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MA in International Relations: Global Governance and Social Theory

Seminar: Research Design

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Goals

The seminar aims to introduce students to the logic of inquiry in International Relations (IR) and other social sciences. At the same time, it seeks to prepare the ground for subsequent, more advanced courses in the methodology component of the program. The focus of the seminar is on learning about and discussing methodological principles and rules that, if properly applied, increase the probability of achieving valid and relevant results in studying world politics. The seminar 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 build and test theories? What is a scientific explanation? In addition, the seminar looks at some problems of the philosophy of social science. Thus, it will examine 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. Throughout the focus is on "positive" research seeking to ascertain facts and accounting for them. (This is in a division of labor with other seminars in the program that pay more attention to normative issues and methodologies.)

General Literature

Useful books dealing with issues of **research design in IR and the social sciences** more generally include the following:

Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M./Brady, Henry E./Collier, David (eds.) (2008): *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. [E-Book UB central library][1]

Della Porta, Donatella/Keating, Michael (eds.) (2008): *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [E-Book UB central library]

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[1] The UB central library's catalogue can be accessed here.

Gerring, John (2012): *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework.* 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [E-Book UB central library (first edition)]

Gschwend, Thomas/Schimmelfennig, Frank (eds.) (2007): *Research Design in Political Science: How to Practice What They Preach.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. [E-Book UB central library]

King, Gary/Keohane, Robert O./Verba, Sidney (1994): *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [E-Book IRC/Library JU][2]

Klotz, Audie/Lynch, Cecelia (2007): *Strategies for Research in Constructivist International Relations.* Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. [E-Book UB central library]

Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine/Yanow, Dvora (2012): *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes.* New York: Routledge. [E-Book IRC/Library JU]

Van Evera, Stephen (1997): *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. [E-Book UB central library]

See also the "Further Reading" folder on the Stud.IP course site, which includes a bibliography broken down by topics relevant to designing research in IR.

Examples in the seminar are generally taken from IR. The following books provide good overviews of **international relations theory and research**:

Carlsnaes, Walter/Risse, Thomas/Simmons, Beth A. (eds.) (2013): *Handbook of International Relations.* 2nd edn. Los Angeles, Cal.: Sage. [E-Book UB central library]

Dunne, Timothy/Kurki, Milja/Smith, Steve (eds.) (2016): *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity.* 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Reus-Smit, Christian/Snidal, Duncan (eds.) (2008): *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. [E-Book UB central library]

Requirements

Participants can obtain 6 or 9 credits (CP) in this seminar. To acquire credits, participants have to meet three requirements. The first two of these requirements apply to all participants alike; the last one is differentiated according to the number of credits sought.

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[2] The catalogue of the JU's IRC/Library can be accessed [here](#). ("IRC" stands for Information Resource Center.)

1. **All participants** are required to attend the sessions and to contribute to the discussions in class according to their ability (3 CP).

To make meaningful participation possible it is necessary for students to read and think through the assigned texts before the respective sessions. They should take notes of the main points made in the text and make sure they have identified and grasped the arguments that are advanced in support of its conclusions. Guiding questions are made available alongside the readings that are meant to help participants focus their attention on issues deemed most important for the discussion in class. Students should also think about how the assigned readings relate to one another, including to readings selected for previous sessions: where do the authors agree, where do they differ (and why)? etc. Finally, students should take down questions they would like to be clarified or discussed in class.

2. **All participants** are required to write three **seminar papers** (3 CP):

Seminar paper 1 is a very short paper (c. 300 words) that proposes a research question and gives reasons why it is worth studying. The paper is to be uploaded to the Stud.IP course site by **26 October 2022**.

Seminar papers 2 and 3 are somewhat longer papers (up to 1,500 words each). Each discusses a distinct set of themes and problems integral to designing research in IR (conceptualization, theory, methodology) – not in the abstract, but in relation to a (fictitious) research project that seeks to answer the research question proposed in seminar paper 1 (although it is possible to change one's mind about the research question further down the road [see sec. "More on Requirements" below]). The papers are to be uploaded to the Stud.IP course site by **23 November 2022** and **18 January 2023**, respectively.

3. **Participants** who wish to obtain **9 CP (large module version**) are required to write a **term paper**. The term paper takes the form of a **research proposal** that formulates (and justifies) a research question and specifies strategies and tools (concepts, theories, methods) for arriving at a valid answer to this question. Usually, the term paper will build on the three seminar papers. The expected length of the term paper is 4-4,500 words.

Participants who opt for the **6 CP (small module version)** are required to submit a **"portfolio"** consisting of seminar papers 1-3. For this purpose, the papers should be revised and integrated into a single, coherent text (c. 2,500 words). Thus, the portfolio is essentially a **short research proposal** similar to the one forming the 9 CP term paper, but smaller and less elaborate.

A digital copy of the term paper/portfolio (PDF, Word, RTF) is to be sent to the instructor via email by **1 March 2023**. Hard copies are not required.

Note that, according to the rules of the university, you must attach a signed "**copyright declaration**" to your final papers (here: term paper or portfolio) (for the prescribed form and

some background information see here). For the program rules governing late submission of final papers see the "MAIR Manual for Students" (sec. 5).

The **grade** for the module will be based on the term paper (9 CP) and the portfolio (6 CP), respectively.

For more detailed information on the expectations for the seminar (including seminar and term papers) see the final part of this syllabus ("More on Requirements" and "Further Hints").

For more on seminar requirements and procedures see the "Additional Information" section of the Stud.IP course site. Note that these hints may be updated, extended, and in other ways revised in the course of the semester. Hence, revisiting the section from time to time should pay off.

Schedule

Session	Time	Topic
1	7 Oct	Introduction
2	14 Oct	Basics of Research Design – Choosing a Research Question
3	21 Oct	Philosophy of Social Science: Explaining and Understanding
4	28 Oct	Discussion of Seminar Paper 1
5	4 Nov	Concepts and Typologies
6	11 Nov	Theory
7	18 Nov	Causality and Constitution
8	25 Nov	Discussion of Seminar Paper 2
9	2 Dec	Causal Inference
10	9 Dec	Methods I: Experiment and Large-N Studies
11	16 Dec	Methods II: Small-N and Case Studies
12	13 Jan	Methods III: Applications
13	20 Jan	Discussion of Seminar Paper 3 – Conclusion

The sessions will take place in the morning (10:00-13:00 hrs). The venue is UNICOM 7.2210.

Topics and Required Readings

1 – Introduction

2 – Basics of Research Design – Choosing a Research Question

King, Gary/Keohane, Robert O./Verba, Sidney (1994): *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, ch. 1.2 (components of research design)

Van Evera, Stephen (1997): *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, ch. 3 (types of study)

3 – Philosophy of Social Science: Explaining & Understanding

Hollis, Martin (2003): Philosophy of Social Science. In: Bunnin, Nicholas/Tsui-James, E. P. (eds.): *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Blackwell, 375-402. (naturalism & hermeneutics)

4 – Discussion of Seminar Paper 1

5 – Concepts and Typologies

Mair, Peter (2008): Concepts and Concept Formation. In: della Porta, Donatella/Keating, Michael (eds.): *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 177-197.

Collier, David/LaPorte, Jody/Seawright, Jason (2008): Typologies: Forming Concepts and Creating Categorical Variables. In: Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M./Brady, Henry E./Collier, David (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 152-173.

6 – Theory

Van Evera, Stephen (1997): *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 7-21 (hypotheses, laws, theories)

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7 – Causality and Constitution

Little, Daniel (1991): *Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, ch. 1 & 2 (models of causality)

Wendt, Alexander (1998): On Constitution and Causation in International Relations. In: *Review of International Studies*, 24 (suppl), 101-118

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8 – Discussion of Seminar Paper 2

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9 – Causal Inference

King, Gary/Keohane, Robert O./Verba, Sidney (1994): *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 46-49, 118-123, 128-139, 168-182, 185-187 (pitfalls of causal inference)

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10 – Methods I: Experimental and Large-N Studies

Hyde, Susan D. (2015): Experiments in International Relations: Lab, Survey, and Field. In: *Annual Review of Political Science,* 18 (1), 403-424.

Braumoeller, Bear F./Sartori, Anne E. (2004): The Promise and Perils of Statistics in International Relations. In: Sprinz, Detlef F./Wolinsky-Nahmias, Yael (eds.): *Models, Numbers and Cases: Methods for Studying International Relations*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Michigan University Press, 129-151

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11 – Methods II: Small-N and Case Studies

Bennett, Andrew (2004): Case Study Methods: Design, Use, and Comparative Advantages. In: Sprinz, Detlef F./Wolinsky-Nahmias, Yael (eds.): *Models, Numbers and Cases: Methods for Studying International Relations*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 19-55.

Ragin, Charles C. (1994): Introduction to Qualitative Comparative Analysis. In: Janoski, Thomas/Hicks, Alexander M. (eds.): *The Comparative Political Economy of the Welfare State: New Methodologies and Approaches*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 299-319.

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12 – Methods III: Applications

Fortna, Virginia Page (2004): Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War. In: *International Studies Quarterly,* 48 (2), 269-292. (large-N design)

Moravcsik, Andrew (2000): The Origins of Human Rights Regimes: Democratic Delegation in Postwar Europe. In: *International Organization,* 54 (2), 217-252. (small-N design)

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13 – Discussion of Seminar Paper 3 – Conclusion

More on Requirements

a. Term paper

The term paper is a research proposal, where you give information and comment on three themes: (i) the goals of the research you propose; (ii) the means you envisage for achieving these goals; and (if applicable) (iii) challenges and limitations that you foresee. These broad themes roughly translate into the following sets of tasks (stated as questions):

(i) Goals: What is the research question that you propose to study? Why is it important? Which literature(s) does the study build upon or speak to? Which theories (if any) are affected?

(ii) Means: How do you intend to tackle the research question? More specifically: Which theories will you make use of or refer to? What are the hypotheses you are going to explore? Which definitions and measurements do you propose for key variables? Which data (cases etc.) do you plan to draw upon and why? etc.

(iii) Challenges (or reflection): Which difficulties do you foresee (and how might they be tackled)? Which important issues with regard to your research design have yet to be solved?

The general document folder on the Stud.IP course site contains a document outlining a possible structure for the term paper ("Seminar Requirements: Term Paper and Seminar Papers 1-3").

A research proposal is similar to an exposé, although there are some notable differences.[3] Many of these differences originate in the different functions of the two types of text. While an exposé seeks to give an idea of a *text* to be written such as an article, book, or thesis, the research proposal assigned in this seminar describes a *research project* to be undertaken, abstracting from the form in which its results might be communicated to the scientific community once the project is finished. You should therefore *not* include a preliminary table of contents of a future work (as you might do in an exposé), and the bibliography of the term paper should be confined to literature referenced in the text (as with a usual paper).[4]

While you should not assume infinite time or resources, there is no need to worry too much about material or time constraints. Imagine that you are proposing a research project to a scientific funding organization that will sponsor your research generously (by giving you travel grants or enabling you to hire research assistants) if you manage to convince them that this is a worthwhile project and you have a sound plan for seeing it through.[5] Therefore, it is important that you are as concrete and precise as you can throughout the proposal. By contrast, mentioning expected results is *not* essential and might even be counterproductive if it creates the impression that you are asking for support for a study that you have already done. (For similar reasons, do not use, in this paper, phrases such as "I will show that etc."! The research question you are proposing must be an open one from your point of view.) As with all seminar or term papers, clarity and coherence are important virtues. And you should assume a reader who is not familiar with your project and its subject matter. Finally, by "convince" I do not mean "trick into believing", in other words: you should not cover up difficulties but point them out yourself, ideally in combination with potential solutions (hence, the theme "challenges").

Do not include trivial information in your research proposal such as "in order to find out I am going to search for relevant literature". (Familiarizing yourself with what other scholars have found out about the subject is, of course, very important, but precisely because it is essential to any research project, presenting this as part of your plan is a redundant.)

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[3] For a useful overview and discussion of the components of a research proposal (with a focus on qualitative research) see also the fourth chapter of Alexander George and Andrew Bennett's book "Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences" (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004) (a PDF of which is accessible via the further reading folder on the Stud.IP course site).

[4] By contrast, in an exposé you will often also list the literature you are planning to read and analyze for your study, so your supervisor knows you are aware of key works in the relevant fields. Both exposés and research proposals often include timelines. Leave those out as well.

[5] Alternatively, you could imagine that you are preparing your MA thesis and your supervisor (who will go on a field trip for several weeks and be off-line) asked you to describe your project to her in order to assure her that you have a clear and valuable research goal and a well-considered and solid plan for how to achieve it.

Be careful about form and language. As with all seminar or term papers, clarity and coherence are important virtues. You should assume a reader who is not familiar with your project and its subject matter. To increase accessibility, include a brief preview of the subsequent argument or reasoning in the introductory section.

Leave space for comments (one inch at least) on the right hand side. Insert page numbers. Use a cover sheet and include a table of contents. (The cover sheet should include the names of the universities, the name of the program, the semester, the name of the instructor, the title of the paper, your name, your email address, your matriculation no., a word count, and the date of submission.)

Reference your sources according to the rules described in the "MAIR Stylesheet". Deviating from these rules is admissible in this seminar but only if you (a) choose another conventional (established) style instead, (b) apply it consistently, and (c) let me know which style you are using (e.g. by placing this information next to or below the word count). If you have no strong preference for another style use the MAIR style. (Note that other instructors may expect you to use the MAIR style and sanction failure to do so.)

To steer clear of any kind of plagiarism, read the definition in the MAIR Stylesheet carefully. If you have a question about this definition, please ask me (e.g. via Blubber).

b. Seminar papers and portfolio

Seminar papers 1-3 are best seen as stepping stones toward the research proposal presented in the term paper. This does not mean that choices made at one stage (i.e. in one paper) cannot be revised at a later stage. For example, the research question proposed in seminar paper 1 may be modified for seminar paper 2 (or even replaced by an entirely new question!). Similarly, a method you select in seminar paper 3 may be dropped in favor of another in the term paper (even if the research question stays the same). Moreover, such changes may be made as often as you like (or rather as often as you feel it is needed, as changes should not be made at random but in order to improve the project).

Seminar Paper 1

The first seminar paper proposes and classifies a research question and gives reasons why it is worth studying.

The proposed research question must belong to the field of International Relations broadly conceived and should be explanatory rather than merely descriptive (i.e. why- or how-questions are preferable).

Omit issues of method at this point (although you should choose your research question and hence your research goal bearing in mind feasibility requirements). Reference to theory may be appropriate or even necessary depending on the research question (e.g. if the proposed research

is about probing the explanatory power of a given theory, you cannot state your research goal without mentioning this theory).

Seminar Paper 2

The second seminar paper addresses issues of conceptualization and theory as they bear upon the research project in the making. Which theory is (or which theories are) relevant for your research project and what is its (or are their) precise role(s) (e.g. will they be tested or used as a source of explanatory hypotheses or causal mechanisms)? What are major variables (and other key concepts) and how will they be defined and operationalized?

Seminar Paper 3

The third paper discusses methodological aspects of the research project. Which method(s) will you use to find an answer to your research question(s) why and how? Which data will you look at (e.g. which cases will you study) why and how?

Even if you do not alter your initial research question, the question should be (re)stated in the second and third seminar papers, so they can be read (more or less) by themselves. Similarly, seminar paper 3 will need to include a concise (re)statement of the concepts, theories, and hypotheses that the methods described in the paper are intended to connect to the empirical world. In both cases the parts of the paper that constitute a recap or "update" of previous working stages or assignments do not count towards the word limit.

Portfolio

The portfolio is the (final) version of the seminar papers that you submit for grading (if you chose the small module version).[6] For this purpose, revise and update the three papers and integrate them into a single text amounting to a short research proposal.

Note that most of the formal expectations I mentioned at the end of the section on the term paper carry over to the three seminar papers. In particular,

- use clear and precise language and complete sentences (not just bullet points)
- make sure the text is intelligible to an uninitiated reader
- remember to insert page numbers and to put your name on the paper
- leave space for comments (at least one inch) on the right hand side of the paper
- reference your sources according to the rules laid down in the MAIR Stylesheet (if you strongly prefer to use another style see the option mentioned above).

Given the shortness of the seminar papers, tables of contents are not necessary. Seminar papers 2 and 3 as well as the portfolio (if applicable) should make use of section headings, however,

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[6] The portfolio (short research proposal) is required of 6 credits candidates only; it is redundant if you go for 9 credits and write a term paper (long research proposal).

as they help clarify the structure of the paper ("Research Question", "Justification of the Research Question" etc.).

For deadlines and size expectations see the section <u>"Requirements"</u> above (pp. 2-3).

Further Hints

a. Theoretical and empirical background information

Constructing a good research proposal not only requires knowledge of methodological rules and skill in applying them. In addition, one needs to know already quite a bit about the topic one wishes to study (e.g. in order to identify a gap in the literature or a hypothesis worth exploring). While working on your research proposals you will therefore also have to do some reading on "substance". It is often useful to start with one or two pertinent literature reviews. With regard to IR, helpful sources for such reviews and overviews are *inter alia*:

Carlsnaes, Walter/Risse, Thomas/Simmons, Beth A. (eds.) (2013): Handbook of International Relations. 2nd edn. Los Angeles, Cal.: Sage. [E-Book UB central library]

Reus-Smit, Christian/Snidal, Duncan (eds.) (2008): The Oxford Handbook of International Relations. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [E-Book UB central library][7]

Or the journals (both of which can be accessed online):

- <u>Annual Review of Political Science</u>
- <u>International Studies Review</u>

If you feel you need to know more about some formal aspect of designing research (say about a given method), you should consult the "Further Reading" document (available in the general document folder). And do not overlook the general literature listed at the beginning of this syllabus.

b. Citing and referencing literature

Apply the rules described in the <u>MAIR Stylesheet</u> when citing and referencing literature. (Although this is the preferred style, adopting another set of rules and applying it consistently is admissible under certain conditions – see <u>above</u>.) To avoid common mistakes make sure you comply with the following directions:

- Add a single bibliography (list of references) which includes every text that is cited in the text – and none that is not.

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[7] Both university libraries (see <u>here</u> and <u>here</u>) hold numerous more specific handbooks that offer useful entry points into the literatures that are relevant for your research projects. Many of them can be accessed online; for others the catalogue entries at least contain links to the table of contents.

- With monographs (i.e. single-authored books or books written jointly by a group of authors where each takes co-responsibility for all chapters) that you mention *in the bibliography* do not specify page numbers or book sections (no matter how much of the book you read or used). By contrast, specifying chapter or page numbers *in the citations in the text* is desirable (with indirect citations, i.e. paraphrases or summaries) and even obligatory (with direct citations, i.e. verbatim quotes).

- Do not reference a chapter of an edited volume by citing the volume rather than the chapter. For example, if you wish to refer in the text to something Braumoeller and Sartori write on p. 135 of their contribution to Sprinz and Wolinsky-Nahmias's volume "Models, Numbers, and Cases", do not insert "(Sprinz/Wolinsky-Nahmias 2004: 135)" but "(Braumoeller/Sartori 2004: 135)". Consequently, the bibliography should include the chapter by Braumoeller and Sartori but not the volume edited by Sprinz and Wolinsky-Nahmias of which it is a part (unless the volume is referenced as a whole elsewhere in the text).

- Handle capitalization consistently *across the bibliography* (irrespectively of the spelling in the headings of the cited books or papers!). In English, it is common to capitalize nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns in headings, and to use lower case for conjunctions, articles, and prepositions, unless they appear at the beginning or at the end of the heading or consist of more than three letters.

- Order the titles in the bibliography alphabetically. Do not use numerals or bullet points.

If anything is unclear either here or in the MAIR stylesheet, please let me know; if you have a question, please ask (either in class or via the Stud.IP plugin Blubber, so everyone gets the answer and can participate in the conversation).