

MGIMO University

School of Government and International Affairs

B.A. in Government, International Politics and Law

«Approved»

Deputy Dean, School of Government and International Affairs

_____ **Anastasia Solomentseva**

«__» _____ 2021

Research Designs, Methods and Contexts

Course Syllabus

This syllabus is designed in accordance with the MGIMO Educational Standard for the Bachelor Program in International Affairs (program track “Government, International Affairs and Law”).

Instructors _____ Prof. Dr. Christopher Korten, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mikhail Troitskiy

Director, MGIMO Library _____ Marina Reshetnikova

This syllabus is approved by the MGIMO School of Government and International Affairs
on “ ” _____ 2021

Deputy Dean _____ Anastasia Solomentseva

Syllabus developed by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mikhail Troitskiy and Prof. Dr. Christopher Korten, 2021

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The undergraduate workshop on “Research Designs, Methods, and Contexts” provides advanced training in research and writing to SGIA 4th-year students during the final stages of preparation of their Bachelor theses. Each workshop session is divided into two parts. In the first part, students present their Bachelor theses design and findings to date as well as research methods they plan on employing. Each student is required to make a presentation comprised of two parts: **(1) the core argument** and logic of their thesis project and **(2) the policy implications of the thesis’ key findings**. Each presentation will be discussed by fellow students and the course instructor with the aim of providing feedback and advice to the presenter on both the substance and optimal methods of research. Presentation must be complemented with a handout—a 500-word “policy memo” outlining the research puzzle and question, major policy-relevant conclusions, and the meaning / policy implications of those conclusions.

In the second part of each session, students and the instructor discuss required readings on research goals, designs, and methods. It is important that the students read the assigned literature before each class and consider how its ideas relate to their thesis research projects.

The course will help students to:

- distinguish between “research” and “non-research” writing;
- understand the role of research questions, concepts, and theories in social science;
- learn core methods of supporting the argument;
- apply methods by using specific research and writing techniques.

Assessment will be carried out according to the following criteria:

Class attendance and participation – 30 percent
Thesis argument and methods presentation – 25 percent
Thesis policy implications presentation – 25 percent
Final test on research methodology (**May 4**) – 20 percent

Class attendance is mandatory and essential for this discussion seminar with a limited amount of reading for each class. Critical thinking and active learning during the seminar sessions are key to achieving the goals of the course and writing and defending a successful Bachelor thesis. Failure to show up for one class will deduct 2.5 points from the overall grade (100 points maximum).

We shall be using three main textbooks, all available in the Google Class folder and this Dropbox folder: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/j3lo4ogajw7iwzt/AAB-dq5HyZh_BcL0Y0wAlfGRa?dl=0

Core Readings

Lisa A. Baglione, *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*, (SAGE, 2016)

Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997)

John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*, (Cambridge University Press, 2017)

Spring 2021 Semester schedule (for the group led by M. Troitskiy)

	Date / Time	Topic	Required Readings
1.	March 16, 9:00	What is and what is <i>not</i> research? Criteria of quality research. The criterion of policy relevance.	
2.	March 16, 10:35	The interplay of education and policymaking: The role of theories and concepts	Stephen Walt, "America's IR Schools Are Broken," <i>Foreign Policy</i> , February 20, 2018, http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/20/americans-ir-schools-are-broken-international-relations-foreign-policy/
3.	March 23, 9:00	What is theory? What makes a good or bad theory?	Van Evera, pp. 7-21
4.	March 23, 10:35	Making and testing theories	Van Evera, pp. 21-43
5.	March 30, 9:00	Myths about theory validation	Van Evera, pp. 43-48
6.	March 30, 10:35	Formulating a research question: Part I	Baglione, pp. 15-40
7.	April 6, 9:00	Formulating a research question: Part II	Baglione, pp. 15-40
8.	April 6, 10:35	Method example: Counterfactual analysis	<i>Marten K. Reconsidering NATO expansion: a counterfactual analysis of Russia and the West in the 1990s // European Journal of International Security. January 2018.</i>
9.	April 13, 9:00	Descriptive concepts	Gerring, pp. 107-131
10.	April 13, 10:35	Causal arguments	Gerring, pp. 197-217
11.	April 20, 9:00	Case studies I: Creating and testing theories	Van Evera, pp. 49-88
12.	April 20, 10:35	Case studies II: Selecting cases	Van Evera, pp. 49-88
13.	April 27, 9:00	Distilling the argument	Baglione, pp. 93-108
14.	April 27, 10:35	Revising and editing	Baglione, pp. 109-119
15.	May 4, 9:00	Bringing the paper together: Part I	Van Evera, pp. 123-128
16.	May 4, 10:35	Bringing the paper together: Part II	Baglione, pp. 175-190

Course literature

Core

Lisa A. Baglione, *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*, (SAGE, 2016)

Ethridge M. *The Political Research Experience: Readings And Analysis : Readings And Analysis*. London: Routledge; 2015. Available from: eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)

John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*, (Cambridge University Press, 2017)

Klass G. *Just Plain Data Analysis : Finding, Presenting, And Interpreting Social Science Data*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; 2012. Available from: eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)

Kadry S, Al-Taie M. *Social Network Analysis : An Introduction With An Extensive Implementation To A Large-Scale Online Network Using Pajek*. Oak Park, IL: Bentham Science Publishers; 2014. Available from: eBook Academic Collection

Additional

Galaskiewicz J, Wasserman S. *Advances In Social Network Analysis : Research In The Social And Behavioral Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, Inc; 1994. Available from: eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)

Johnson, Gail. *Research Methods for Public Administrators*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002. *eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost

Martel A. *A Student's Guide For Writing In Political Science*. [Ottawa]: MQUP; 1997. Available from: eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)

Morton R. *Methods And Models : A Guide To The Empirical Analysis Of Formal Models In Political Science*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press; 1999. Available from: eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)

Rog D., Bickman L. *The SAGE Handbook Of Applied Social Research Methods*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc; 2009. Available from: eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)

Sample student presentations schedule

Session number	Date / Time	Presenters	
		<i>Session 1</i>	<i>Session 2</i>
1.	March 16, 9:00	Smith	Jones
2.	March 16, 10:35	Smirnov	Wu
3.	March 23, 9:00	...	...
4.	March 23, 10:35	...	...
5.	March 31, 9:00	...	...
6.	March 31, 10:35	...	...
7.	April 6, 9:00	...	...
8.	April 6, 10:35	...	...
9.	April 13, 9:00	...	...
10.	April 13, 10:35	...	...
11.	April 20, 9:00	...	...
12.	April 20, 10:35	...	...
13.	April 27, 9:00	...	...
14.	April 27, 10:35	...	...
15.	May 4, 9:00	...	...
16.	May 4, 10:35	...	...