate regression | RMSS, Chapter 17 Bivariate analysis report due |
| Week 14 | May 2-6 <i>Writing & Presenting the Research Report</i> Overview of how to write final research reports; special attention given to the structure and content of a formal research prospectus, as well as a scholarly presentation | Baglione, Chapters 8-9 RMSS, Appendix A Multivariate analysis report due |
| | Final Exam Week Turn in research prospectus and oral presentations | |