

MA International Relations: Global Politics and Social Theory

Modules

This document (which is an unofficial, more reader-friendly version of the module catalogue) is meant to give students and potential applicants a better insight into the curriculum of the program. Note that where information given in this document (including information on requirements) deviates from stipulations in the current seminar outlines (syllabi), the latter take priority.

Compulsory modules must be taken. Compulsory elective modules (*Wahlpflichtmodule*) belong to a set of modules from among which students are required to choose a certain number. Elective modules (*Wahlmodule*) belong to a complementary part of the program (sometimes referred to as “General Studies”), where students are given the opportunity to take additional courses or engage in further activities (such as a research internship) to deepen and broaden their studies according to their own preferences and career goals.

“PL” stands for *Prüfungsleistungen*, i.e. graded exams (in the widest sense). “SL” is shorthand for *Studienleistungen*, i.e. exams (in the widest sense) that must be passed but for which there is no grade.

IR-1: Foundations of Global Politics

Type of module: compulsory

Content

The module (re)introduces students, who come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, to the study of world politics or International Relations (IR). Students are familiarized, and given the

opportunity to engage more deeply, with central topics of the field including the main actors, institutions, and issue-areas of international relations as well as the most important theories that scholars have constructed in order to describe, understand, and explain their properties and operations. The focus will be on refreshing and deepening students' knowledge of both mainstream and critical theories of international relations and studying how they are utilized to explore both classical and more recent questions of the field or even to generate new questions about world politics altogether. As a rule, required readings include both theoretical and applied papers, enabling students to observe and critically assess IR theories "in action." Examples cover the full spectrum of issue-areas and represent different types of actors and institutions. In this way, the module is intended to serve its main purpose, i.e. prepare, in tandem with module IR-2 ("Foundations of Social Theory"), students for the more specialized and advanced seminars that are offered within the modules of the second semester.

Results

- knowledge of mainstream (Realism, Liberalism, Institutionalism) and critical (Constructivism, Marxism, Feminism, Poststructuralism) theories of international relations
- knowledge of core features of central actors (both state and non-state), institutions (including international law), and issue-areas (security, economy, environment, human rights) of contemporary world politics and how they have evolved
- ability to apply IR theories to describe, understand, and explain particular (changes in) structures, processes, practices, and events of world politics

Examination and Grading

- two position papers or review essay or short presentation (PL) (25% of the module grade)
- exposé of term paper (SL)
- term paper (PL) (75%)

Calculation of Workload

- class attendance: 56 (4x14) hours

- preparation of classes: 34 hours
- preparation and performance of exams: 180 hours

Total: 270 hours = 9 ECTS credit points

Module coordinator: Peter Mayer (prmayer@uni-bremen.de)

Secretariat: Tina Menge (tmenge@uni-bremen.de)

IR-2: Foundations of Social Theory

Type of module: compulsory

Content

The purpose of this module is to learn from classic and contemporary texts of modern social theory. By studying those texts, we can elaborate concepts concerning fundamental characteristics of social developments and adapt them for the analysis of contemporary societal problems. By combining distinguished and contradictory perspectives, we will focus on those achievements which prepare a better understanding and explanation of long-term developments that are of extreme importance also for challenges of governance and social change in the 21st century. Topics for discussion include the methodological status of social theory, different characterizations of modern society (in particular capitalist society), the role of more than 500 years of colonization in the shaping of modernity, the relation of agency and structure, modern conceptions of the self, power and hegemony, and the relevance of the categories of race and gender. The module will serve as a general introduction to modern social theory – it does not require any previous knowledge of this field, but the willingness to engage with theoretical texts and their sometimes complex arguments.

Results

- knowledge and understanding of classic and modern texts of social theory

- ability to make, defend, and rebut arguments in social theory
- ability to transform classical and modern theories while describing and explaining current social trends
- ability to apply major theoretical concepts to selected empirical problems

Examination and Grading

- short presentation or two position papers (25%) (PL)
- exposé of term paper (SL)
- term paper (75%) (PL)

Calculation of Workload

- class attendance: 56 (4x14) hours
- preparation of classes: 34 hours
- preparation and performance of exams: 180 hours

Total: 270 hours = 9 ECTS credit points

Module coordinator: Martin Nonhoff (mnonhoff@uni-bremen.de)

Secretariat: Peter Arnhold (arnhold@uni-bremen.de)

IR-3: Methods of Social Science

Type of module: compulsory

Content

This module aims at providing an overview and understanding of a selection of commonly applied quantitative and qualitative methods as well as of general standards and challenges of empirical

research. Students will study the module in two complementary seminars, focusing on quantitative and qualitative methods, respectively. The quantitative part will deepen knowledge on essential statistical techniques, including hypothesis testing, as well as the ideas behind data reduction, prediction and explanation. The qualitative part will cover selective interpretive methods, such as qualitative content analysis, discourse analysis, ethnographic methods, interviewing, or qualitative case comparison. In both complementary seminars of the module students will also learn more about sampling and coding, about data collection and analysis and criteria of data evaluation in general. The focus will be on real-world applications, using published research and smaller research tasks carried out by students themselves.

Results

- knowledge of advanced methods in social sciences, in particular data generation and interpretation
- ability to interpret and critically discuss empirical studies in International Relations and competent comprehension of research results
- ability to actively apply selected qualitative and quantitative methods
- ability to make well-founded decisions about methods for specific research purposes
- improved capacities to develop adequate research designs including empirical methods;
- ability to conceptualize, plan and carry out smaller empirical studies independently
- knowledge about ethical and legal standards in social sciences, including data protection

Examination and Grading

- written examination (seminar “Quantitative Methods”) (PL) (50%)
- term paper or take-home exam (seminar “Qualitative Methods”) (PL) (50%)

Calculation of Workload

- class attendance: 56 (2x2x14) hours
- preparation of classes: 94 hours
- preparation and performance of exams: 210 hours

Total: 360 hours = 12 ECTS credit points

Module coordinator: Markus Tepe (markus.tepe@uni-bremen.de)

Secretariat: N.N.

IR-4: Theorizing Social and Political Phenomena

Type of module: compulsory elective¹

Content

In this module, students will deepen their knowledge of social and political theory. Courses offered will allow students to learn more about core theory concepts such as modernity, capitalism, colonialism and decolonization, gender, power, agency, democracy, (international) justice etc. They will also be familiarized with epistemological and methodological questions pertinent in social and political theory (for example, positivism and post-positivism, different aspects of constructivism, the nature/culture nexus or the relation between agency and structure). Regularly, courses in this module will link issues of social and political theory with phenomena of global politics. Students choosing this module will take two courses, earning them 9 and 3 credits, respectively.

Results

- deeper understanding of problems in social and political theory
- deeper understanding of concepts relevant in social and political theory
- improving skills of reading and interpreting complex theoretical texts
- honing of argumentative skills and of putting coherent argumentation into writing

¹ Students are required to choose two out of the three modules IR-4, IR-5, and IR-6.

Examination and Grading

- final paper (seminar 1) (PL) (75%)
- oral presentation or short paper (seminar 2) (PL) (25%)

Calculation of Workload

- class attendance: 56 (2x2x14) hours
- preparation of classes: 34 hours
- preparation and performance of exams: 270 hours

Total: 360 hours = 12 ECTS credit points

Module coordinator: Martin Nonhoff (mnonhoff@uni-bremen.de)

Secretariat: Peter Arnhold (arnhold@uni-bremen.de)

IR-5: Examining Global Political Dynamics

Type of module: compulsory elective

Content

Growing international interdependencies in world markets, the causes and effects of migration or the spread and appropriation of cultural patterns across the globe stand for social dynamics that have considerable political implications. In this module a variety of teaching forms will introduce students to the study and analysis of social and political cross-boundary dynamics that affect domestic politics and international relations likewise. How do, for example, trade, migration, political violence, or the spread of mass and social media affect the realm of international relations? What forms of appropriation and what conflicts result from these dynamics? How do social movements cross boundaries, what forms of transnational politicization affect international politics? Seminars

in this module may in particular highlight political dynamics of non-European origin and scope in order to overcome the North-Atlantic bias of traditional IR. Students choosing this module will take two courses earning them 9 and 3 credits, respectively.

Results

- ability to identify, analyze and understand social processes with global political implications
- knowledge of the state of the art on selected topical fields of such processes
- ability to develop research ideas, to conceptualize research designs on such topics and to find and analyze appropriate sources (literature and data) for this research
- enlarged vision of political phenomena and themes beyond dominant understandings of IR, esp. with regard to the Global South

Examination and Grading

- final paper (seminar 1) (PL) (75%)
- oral presentation or short paper (seminar 2) (PL) (25%)

Calculation of Workload

- class attendance: 56 (2x2x14) hours
- preparation of classes: 34 hours
- preparation and performance of exams: 270 hours

Total: 360 hours = 12 ECTS credit points

Module coordinator: Wiebke Rabe (wrabe@uni-bremen.de)

Secretariat: Nicole Henze (n.henze@uni-bremen.de)

IR-6: Analyzing International Policies

Type of module: compulsory elective

Content

In this module, students learn about the international dimension of different policy fields with regard to contents, actors, and institutions. Seminars may deal with international policy fields such as peace and security, climate change and natural resources, economic and labor policies, migration, education and social policy. Students learn how to apply theory-based frameworks to empirical phenomena in order to analyze international policies. Students choosing this module will take two courses earning them 9 and 3 credits, respectively.

Results

- deepening of specialized knowledge in selected areas of international policies
- ability to apply social science concepts, theories and methods to selected research problems and relevant issues
- ability to present and combine theoretical arguments and empirical findings
- ability to formulate and evaluate policy recommendations against the backdrop of political science research results and theory debates

Examination and Grading

- final paper (seminar 1) (PL) (75%)
- oral presentation or short paper (seminar 2) (PL) (25%)

Calculation of Workload

- class attendance: 56 (2x2x14) hours
- preparation of classes: 34 hours
- preparation and performance of exams: 270 hours

Total: 360 hours = 12 ECTS credit points

Module coordinator: Kerstin Martens (martensk@uni-bremen.de)

Secretariat: Nicole Henze (n.henze@uni-bremen.de)

IR-7: Research Design

Type of module: compulsory

Content

The focus of the module is on learning about and discussing methodological principles and rules the purpose of which is to help students of international relations plan, structure, and organize their research endeavors in ways that maximize the probability of achieving valid and relevant results, particularly in the area of “theory-oriented research”. The module deals with questions such as the following: What are the features of a good research design? Which research questions are worth studying? What is a theory? How can we develop and test theories? What is a scientific explanation? In addition, the module looks at some problems of the philosophy of social science, especially the debate between “naturalists”, who argue that social science is about explaining collective human behavior in an “objective” manner, and “interpretivists”, who argue that social life can only be understood from within the social world. This seminar may also be used to prepare a first draft of the M.A. thesis proposal.

Results

- deeper understanding of the epistemological foundations of the social sciences
- familiarity with the main research strategies in the social sciences, including their advantages and disadvantages and ranges of applicability
- ability to select appropriate research strategies according to the nature of the research problem at hand, including the MA thesis

Examination and Grading

- research proposal (PL) (100%)
- oral presentation and discussion of a draft research proposal (SL)

Calculation of Workload

- class attendance: 56 (4x14) hours
- preparation of classes: 34 hours
- preparation and performance of exams: 270 hours

Total: 360 hours = 12 ECTS credit points

Module coordinator: Philipp Genschel (genschel@uni-bremen.de)

Secretariat: Ulla Meller (umeller@uni-bremen.de)

IR-8: Research Internship

Type of module: elective

Content

Students can choose this elective module in order to gain experience in research institutions. Such institutions can be purely academic or do applied social sciences like in consultancies, political foundations or think tanks in any world region. With the consent of the module coordinator, the internship can also be done in political institutions (political parties, public administration, NGOs, etc.), if it aims, for example, at gaining access to a research field or data collection for the MA thesis in the fourth semester (IR-10).

Examination and Grading

- internship report (SL)

Calculation of Workload

- internship: 360 hours
- class attendance (block seminar): 20 hours
- preparation of class (block seminar): 100 hours
- preparation and performance of exams: 60 hours

Total: 540 hours = 18 ECTS credit points

Module coordinator: Klaus Schlichte (kschlich@uni-bremen.de)

Secretariat: Claudia Herold (herold@uni-bremen.de)

IR-9: Study Abroad

Type of module: elective

Content

To spend a semester at a university abroad is both an enrichment for professional and personal reasons. Students acquire additional cultural and social competences, they intensify their knowledge of foreign languages, and they get acquainted with parts of International Relations and other social sciences that might not be taught at the University of Bremen. A closer acquaintance with other regional or national political patterns is also an intended effect. There is a far-reaching network of Erasmus-Partnerships of the University of Bremen, as well as of the YUFE-program in Europe. Additional contacts within and beyond Europe can be used, but “free moving” (self-organized) stays at recognized universities are also possible with the consent of the module coordinator.

Examination and Grading

- according to requirements of host university (SL)

Calculation of Workload

- semester abroad: 540 hours

Total: 540 hours = 18 ECTS credit points

Module coordinator: Klaus Schlichte (kschlich@uni-bremen.de)

Secretariat: Claudia Herold (herold@uni-bremen.de)

IR-10: Master Thesis

Type of module: compulsory

Content

The concluding module of the program encompasses the Master's thesis as well as the MA thesis seminar. The purpose of the thesis is for the students to demonstrate that they are able to produce a piece of scientific work on an appropriate scientific and methodological level within a certain period of time. The purpose of the thesis seminar is to support students in the process of conceiving, designing, and writing the thesis, complementing the input they receive from their supervisors. The thesis seminar consists of three workshops: In the first workshop students present their thesis topic and initial ideas about how to tackle it. The second workshop gives students an opportunity to present and discuss their fully elaborated research design, i.e. precise statements of their (final) research question, its (normative, scientific, or practical) relevance, its place in the literature, their working hypothesis (or hypotheses), the role of theory in their study, the methods they are employing and the reasons for choosing them, the data they are using, etc. Finally, the third workshop is

devoted to discussing results of students' investigation on the basis of a "writing sample", i.e. a draft of the Introduction or of a key chapter. In each workshop students receive feedback from the instructors and their fellow students helping them to identify problems in their arguments and possible solutions to these problems.

Results

- ability to conceive, design, and produce, in a restricted period of time, an extended social-scientific study which meets pertinent methodological and formal criteria
- ability to engage in a constructive and mutually supportive intercourse with one's peers on an ongoing research project

Examination and Grading

- progress report I (SL)
- progress report II (SL)
- progress report III (SL)
- thesis (PL) (100%)

Calculation of Workload

- class attendance (block seminar): 28 hours
- preparation of classes (block seminar): 62 hours
- preparation and performance of exams: 810 hours

Total: 900 hours = 30 ECTS credit points

Module coordinator: Peter Mayer (prmayer@uni-bremen.de)

Secretariat: Tina Menge (tmenge@uni-bremen.de)
