Jacobs University/University of Bremen Fall 2019

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), 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.

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

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.

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.

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 separate "Further Reading" document in the general document folder on the Stud.IP course site.

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

Burchill, Scott/Linklater, Andrew/Devetak, Richard/Donnelly, Jack/Nardin, Terry/Paterson, Matthew/Reus-Smit, Christian/True, Jacqui (2013): *Theories of International Relations.* 5th edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

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.

Requirements

Participants can obtain 6 or 9 credits (CP) in this seminar. Two sets of assignments apply to both groups of students:

1. Participants are required to attend the sessions and to contribute to the discussions in class according to their ability. 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 reading assignments 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. (Participants are welcome to use the forum of the Stud.IP course site to communicate comments or questions.) (3 CP)

2. In addition, participants are required to write three **seminar papers**:

- **seminar paper I**: a very short paper (c. 300 words) formulating a research question and giving reasons why it is worth studying (to be uploaded to the Stud.IP course site by **4 November 2019**)

There will be no grade for seminar paper I, but it is nonetheless mandatory ("Studienleistung").

- **seminar papers II & III**: two somewhat longer papers (c. 1,500 words each) reflecting on a set of research design topics and relating them to a fictitious research project that seeks to answer the research question proposed in seminar paper I (to be sent to the instructor via email by **9 December 2019** and **31 January 2020**, respectively) (3 CP)

3. While the above-mentioned assignments describe the requirements that have to be met by students who seek **6 CP** (**small module version**), participants going for **9 CP** (**large module version**) have to write a fourth paper *on top of that*. This **term paper** will outline a research proposal by formulating and justifying a research question and elaborating the strategies (concepts, theories, methods) to be employed in order to arrive at a valid answer to this question.

The expected length of the term paper is 3-3,500 words. Its digital version (to be submitted via email) is **due 1 March 2020.** A printout (double-sided, no folder) is welcome. Students who choose to write a term paper are strongly encouraged to send me a short exposé outlining their initial ideas for the project proposal by the end of January. Note that, according to the rules of the university, you must provide each of your term papers with a signed "**copyright declaration**" (for the prescribed form and some background information see here). For the program rules governing late submission of term papers see the "MAIR Manual for Students" (sec. 5).

Weighting of Partial Grades

9 CP (large module version, IR-D1a MPO 2019)

- seminar paper I: no grade
- seminar paper II: 25%
- seminar paper III: 25%
- term paper: 50%

6 CP (small module version, IR-D1b MPO 2019)

- seminar paper I: no grade
- seminar paper II: 50%

- seminar paper III: 50%

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

Schedule

Session	Time	Topic
1	10 Oct	Introduction
2	17 Oct	Basics of Research Design – Choosing a Research Question
3	24 Oct	Philosophy of Social Science: Explaining and Understanding
	31 Oct	*No class due to a public holiday*
4	7 Nov	Discussion of Research Questions (Seminar Paper I)
5	14 Nov	Concepts and Typologies
6	21 Nov	Theory
7	28 Nov	Causality and Constitution
8	5 Dec	Causal Inference
9	12 Dec	Methods I: Experiment and Large-N Studies
10	19 Dec	Methods II: Small-N and Case Studies
11	9 Jan	Methods III: Applications and Combinations
12	16 Jan	Methods IV: Interpretative Methods – Conclusion

Sessions begin at 10:00 hrs and end at 13:00 hrs. The venue is InIIS room 7.2210. Using entrance "Haus Mailand" takes you right there.

Topics and Required Readings

I recommend reading the texts in the order in which they appear below.

1 – Introduction

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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, pp. 12-19 (components of research design)

Shively, W. Phillips (2009): *The Craft of Political Research.* 7th edn. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, ch. 2 (selection of research topics)

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

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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)

Kurki, Milja/Wight, Colin (2013): International Relations and Social Science. In: Dunne, Tim/Kurki, Milja/Smith, Steve (eds.): *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity.* 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 14-35. (IR & the philosophy of science)

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4 – Discussion of Research Questions (Seminar Paper I)

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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/Levitsky, Steven (1997): Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research. In: *World Politics*, 49 (2), 430-451.

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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)

Dessler, David (2003): Explanation and Scientific Progress. In: Elman, Colin/Elman, Miriam Fendius (eds.): *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 381-404 (theories, research programs, explanations)

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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 – 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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9 – 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

10 – 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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11 – Methods III: Applications and Combinations

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)

Tarrow, Sidney (2010): Bridging the Quantitative-Qualitative Divide. In: Brady, Henry E./ Collier, David (eds.): Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards. 2nd edn. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 73-78.

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12 – Methods IV: Interpretative Methods – Conclusion

Milliken, Jennifer L. (1999): The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods. In: *European Journal of International Relations*, 5 (2), 225-254.

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 questions/tasks (note, however, that this should not be mistaken for a fixed checklist, not all of the items mentioned being relevant or equally important for all types of research project):

(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 ("Term Paper – Seminar Papers I-III"). (The above caveat applies mutatis mutandis. By no means should this structure be slavishly and mechanically followed: what to comment on and where to do so in the research proposal ought to be a rational choice made in light of the concrete project proposed.)[1]

A research proposal is similar to an exposé, although there are some important differences. 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). (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 "real" research proposals often include timelines. Leave this out as well.)

[1] For a useful overview and discussion of the components of a research proposal (albeit 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).

While you should not assume the availability of infinite 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.[2] Therefore, it is important that you are as concrete and precise as you can throughout the proposal. By contrast, mentioning expected results, though surely of some interest, 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 undertaken. (Do not use, in this paper, phrases such as "I will show that etc."!) As with all seminar or term papers, clarity and coherence are important virtues. 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 such as "in order to find out I am going to search for relevant literature".

Be careful about form and language. As with any of your papers, put yourself into the shoes of your reader: make sure your paper is accessible and clear throughout (e.g. it is usually helpful to include a brief preview of the subsequent argument or reasoning into the introductory section).

Leave space for comments (3-4 cm) on the right hand side. Insert page numbers. Use a cover sheet and include a table of contents.

Review the slides "How to Write a Paper" in the General Document Folder. Reference according to the rules described in the "MAIR Stylesheet". Deviating from these rules is admissible 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. in a footnote at the end of the first sentence of the paper).

To stay clear of any kind of plagiarism review the definition in the MAIR Stylesheet.

b. Seminar papers

Seminar papers 1-3 are best seen as stepping stones toward the research proposal presented in the term paper, although only those participants who go for 9 credits will do the final "leap". This does not mean that choices made at one stage cannot be revised at a later stage. For example, the research question proposed in seminar paper I may be modified for seminar paper II (or even replaced by an entirely new question). Similarly, a method you select in seminar paper III may be dropped in favor of another in the term paper (even if the research question

[2] 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.

stays the same). Moreover, such changes may be made as often as you like (or rather as you feel it is needed, as changes should not be made at random but in order to improve the project).

Seminar Paper I

In the first seminar paper you propose and classify a research question and give 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).

Seminar Paper II

In the second seminar paper you address 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 (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 III

In the third paper you discuss methodological aspects of the research project you are designing. 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 III 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 an "update" of previous working stages or assignments do not count towards the word limit.

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 (3-4 cm) on the right hand side of the paper

- reference according to the rules laid down in the MAIR Stylesheet (if you prefer to use another style see the option mentioned above).

Given the length of the seminar papers tables of contents are not necessary. Seminar papers II and III will benefit from the insertion of section headings, however, as they help clarify the structure of the paper ("Research Question", "Justification of the Research Question" etc.).

For deadlines, size expectations, and weights see the section "Requirements" above (pp. 2-4).

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 working 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 reviews. With regard to IR, helpful sources for such reviews are *inter alia*:

- Carlsnaes, Walter/Risse, Thomas/Simmons, Beth A. (eds.) (2013): Handbook of International Relations. 2nd edn. Los Angeles, Cal.: Sage (available online via the University of Bremen central library).
- Reus-Smit, Christian/Snidal, Duncan (eds.) (2008): The Oxford Handbook of International Relations. Oxford: Oxford University Press (table of contents in "Further Reading" folder).[3]

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

- Annual Review of Political Science
- International Studies Review

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 MAIR Stylesheet when citing and referencing literature. (The MAIR Style is certainly not the only valid referencing system in this world but you are on the safe side if you use it. If you wish to deviate, a minimum requirement is internal consistency

[3] Both university libraries (see here and here) 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.

[further requirements are mentioned above].) To avoid common mistakes make sure you comply with the following directions:

- Add a bibliography (list of references) which includes every text that is cited in the text – and none that is not.
- 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 list *in the bibliography* do not specify page numbers or book sections (no matter how much of the book you actually 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 headings it is common to capitalize nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns; 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.