

## INTS 270: RESEARCH METHODS IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Spring 2023

Professor Risley

[risleya@rhodes.edu](mailto:risleya@rhodes.edu)

116 Buckman; office phone (901) 843-3630

Office hours: Monday 10:00 - 11:30 AM

Thursday 12:30 - 2:00 PM

Or by appointment or via Zoom

---

*“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.”*

Zora Neale Hurston

The work of the social scientist is rigorous, systematic, and empirical. This course will equip students with a methodological toolkit useful for interpreting, understanding, and conducting social scientific analysis. We will discuss *why* we use social scientific research methods to investigate international politics and *how* we make methodological choices throughout the research process. We will study the logic(s) of research, the elements of research design, and a range of methodological approaches used by political scientists and other social scientists.

The first part of the course serves as a general introduction to research methods. We will build a core vocabulary of social scientific terminology. We will then familiarize ourselves with various empirical research approaches and research design processes. Students will be exposed to qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches. Special attention will be paid to qualitative case study methods given that IS majors typically utilize such approaches in their senior papers. To prepare for senior seminar, students will craft a research proposal, thereby thinking through conceptualization, data collection and analysis, and the logic and design of a social science research project – in essence, learning by doing.

### Course objectives

All students completing the course will be expected to achieve the following objectives:

- Become conversant in fundamental social science methods in order to critically evaluate scholarly work on the basis of its research design.
- Gain knowledge of basic steps of the research process.
- Gain experience in writing a research design that can be used as the basis for a subsequent research paper (formulate researchable question and identify methods suitable for answering that question).

## Requirements

You are responsible for material covered in class and in the readings.

Your final grade is based on the following components:

Assignments	25%
In-class exercises	10%
Exam	15%
Research proposal	25%
Presentation	10%
Participation	15%

- *Assignments:* These will help build your methodological vocabulary and key research skills. Detailed instructions are available in Canvas; I will also offer further guidance in class.
- *In-class exercises:* These unannounced exercises usually consist of brief questions on readings. They are designed to encourage active, engaged reading before each class. At the end of the semester, your lowest score is dropped. No make-ups will be scheduled for missed exercises.
- *Exam:* There is no comprehensive exam during finals week, but you will take one in-class exam designed to test your understanding of research methods.
- *Research proposal:* As you develop confidence and skills as a researcher, you will have the opportunity to develop a research proposal based on your own interests. You will identify a research puzzle or topic, formulate a question, situate this question in existing scholarly debates/literatures, describe the types of data and empirics you will need to answer your question, and devise a methodological approach for collecting and analyzing data. Detailed instructions are available in Canvas; I will also offer further guidance in class.
- *Presentations of research proposals:* These brief oral presentations are scheduled for the end of the semester.
- *Participation:* I look forward to seeing you during each and every class period! You will be rewarded for good attendance and participation. There are penalties for poor attendance and participation (see below).

Your participation grade is determined by your **attendance** record and your **in-class contributions**. The format of this course is a combination of lectures and discussions (in large and small groups). Contributing to class discussions entails the following:

1. Engaging thoughtfully with the assigned reading or other materials (which you have read *before* class);
2. Listening attentively to your classmates;
3. Expressing your ideas clearly, concisely, and respectfully. Supporting your views with evidence whenever possible.

Students with **six** or more *unexcused* absences automatically receive a failing participation grade. *Excused* absences are due to a personal or family emergency, illness/injury, or prior commitment (e.g., jury duty, religious observances, College-sanctioned athletic or academic travel). Personal travel is not a valid reason for missing class; make your plans accordingly.

Please notify me of excused absences via email (I may request documentation from the Dean of Students' office, a doctor or nurse, a coach, etc.). If you miss class, it is your responsibility to a.) follow up with a classmate for notes, announcements, etc.; b.) review materials on Canvas, including PowerPoint slides or handouts; and c.) catch up on readings and assignments.

If you participate in student athletics or other extra-curriculars, it is your responsibility to inform me of travel/conflicts as soon as you know your schedule for the semester. You should prepare and turn in assignments early whenever possible.

Arriving late to class more than 1-2 times signals to me that this course is a low priority for you. As a result, your participation grade will be lowered by one whole letter grade.

The grading scale for the course is as follows: A (100-93); A- (92-90); B+ (89-88); B (87-83); B- (82-80); C+ (79-78); C (77-73); C- (72-70); D+ (69-68); D (67-63); D- (62-60); F (59 and below).

### **Additional policies**

- I mark late work down one-third of a letter grade per day. Every student has one “freebie” this semester: you will have a 48-hour grace period, which you can use to complete/improve one of the assignments without penalty. Note: This policy does not apply to exams. Simply send an email informing me that you are using your freebie.
- Honor Code: You are expected to pledge your work. The College's Honor Code will govern all of the work that you do in this course as well as your conduct in class. Be sure to properly cite all sources in your written work (whenever you quote, paraphrase or summarize another's ideas, information or words). See the Writing Center's publication, “[A Guide to Effective Writing](#)” – see the sections on intellectual honesty.

- The use of electronic devices is prohibited during our class meetings unless I grant you special permission. If your request to use a laptop or other device is granted, you must use it solely to take notes and/or consult assigned readings; you must not distract yourself, fellow students, or me. If some of us are behind screens, are multitasking, or have divided attentions, it will be hard for us to accomplish our classroom goals of active listening and meaningful participation. Phones must be silenced or turned off; texting is not allowed.
- Students are not permitted to record or distribute classroom lectures, discussions, or any course materials (text, images, slides, etc.) without either the express written approval of the faculty member teaching the course or an accommodation through Student Accessibility Services.
- I am strongly committed to accommodating students with disabilities, and I request your cooperation in making me aware of any such accommodations no later than the second week of class. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability and have not already established accommodations with [Student Accessibility Services](#), please contact them as soon as possible.
- Sexual Misconduct: Rhodes faculty are concerned about the well-being of our students and are required by policy to share knowledge of sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, sexual exploitation, stalking, sexual harassment and sex/gender discrimination with the Title IX Coordinator, Inez Warner. As a mandatory reporter, I cannot keep information about sexual misconduct confidential from the College. For more information or to make a report, please visit the [webpage](#).
- The [International Studies Department](#) is committed to creating an academic climate that is safe, respectful, and appreciative of all students, faculty, and staff regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, socioeconomic background, religion, ability, or any other aspect of one's identity. A climate of mutual respect allows us to ask challenging questions and participate in honest, open discussions, even in the context of disagreement. Creating this kind of open, respectful environment is our shared responsibility.
- I encourage you to visit me during office hours to discuss assignments (well in advance of the deadline!), study skills, issues raised in class, etc. You do not have to schedule an appointment to visit office hours, but you can book one using [Calendly](#).
- *Last but not least... Pandemic policies:* Masking is optional in this course, but that policy is subject to change in accordance with public health conditions.

Reminder: the College's Covid policy relies on your steadfast commitment to upholding the Honor Code and following CDC guidance for testing and isolation.

If you have tested positive for Covid, flu, or another illness, have a fever, and/or are contagious, please do NOT attend class! If you are feeling unwell (but not so poorly that you need to miss class), please wear an N95, KN95 or equivalent mask.

## **Readings**

There are no texts to purchase for this course. All required readings are available in Canvas, where they are saved under the author's last name (unless noted otherwise). **Readings must be completed before the class meetings under which they are listed.**

## **Course schedule**

*(Subject to modification if the instructor deems it necessary.)*

W, 1/11: Greetings & introduction to the course

F, 1/13: Overview of research methods; philosophical and ethical perspectives

Buttolph Johnson, Janet, et al., *Political Science Research Methods* (2015), Ch. 4.

**M, 1/16: No Class (MLK Holiday)**

W, 1/18: Methods overview continued

Bryman, Alan. *Social Research Methods* (5<sup>th</sup> ed. 2016), Ch. 6.

F, 1/20: Approaches to research

Blatter, Joachim and Markus Haverland. *Designing Case Studies: Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research* (2012), Ch. 1.

M, 1/23: Approaches to research

Pollock. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, p. 78-86

W, 1/25: Feminist methods and critical approaches

Tickner, J. Ann. "You Just Don't Understand..." *International Studies Quarterly* (1997).

F, 1/27: Defining and measuring concepts

Powner, Leanne. *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide* (2014), Ch. 6.

M, 1/30: Operationalizing variables

Pollock, Philip. *The Essentials of Political Analysis* (2016), Ch. 2

W, 2/1: Operationalizing variables II

Read handout titled "Past student work"

F, 2/3: Operationalizing variables III

No reading

**M, 2/6: No class due to travel**

W, 2/8: Formulating research questions

Powner, Ch. 1

F, 2/10: Formulating research questions and using theory

Powner, Ch. 2

M, 2/13: Proposing explanations and formulating hypotheses

Powner, Ch. 4

W 2/15: Proposing explanations and formulating hypotheses II

Powner, Ch. 3

F, 2/17: Writing a literature review

Knopf, Jeffrey. "Doing a Literature Review" *PS* (2006).

**\*First research design assignment due Monday, 2/20 at noon. Please submit via email.**

M, 2/20: Qualitative research design

No reading

W, 2/22: Qualitative research design and the comparative method

Lim, Timothy. *Doing Comparative Politics* (2006), Ch. 2 (*read up to p. 53 only*)

F, 2/24: The comparative method II

No reading

M, 2/27: Case studies and case selection

Blatter and Haverland. *Designing Case Studies...* , Ch. 2

W, 3/1: Case studies II

Blatter and Haverland. *Designing Case Studies...* , Ch. 3

F, 3/3: Case studies III

No reading

**M, 3/6: Midterm exam**

W, 3/8: Quantitative methods

Powner, Ch. 7

F, 3/10: Quantitative methods II

Htun, Mala and S. Laurel Weldon. 2012. "Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating VAW..." *American Political Science Review*.

*Warning! This reading discusses gender-based and sexual violence; read with your own self-care in mind.*

### **3/13-17: Spring Break**

M, 3/20: **No Class:** Use this time to complete your article analysis assignment (due Wednesday).

W, 3/22: Analysis of scholarly articles

Zangl, Bernhard. 2008. "Judicialization Matters! A Comparison of Dispute Settlement under GATT and the WTO." *International Studies Quarterly*.

Tannewald, Nina. 1999. "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use." *International Organization*.

**\*Article analysis assignment due at beginning of class. Please bring a hard copy.**

F, 3/24: Discussion of research proposals

Read sample proposals saved in handouts folder.

M, 3/27: Content analysis

Bryman. *Social Research Methods*, Ch. 13.



W, 3/29: One more article analysis

Wagner, Wolfgang and Michal Onderco. 2014. "Accommodation or Confrontation? Explaining Differences in Policies Toward Iran." *International Studies Quarterly*.

F, 3/31: **No Class:** Use this time to complete your research proposal draft (due Monday).

**\*First draft of research proposal due Monday, 4/3 at noon. Please submit a hard copy as well as via email.**

M, 4/3: Additional research techniques

Bryman. *Social Research Methods*, Ch. 19.  
*Recommended:* Bryman, Ch. 20.

W, 4/5: **No class due to travel**

**F, 4/7: Easter Recess**

M, 4/10: Presentations

W, 4/12: Presentations

F, 4/14: Presentations

M, 4/17: Presentations

W, 4/19: Presentations

F, 4/21: Presentations

M, 4/24: Presentations

**W, 4/26: Last class meeting!**

**\*Final version of research proposal due Wednesday, 4/26 at 2 pm. Please submit via email.**