

Course Title: “Research Methods of International Relations and Foreign Policy”

Approved by Academic Council

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Instructor: Prof. Maxim V. Bratersky

Course type: compulsory

ECTS 6

Total hours 228

Course syllabus and Description

Students of politics ‘have not been, in general, sufficiently reflective about the nature and scope of their discipline. They just do it rather than talk about it’ (G.Stoker). Given that political scientists study people – individuals, groups, states, nations, cultures – rather than ‘things’, PO825 moves from the assumption that politics students ought to be reflective about their research. The module aims to provide an opportunity for reflection by presenting some of the key theoretical and methodological debates in politics and international relations. These debates deal with issues such as: the concept of ‘the political’ and the concept of power; the relationship between structure and agency; the causal and constitutive role of ideas and discourse; biopolitics; an introduction to quantitative and qualitative research, and to research design and research ethics. The module is designed to guide and inspire students through their first term as an MA/PhD students by encouraging them to grasp the practical relevance of key philosophical and methodological debates in politics and international relations for identifying new research questions and different ways of approaching them, and to think about the philosophical underpinnings of particular research methods, the relationship between methodology and conceptual analysis and the appropriate ways to incorporate these into research design.

Learning outcomes

As a result of their studies, students should:

Know:

- the requirements to the content and drafting of academic and applied research (articles, essays, dissertations, etc.);
- the criteria of selection and principles of usage of the academic sources relevant for the research and interpretation of the research results;
- the requirements to the quality and quantity of research material/data;
- the requirements to the presentation of research results;
- the main theoretical approaches and methods used in public policy & human rights research;
- the basic theoretical conceptions and categories used for the monitoring preparation;
- the core questions associated with the choice of the research method applicable to public policy & human rights issues investigation;
- the content of the required reading given by this program.

Be able to:

- lay out a scientific research and monitoring from the problem definition to the interpretation of the results;
- monitor public policy & human rights events and processes in the class and

independently;

- summarize, compare and interpret data obtained from monitoring or other research methods;
- compose a report on research or monitoring results and suggest recommendations for policymakers;
- use academic literature properly, involving results of previous studies and other sources of data to develop their own research;
- present the results of research or monitoring in accordance with the requirements to academic and applied research (course paper, articles, abstracts, reports, etc.)

Have skills to:

- conduct an independent research in the field of public policy & human rights, both singly and within the group;
- lead the whole process of monitoring or any step of this process,
- develop independently the program of the research in the field of public policy & human rights;
- draft and present in public the results of the academic research in the field of public policy & human rights;
- use different data, apply different analysis methods in the public policy & human rights research and monitoring.

Students will be able to critique Research proposals of each other & offer constructive advice.

Assesment

| Number | Format and length | % of final mark |
|--------|---|-----------------|
| 1 | Group Essay (4 students): 2,500 words | 50% |
| 2 | Individual Essay: 2,500 words | 50% |

GRADING CRITERIA

Group and Individual essays must be 2,500 words in length. They must be word-processed in font not less than size 10. Below is a list of points to keep in mind in preparing your essay. They also constitute the criteria we will employ to assess your essays:

1. Essays should not simply consist of a summary of the relevant literature. The essays should consist of an analytical piece of writing and directly addresses the question. They should have a clear introduction which sets out the argument and indicates how the argument will be developed. You are welcome to use sub-headings as sign-posts to guide the reader through the material. Essays should also contain a logical conclusion that flows from the main arguments developed in the essay. Hence, essays should have a clear structure and a clear focus and should provide a substantive and accurate engagement with the literature and the empirical material. Below is a (non-exhaustive) list of points to keep in mind in preparing your essay:

- a) Address the question within the terms of the question
 - b) Clarify your argument (try to summarize it in two lines)
 - c) Structure you argument
1. Intro (political context, theoretical debates, what is your argument and how you will

explore it, theoretical approach, its advantages and limits)

2. Main body (develop the two-three points mentioned in the intro)
 3. Conclusion (summarise very briefly what you did, how your essay contributes to address the question and also the limits of your argument)
- d) Provide evidence for your claims
 - e) Avoid vague and unsubstantiated claims
 - f) Be critical
1. Why am I saying this? Is it relevant to address the question? Is it relevant to make my point?
 2. Can I express an opinion? Sure, but you need to provide evidence for this
 3. Discuss contending positions: this will help you structure your argument and build your position
- g) A good essay requires several stages of editing
 - h) Familiarise yourself with the assessment criteria and use them to do a self-check up
 - i) Read carefully the essay feedback from your first essay and use them to improve in your second essay

INTERMEDIATE CONTROL (Two essays)

ESSAY 1: Group essay

The first assignment is a 2,500-word group essay (usually in groups of 4; worth 50% of the final mark). You as a group need to address either Q1 or Q2 below:

Q1 (PHILOSOPHY QUESTION): Apply ONE of the approaches/concepts explored in the module (the political, power, agency and structure, idealism and materialism, biopolitics) to ONE case study of your choice.

Here are a few examples of how your research question should look like:

- Contending understandings of the political [approach/concept] in the Brexit debate [case study].
- The power of norms [approach/concept] in global AIDS politics [case study]
- Explaining the hegemony of neoliberalism [case study] through the agency/structure debate [approach/concept].
- Is EU foreign policy [case study] driven by ideas or material interests [approach/concept]?
- How can biopolitics [approach/concept] help explain the 2008 global financial crisis [case study]?

Q2 (METHODOLOGY QUESTION): Select one of the research questions below and a) provide a theoretical argument including hypotheses and causal mechanism, b) develop, define and justify your concepts and operationalise them, c) consider possible measurement and appropriate data, and d) elaborate on an appropriate research design. For each step you should justify your choices (i.e. it should become clear why you decided, for example, on a particular research design).

- Research questions:
- Under which conditions does armed inter-state conflict re-emerge?
- Do peace treaties have an independent effect on the re-emergence of intra-state armed conflict and if so under what conditions?

- Do first past the post electoral systems lead to more divided societies?
- Do female holders of political office appoint more women into positions of power?
- What is the relative importance of ideational and material factors in the outbreak of the Arab Spring?
- Did the lack of support by Western governments lead to the demise of the Arab Spring?

ESSAY 2: Individual Essay

Choose 1 (one) question from the list below:

The Political

1. Which among the liberal, the Aristotelian, the Hobbesian, the Schmittian, and the Marxist understandings of the political do you find more relevant and why?
2. ‘Everything is political’; ‘Nothing is political, [but] everything can be politicised’ (Michel Foucault). Which of these two assertions do you find more convincing and why?

Power

3. Is power just repressive or can it also be productive?
4. Is power the same as violence?

Agency and Structure

5. “Men make history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered and inherited from the past” (Marx). Discuss.

6. Is neo-liberalism a framework in which the possibility of individual agency is maximised or is it an ‘iron cage’ which structurally determines and constrains individual behaviours?

Idealism and Materialism

7. ‘The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist [or political philosopher]’ (Keynes). Discuss.

8. “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness” (Marx). Discuss.

Biopolitics

9. Is modern politics biopolitics?
10. What is the relationship between biopolitics and neoliberalism?

Methodology

1. Pick a research question in the area of political science / IR and discuss the merits and flaws of two research designs and suitable techniques for investigating that research question.
2. Consider the following two papers and critically assess the theory (including causal mechanisms) and the choices the authors made with regard to definitions, conceptualisation, operationalization, measurement, and research design. Which theory is more convincing and which of these choices are more appropriate? Please justify your assessment.

Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin (2003) Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War, *American Political Science Review*, 97 (1): 75-90.

Collier, Paul and Anke Hoefler (2004) Greed and Grievance in Civil War, *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (4): 563-595

3. Consider the following two papers and critically assess the theory (including causal mechanisms) and the choices the authors made with regard to definitions, conceptualisation, operationalization, measurement, and research design. Which theory is more convincing and which of these choices are more appropriate? Please justify your assessment.

Binningsbo, H. M., I. de Soysa, and N. P. Gleditsch. 2007. Green giant or straw man? Environmental pressure and civil conflict, 1961-99. *Population and Environment* 28, no. 6:337-

353.

Raleigh, Clionadh; & Henrik Urdal (2007) Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Armed Conflict, *Political Geography* 26(6): 674–694.

4. Consider the following two papers and critically assess the theory (including causal mechanisms) and the choices the authors made with regard to definitions, conceptualisation, operationalization, measurement, and research design. Which paper offers the more appropriate choices when it comes to theory development and research design? Please justify your assessment. Do those choices influence the overall conclusion each paper arrives at? Homer-Dixon, Thomas, “Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases,” *International Security* 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994): 5 – 40.

Urdal, H. 2005. People vs. Malthus: Population pressure, environmental degradation, and armed conflict revisited. *Journal of Peace Research* 42, no. 4:417-434.

Literature

1. Saldana, Johnny. *Fundamentals of Qualitative Research*, Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2011. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=665394>.

2. Bryman, A. *Social research methods* / A. Bryman. – 4th ed. – Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016. – На англ. яз. - ISBN 0-19-874204-5; 0-19-926446-5; 978-0-19-920295-9; 978-0-19-958805-3; 978-0-19-968945-3.

3. Brians, C. L. *Empirical political analysis: quantitative and qualitative research methods* / C.

L. Brians, L. Willnat, J. B. Manheim, R. C. Rich. – 8th ed. – Harlow: Longman, 2011. – 428 c. – На англ. яз. - ISBN 978-0-205-79121-7.

4. *Comparative Policy Studies : Conceptual and Methodological Challenges*, edited by Isabelle Engeli, et al., Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1699386>.

Electronic support

1. Microsoft Windows Professional RUS MicrosoftWindows 10

MicrosoftWindows 8.1 Professional RUS From the university’s internal network (contract)

2. Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2010 From the university’s internal network (contract)

3. Professional databases and reference systems.

-Consultant Plus From the university’s internal network (contract)

-URAIT Electronic library system URL: <https://biblio-online.ru/>

-Internet resources (electronic educational resources)

-Open Education URL: <https://openedu.ru/>

Material and technical support

Classrooms for lectures on the discipline provide for the use and demonstration of thematic illustrations corresponding to the program of the discipline, consisting of:

PC with Internet access (operating system, office software, antivirus software);

multimedia projector with remote control

WEEKLY TOPICS AND READINGS

PART 1: PHILOSOPHY

1) Introduction

Key Questions:

- Why is self-reflexivity – that is, a problematization and an awareness of the underlying philosophical, conceptual and normative assumptions that guide one’s research – an essential prerequisite for the study of politics and international relations?
- What is the nature of knowledge in the study of world politics and international relations?
- Is knowledge about the acquisition of skills or the transformation of the self – or can it be both?
- Is knowledge ‘always for someone and for some purposes’ (R. Cox)?

Essential Readings:

- Mavelli, L. (2014). Widening participation, the instrumentalization of knowledge and the reproduction of inequality. *Teaching in Higher Education* [Online] 19:860-869.

2) The Political

Key Questions:

- What is ‘politics’ about, and what and where is ‘the political’ in political science and international relations?
- Is politics about power and interests, the state and the international system, procedures, deliberation and compromise, or is it the case that ‘everything has the potential to become political’ (Hay)?
- Is politics different from economics, ethics, and law or does it encompass all these categories?
- Is politics about the maximization of individual freedoms or the good life?
- Does every political form – such as, for instance, political community – require an enemy?
- Is the essence of the political about the friend/enemy distinction as Carl Schmitt argues?

Essential Readings:

- Pratt, Nicola Christine (2004) ‘Bringing politics back in: examining the link between globalization and democratization’. *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol.11 (No.2). pp. 311-336. ISSN 0969-2290
- Fairclough, Isabela and Norman Fairclough. "Argument, Deliberation, Dialectic and the Nature of the Political: A CDA Perspective." *Political Studies Review* 11, no. 3 (2013): 336-344.
- Mavelli, Luca ‘Security and Secularization in International Relations’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 2012, 18(1): 177-199.

3) Power

Key Questions:

- Is power the essence of politics?
- What are the differences between hard power, soft power, balance of power, power/knowledge and the ‘microphysics of power’? Are these concepts comparable?
- Is power repressive or constitutive? Is it the product of individual or of structural conditions?
- Is it possible to tame or achieve emancipation from power?

- Is power the same as violence?

Essential Readings:

- Haugaard, Mark. "Power: a 'family resemblance' concept." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 13, no. 4 (2010): 419-438.
- Hayward, Clarissa, and Steven Lukes. "Nobody to shoot? Power, structure, and agency: A dialogue." *Journal of Power* 1, no. 1 (2008): 5-20.
- Bates, Stephen R. "Re-structuring Power." *Polity* 42, no. 3 (2010): 352-376.
- Dowding, Keith. "Agency and structure: Interpreting power relationships." *Journal of Power* 1, no. 1 (2008): 21-36.
- Haugaard, Mark. "Editorial: reflections upon power over, power to, power with, and the four dimensions of power." *Journal of Power* 5, no. 3 (2012): 353-358.
- Heaney, Jonathan G. "Emotions and power: reconciling conceptual twins." *Journal of Political Power* 4, no. 2 (2011): 259-277.
- Nye, Joseph S. "Power and foreign policy." *Journal of Political Power* 4, no. 1 (2011): 9-24.

4) Agency and Structure

Key Questions:

- "Men make history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered and inherited from the past" (Marx). Do you agree? And what are the implications of this idea for the study of politics and international relations?
- What shapes the behaviour of political actors: individual agency or structural conditions?
- What are the sources of agency?
- Can individual agency be a form of false consciousness (and, as such, a product of structural conditions)? Is it possible to have agency at all?
- Are structures objective or subjective?
- Is it possible to adjudicate empirically the relationship between structure and agency?

Essential Readings

- Doty, Roxanne Lynn. "Aporia: a critical exploration of the agent-structure problematique in international relations theory." *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997): 365-392.
- Wight, Colin. "They shoot dead horses don't they? Locating agency in the agent-structure problematique." *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 1 (1999): 109-142.
- Carlsnaes, Walter. "The agency-structure problem in foreign policy analysis."

5) Idealism and Materialism

Key Questions:

- What is the role of ideas in political analysis?
- Can ideas be an autonomous force or are they the product of the material conditions of society (and, in particular, of the social relations of production)?
- What is historical materialism?
- Can the origins of capitalism be traced back to ideas or to material forces?
- Can constructivism be considered an adequate third way between and beyond idealism and materialism?

Essential Readings

- Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?' *The National Interest*, vol.16, (1989), pp.3-18. <http://www.wesjones.com/eoh.htm>
- Birnbaum, Norman. "Conflicting interpretations of the rise of capitalism: Marx and Weber." *The British Journal of Sociology* 4, no. 2 (1953): 125-141.
- Adler, Emanuel. "Seizing the middle ground: constructivism in world politics." *European journal of international relations* 3, no. 3 (1997): 319-363.
- Joseph, Jonathan. "Philosophy in international relations: A scientific realist approach." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 2 (2007): 345-359.

6) Biopolitics

Key Questions:

- Is modern politics biopolitics?
- What are the main differences between Foucault's and Agamben's understandings of biopolitics?
- What is the relationship between biopolitics and neoliberalism?
- Is the biopolitical subject a resilient subject?

Readings

- Dillon M and Lobo-Guerrero L (2008) *Biopolitics of security in the 21st century: an introduction*. *Review of International Studies* 34(02): 265-292.
- Esposito, Roberto. *Bios: Biopolitics and philosophy*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Evans B and Reid J (2013) *Dangerously exposed: The life and death of the resilient subject*. *Resilience* 1(2): 83-98.
- Lemke T (2003) Comment on Nancy Fraser: Rereading Foucault in the shadow of globalization. *Constellations* 10(2): 172-179.

PART 2: METHODOLOGY

7) The Research Process, Research Design and Ethics

Key Questions / Issues:

- a. What is research design?
- b. How to develop a good research design.
- c. How to match a research problem with data, method and technique.
- d. What is the role and importance of definitions, operationalization and measurement?
- e. What ethical considerations do I have to make before doing research?
- f. What are the university procedures for ethics approval?

8) Positivism, scientific realism and causality in political science

Key Questions / Issues:

- a. What is 'political science'?
- b. Different types of theory
- c. How is scientific knowledge different from other forms of knowledge or pseudo-science?

- d. How do we use evidence in political science?
- e. Causality in political science

Essential Readings

- Wittman, Donald, "Candidate motivation: A Synthesis of Alternative Theories", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (1983): 142-157
- Robert Keohane, "International Institutions: Two Approaches," *International Studies Quarterly* 32 (December 1988), pp. 379-96.

9) Large-n (quantitative) Analysis

Key Questions / Issues:

- a. What are the principles of quantitative research and why is such research important?
- b. What do I need to know to read and make sense of quantitative studies?
- c. What are univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis and what are they useful for?
- d. How can we investigate the influence of power on the effectiveness of international institutions?

Readings

- e. Neumayer, Eric and Plümper, Thomas, 2009. International terrorism and the clash of civilizations. *British Journal of Political Science*, 39 (4). pp. 711-7

10) Small-n Comparative Analysis

Key Questions / Issues:

- a. What are the principles of small-n case study research and why is such research important?
- b. How to select cases to avoid selection bias.
- c. Under what conditions can we make inferences from case studies to a wider range of cases?

Essential Readings

- d. Plümper T, Troeger VE, Neumayer E. 2019. Case selection and causal inferences in qualitative comparative research. *PLoS ONE* 14(7): e0219727 (open access) <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0219727>

4) Case Study Analysis and Mixed methods

Key Questions / Issues:

- a. What are the principles of case study research and why is such research important?
- b. What are the different kinds of case studies we can use?
- c. Under what conditions can we make inferences from case studies to a wider range of cases?
- d. How to deal with alternative explanations in qualitative research?
- e. Can qualitative and quantitative research be fruitfully combined?

Essential Readings

Case studies:

- f. John Gerring, 'What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?', *American Political Science Review*. 98:2 (May 2004): 341-54.

a. Thompson, Alexander “Rational design in motion: Uncertainty and flexibility in the global climate regime” *European Journal of International Relations* 16, 2, 2010: 269-296

Mixed methods:

b. Lieberman, E “Nested analysis as a mixed method strategy for comparative research” *American Political Science Review* 99, 3, 2005: 435-452.

c. Seawright, J and John Gerring “Case selection techniques in case study research: A menu of qualitative and quantitative options” *Political Research Quarterly* 61, 2, 2008: 294-308