The study of "international relations" presupposes more than that you will acquire knowledge about different countries and their interactions, about the objectives and behavior of international organizations, about transnational economic patterns, or about other global phenomena. It also means that you are able to conduct research, in one or more of these domains, to answer interesting questions to your own satisfaction and to that of other professional social scientists.

Posing and answering important research questions is an art. There is no objective way to decide what is an "important" problem and what is "uninteresting." Partly, it is a function of what is already known (or thought to be known) and what is not. And, inevitably, it is also a function of your interests (or perhaps those of your advisers), of current events, and of other intangibles. Scholars who study international relations do not even agree on the best way to answer questions, interesting or not. But this does not mean that comparing various answers to a research question is impossible. This course will introduce you to some of the most common arguments advanced in support of various ways of conducting research. It focuses on how to formulate a compelling research design and on the virtues and shortcomings of various kinds of evidence or "data." Its purpose is to enable you to construct and defend your own proposal for a research project in international relations.

Course Requirements

As in any graduate seminar, active participation is essential. Required readings, indicated by an asterisk (*) on the syllabus, should always be completed before class. As a prelude to each week's discussion, students should be prepared to summarize the central points of each required reading. The required books are available for purchase in the Campus Bookstore.

The course requires a "research critique" of no more than 5 pages (including all footnotes, tables, and other material), evaluating the research design and persuasiveness of a piece of published empirical research. Please note that this critique is not a book report: it should summarize the reviewed work minimally and only as necessary. Its objective is to evaluate the approach, technique, evidence, and design of the work under review.

The course also requires a research design that proposes an original research project on some aspect of international relations. This assignment is divided into two parts. The first part, due early in the course, will articulate a specific research question and briefly summarize the existing literature relevant to this question (i.e., answers others have proposed to this question). This paper should make clear what is novel about your proposed approach. It should not be more than 10 pages long, and will form the basis for the second part of this assignment: a complete research proposal of approximately 15-20 pages. The final research proposal should contain a revised version of the original essay, articulating your research hypothesis, and should
also explain in detail how the research might be conducted. This proposal should justify your selection of cases or other data, it should describe the methods to be used for assessing this data, and it should explain how the expected results might be interpreted within the larger context of international relations theory. The final paper is due at the beginning of the last class meeting.

All written work must be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins. It should conform stylistically to the standards of a prominent international relations journal (such as *International Organization* or *International Studies Quarterly*). Style manuals such as the following may also be helpful: Kate Turabian, *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press); and William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style* (New York: Macmillan). The latter of these two is a required text for this course. Written work should also conform to university and professional standards for academic integrity such as those described in the Student Handbook. Late papers will be accepted only at the professor's discretion and will be penalized. Please note, also, that no assignment will be accepted in the form of an email attachment.

Grades will be determined on the basis of these course requirements as follows:

- Participation in Class 10%
- Essay on Research Problem 25%
- Research Critique 25%
- Final Research Design 40%

**Required Texts**


*Additional required readings are not conveniently available in book form. Access to these readings will be discussed on the first day of class.*

**Questions? Problems?**

You are always welcome to discuss this course or other academic issues with me during my office hours. I will also be happy to make an appointment for another time if you cannot see me during office hours. Don't hesitate to ask if you have any questions or problems.
Syllabus

Week 1 (Jan. 10) — Scope and Introduction to the Field of International Relations


Part I — Philosophy of Social Science

Week 2 (Jan. 17) — Positivism and Social Science


Week 3 (Jan. 24) — *The Messy "Reality" of Social Science*


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Week 4 (Jan. 31) — *Critical Theory, Postmodernism, Constructivism and Research*


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George, Jim, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994).
Zejfuss, Maja, *Constructivism in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

**Part II — Research Design**

**Week 5 (Feb. 7) — Interesting Questions and Useful Answers: Theories and Hypotheses**

* Przeworski, Adam and Frank Salomon, "On the Art of Writing Grant Proposals," Social Science Research Council pamphlet.

On Theories and Hypothesis:
Aron, Raymond, "What is a Theory of International Relations?" *Journal of International Affairs* 21 (1967), pp. 185-206.

*On "Selling" an Interesting Question:*


**Week 6 (Feb. 14) — Defending a Hypothesis**

**First Paper (Essay on Research Problem) Due**


**Week 7 (Feb. 21) — Research and Scholarly Writing**


Part III — Data and their Uses

Week 8 (Feb. 28) — Social and Historical "Quasi-experiments"


Skocpol, Theda and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," Comparative Studies in Society and History 22, pp. 147-97.

Week 9 (Mar. 6) — Comparative Case Studies and "Qualitative" Data


Geddes, Barbara, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," Political Analysis 2 (1990), pp. 131-152.
George, Alexander and Andrew Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences (Boston: MIT Press, 2005).
Week 10 (Mar. 13) — *Spring Break*

No class meeting.

Week 11 (Mar. 20) — *Interviews, Surveys, and Direct Observation*

* Holsti, Ole, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1969), ch. 2.

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Converse, Philip E. *et al., "Is Democratic Competence Possible?" Special Issue of Critical Review* 18, Nos. 1-3.

Week 12 (Mar. 27) — *Simulation, Experimentation and Modeling*

Research Critique Due.


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**Week 13 (Apr. 3) — Statistics and Quantitative Analysis**


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Week 14 (Apr. 10) — Quantitative Analysis (continued) and Geographic Information Systems


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Ember, Carol, Melvin Ember, and Bruce Russett, "Peace Between Participatory Polities: A Cross-Cultural Test of the 'Democracies Rarely Fight Each Other' Hypothesis," *World Politics* 44 (1992), pp. 573-599.


**Part IV — Ethics and the Ivory Tower**

**Week 15 (Apr. 17) — Ethics and Social Science**

**Final Paper (Research Design) Due.**

* American Political Science Association Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science.