



Course plan

B2.525 - Research Methods

Credits: 3.0

Subject coordinator	Lluc Lopez Vidal
Course instructors	Just Castillo Iglesias

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Presentation

Description

The course reflects the importance that the Master's in International Affairs and Diplomacy gives to **methodology** and **research methods**. Indeed, any analysis of international affairs needs to be based on sound methodological premises. Therefore, the course aims at providing students with the **theoretical background, concepts** and **tools** that will allow them to **critically analyse empirical research** about international affairs and to **design and conduct small research projects**.

The course focuses on **methodology rather than just methods**. It underscores the importance of reflecting about research questions and their theoretical underpinning, research design and the choice of methods. Students will be encouraged to defend methodological choices, but also to demonstrate an awareness of their limits.

The course starts with an introduction to the **philosophical underpinning of methodology** in international relations (**ontology and epistemology**). It then critically discusses the "**quantitative-qualitative divide**", explaining what each side explains and how it does so. The following unit shifts to **research design** and its main components while the last unit introduces the main **research methods** used in international relations. This unit concentrates on various methods but it allows students to choose and study two methods in which they are particularly interested.

Finally, in addition to providing students with a strong background that will allow them to engage with research about international affairs, the course is designed as a **preliminary step towards the Master's dissertation (TFM)**.

The course as part of the programme as a whole

This course will give an opportunity for students to outline the topic and methodology of their Master's dissertation.

Prior knowledge

It is advisable to have prior knowledge of the main Theories / Paradigms of the IR Discipline.

Objectives and competencies

Objectives

- Understand the importance of methodology to analyse international affairs.
- Understand the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying different forms of research.
- Justify the choice of quantitative or qualitative research methods.
- Know the main research methods used to analyse international affairs.
- Designing a research project adequate to analyse a given research question.
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of various research designs and techniques and, ultimately, assess the quality of empirical research about international affairs

Main competencies

- Knowledge of different research traditions and their implications as regards the questions they ask about international relations;
- Understanding of the issues that shape the design of empirical research;
- Ability to defend the choice of quantitative or qualitative methods;
- Ability to design a research project and justify the choice of methods, cases, variables and data;
- Ability to defend a piece of research and demonstrate an awareness of its limits;
- Ability to understand and critically engage with various sorts of empirical research;
- Acquisition of communication skills to engage with specialist and non-specialist audiences.

Content

Unit	Content	Readings	Activities (CAT)
1. Why methodology matters	1. 1 What is theory (for)? Ontology, epistemology and theoretical frameworks	<p>Mandatory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction and section 1 (What is methodology and why does it matter?) of the UOC's learning module "Research Methods", pp. 5-16. - Bryman, Alan "Social Research Strategies". Chapter 2. Social Research Methods, 4th ed. pp. 18-43. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0-19-958805-3 - Kurki, Milja and Colin Wight. "International Relations and Social Science". Chapter 1. In: Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith. International Relations Theories Discipline and Diversity, 4th ed. pp. 13-33 Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016. ISBN 9780198707561 	CAT1
	1.2 Methodology and research in International Relations	<p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lamont, Chistopher. "Research Methods in International Relations", Chapter 1. In: Lamont, 	

Unit	Content	Readings	Activities (CAT)
		<p>Christopher. Research Methods in International Relations . p. 13-29. Los Angeles : Sage, 2015.</p> <p>- Byrne, D. (2017). Philosophy of research. Project Planner. 10.4135/9781526408495.</p>	
2. Research methods: The quantitative-qualitative divide	<p>2.1 Making sense of the quantitative-qualitative divide</p> <p>2.2 Quantitative and qualitative research in International Relations</p>	<p>Mandatory:</p> <p>- Section 2 (Research methods: the quantitative-qualitative divide) of the UOC's learning module "Research Methods", pp. 17-31.</p> <p>-Lamont, Chistopher. "Qualitative Methods in International Relations". Chapter 5. In: Lamont, Christopher. Research Methods in International Relations . p. 77-929. Los Angeles : Sage, 2015.</p> <p>- Lamont, Chistopher. "Quantitative Methods in International Relations". Chapter 6. In: Lamont, Christopher. Research Methods in International Relations . p. 96-107. Los Angeles : Sage, 2015.</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <p>- Hafner-Burton, E., & Ron, J. (2009). Seeing Double: Human Rights Impact through Qualitative and Quantitative Eyes. World Politics, 61(2), 360-401.</p> <p>- Mahoney, J., & Goertz, G. (2006). A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative</p>	CAT2

Unit	Content	Readings	Activities (CAT)
		<p>Research. Political Analysis, 14(3), 227-249.</p> <p>- Byrne, D. (2017). Methods Map: Quantitative Data analysis. Project Planner. 10.4135/9781526408495.</p> <p>- Byrne, D. (2017). Methods Map: Qualitative Data analysis. Project Planner. 10.4135/9781526408495.</p>	
		<p>Mandatory (for everyone):</p> <p>- Byrne, D. (2017). Data collection. Project Planner. 10.4135/9781526408563.</p> <p>- Byrne, D. (2017). Data analysis and interpretation. Project Planner. 10.4135/9781526408570.</p>	
3. Research techniques	<p>3.1 Interview, Fieldwork and Ethnographic techniques</p> <p>3.2 Content analysis</p> <p>3.3 Discourse analysis</p>	<p>Optional (to choose according to research interests / relevance for individual research project):</p> <p>* Interviews:</p> <p>- Barbour, R. (2008). Interviews. Chapter 5. In <i>Introducing qualitative research</i> (pp. 111-132). London: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781526485045</p> <p>- Levy, N. (2019). <i>Researching post-conflict peace building using semi-structured interviews & secondary data [video recording]</i>. Retrieved from SAGE Research Methods.</p> <p>* Fieldwork / ethnographic techniques:</p> <p>- Lamont, Chistopher. "Field Research in International Relations".</p>	CAT 2

Unit	Content	Readings	Activities (CAT)
		<p>Chapter 9. In: Lamont, Christopher. Research Methods in International Relations . p. 140-154. Los Angeles : Sage, 2015.</p> <p>* Content analysis:</p> <p>- Hermann, Margaret G. "Chapter 10 - Content Analysis". In: Klotz, Audie; Prakash, Deepa (eds.). Qualitative Methods in International Relations. A Pluralist Guide. pp. 151-167. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. ISBN 9780230241756</p> <p>* Discourse analysis:</p> <p>- Neumann, Iver B. "Chapter 5 - Discours Analysis". En: Klotz, Audie; Prakash, Deepa (eds.). Qualitative Methods in International Relations. A Pluralist Guide. pp. 61-77. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. ISBN 9780230241756</p> <p>* Case study research:</p> <p>- Lamont, Chistopher. "Case study research in internatiomal relations". Chapter 8. In: Lamont, Christopher. Research Methods in International Relations . p. 125-139. Los Angeles : Sage, 2015.</p> <p>* Questionnaire surveys:</p> <p>- Pierce, R. (2008). Questionnaire surveys. Research methods in politics (pp. 140-160). London: SAGE Publications Ltd doi: 10.4135/9780857024589</p>	
4. Research design		<p>Mandatory:</p> <p>- Section 3 (Research design) and Summary,</p>	CAT3

Unit	Content	Readings	Activities (CAT)
		of the UOC's learning module "Research Methods", pp. 32-40	
		- 4 "Asking Questions: How to Find and Formulate Research Questions". In: Halperin, S. & Oliver Heath. Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills. New York, NY : Oxford University Press, [2017],p. 81-110. ISBN 9780198702740.	
		- "6 Research Design". En: Halperin, S. & Oliver Heath. Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills. New York, NY : Oxford University Press, [2017]. p. 146-167. ISBN 9780198702740	
	4.1 The importance of research design		
	4.2 Fundamentals of research design: Hypothesis, cases, variables, sampling	Recommended: - Vaus, David. "The Context of Design". Chapter 1. Research Design in Social Research. Sage, 2001. p. 1-16. ISBN 0761953477	
	4.3 Research design for comparative-small N research and single case research	- Vaus, David. Tools for Research Design". Chapter 2. Research Design in Social Research. Sage, 2001. p. 17-33. ISBN 0761953477 - Punch Keith. "Quantitative Research Design". Chapter 10. Introduction to social research : quantitative and qualitative approaches. Third edition. London: SAGE, 2014. p. 205-226 ISBN 9781446240939 - Landman, Todd ."Comparing few countries". Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics. An introduction. 4th ed. Routledge, 2017. p. 72-85. ISBN 9780415538305.	

Unit	Content	Readings	Activities (CAT)
		<p>- Gerring, J. (2004). What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for? The American Political Science Review, 98(2), 341-354.</p> <p>- Flyvbjerg, Bent. (2006). Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research. Qualitative Inquiry Volume: 12 Issue 2. Online ISSN: 1552-7565</p> <p>Additional materials available:</p> <p>- Byrne, D. (2017). Defining a topic. Project Planner. 10.4135/9781526408501.</p> <p>- Byrne, D. (2017). Research design. Project Planner. 10.4135/9781526408532.</p> <p>- Byrne, D. (2017). Reviewing the literature. Project Planner. 10.4135/9781526408518.</p> <p>- Byrne, D. (2017). Developing a researchable question. Project Planner. 10.4135/9781526408525.</p> <p>- Byrne, D. (2017). Research design. Project Planner. 10.4135/9781526408532.</p>	

Resources

View the learning resources used in the subject

Material	Support
Research methods	Audiobook
Research methods	ePub
Research methods	Mobipocket
Research methods	Videobook

View the bibliography titles available in the library

- 6, Perri (2012). Principles of methodology : research design in social science / Perri 6 and Christine Bellamy. Los Angeles : SAGE, 2012
ISBN: 9780857024749
- Bryman, Alan, autor (0). Social research methods / Alan Bryman. Oxford New York : Oxford University Press , [2016]
ISBN: 9780199689453
- Dawson, Catherine, autor (0). 100 activities for teaching research methods / Catherine Dawson. Los Angeles London : SAGE Publications Ltd, 2016
ISBN: 9781473946286
- De Vaus, D. A. (2001). Research design in social research / David A. de Vaus. London [etc.] : Sage, 2001
ISBN: 0761953477
- Dixon, Jeffrey C., autor (0). The process of social research / Jeffrey C. Dixon, Royce A. Singleton, Jr., Bruce C. Straits. New York : Oxford University Press, [2018]
ISBN: 9780190876654
- (0). El Reglamento General de Protección de Datos : un enfoque nacional y comparado, especial referencia a la LO 3/2018 de protección de datos y garantía de los derechos digitales / Rosario García Mahamut, Beatriz Tomás Mallén, editoras Mónica Arenas Ramiro [i 23 autors més].. Valencia : Tirant lo Blanch, 2019
ISBN: 9788413134284
- Lamont, Christopher K. (2015). Research methods in international relations / Christopher Lamont. Los Angeles : Sage, 2015
ISBN: 9781446286050
- Landman, Todd, autor (0). Issues and methods in comparative politics : an introduction / Todd Landman and Edzia Carvalho. London New York : Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017
ISBN: 9780415538299
- Nachmias, Chava (0). Research methods in the social sciences / Chava Frankfort-Nachmias, David Nachmias, Jack DeWaard. New York, NY : Worth Publishers, a Macmillan Education Company, cop.2015
ISBN: 9781429233002
- Schmidt, Diane E., autor (0). Writing in political science : a practical guide / Diane E. Schmidt, California State University-Chico. New York : Routledge, 2018
ISBN: 9781351252836

- Schutt, Russell K., autor (0). Understanding the social world : research methods for the 21st century / Russell K. Schutt, University of Massachusetts, Boston. Los Angeles : SAGE, [2017]
ISBN: 9781506306018
- (0). Scientific realism and international relations / edited by Jonathan Joseph, reader in politics and international relations, University of Kent, UK and Colin Wight, professor of international relations, University of Exeter, UK. Basingstoke New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010
ISBN: 9780230281981
- (0). What's the point of international relations? / edited by Synne L. Dyvik, Jan Selby and Rorden Wilkinson. London : New York Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, january 2017
ISBN: 9781351782081
- Wight, Colin, 1954-, autor (0). Agents, structures and international relations : politics as ontology / Colin Wight, University of Sheffield. Cambridge, UK New York : Cambridge University Press, 2006
ISBN: 9780511491764

Bibliography and information sources

Articles and books

Della Porta, Donatella and Michael Keating (2008) 'How Many Approaches in the Social Sciences? An Epistemological Introduction,' in Della Porta, Donatella and Michael Keating (eds.) Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences. A Pluralist Perspective (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus (2016) The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations. Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics (Abingdon: Routledge).

Reus-Smit, Christian and Duncan Snidal, eds. (2008) **The Oxford Handbook of International Relations** (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Sprinz, Detlef F. and Yael Wolinski-Nahmias (2004) Models, Numbers, Cases. Methods for Studying International Relations (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press).

Journals

Cooperation and Conflict

European Journal of International Relations

European Journal of International Security

International Organization

International Studies Perspectives

International Studies Review

Review of International Studies

World Politics

