



**SIS 206 Introduction to International Relations Research**

Section 001  
Fall 2009

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Class Meetings

Sec 001: M/Th, 9:55-11:10, Watkins 106

Office: SIS 306/McK \_\_\_\_\_

Office Hours: \_\_\_\_\_,

and by appointment

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Location

This course is designed to give students a broad overview of the science of international relations: how we think systematically and make arguments about the way the world works. If SIS 105 World Politics is a roadmap of the field of international relations, the bird's eye view, then SIS 206 is a GPS navigator: it will help you to figure out where you are and how to get from one place to another, to make connections between ideas, to plot a route through competing explanations and to make informed decisions about what you believe is true about IR. In this course, you'll acquire a working understanding of how knowledge about IR is produced and disseminated, and you'll develop a toolbox of techniques for contributing to our knowledge about IR. Ultimately, your goal is to go from being a student of international relations – one who passively absorbs what others say about IR – to being a scholar of it – one who actively engages with knowledge of the field and contributes critically to the development of knowledge.

I take a very learner-centered approach in my classroom (see Maryellen Weimer, *Learner-Centered Teaching*, Jossey-Bass 2002). Weimer says, that "college should be the time when and the place where students develop prowess as learners" (p 5). I agree! It's about *what* you learn, true, but it's also about learning *how* you learn. What this means for us both, in practical terms, is that you as the student take charge your own learning in this course. My job is to facilitate your learning: to provide a classroom environment and activities where structured development can occur. Learning, here, is as much about process as it is about content. You will have a significant amount of flexibility to choose which assignments and tasks you will complete. With this freedom comes the responsibility to self-monitor and to engage actively and deeply with the material. This is your chance to make the field of IR your own: think carefully about how you'll take advantage of this opportunity.

**Objectives**

At the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. Distinguish between scholarship and other forms of writing about politics, and identify the function of different pieces of writing.
2. Identify a viable research question and derive appropriate hypotheses from it, and situate both question and hypotheses in the academic literature.
3. Identify, locate and assemble appropriate evidence to test your hypotheses using credible sources, including but not limited to library sources, public records, and open-access data sources.

4. Present your research findings in professionally accepted formats, including as a paper and as either a poster or public presentation.

### **Requirements and Assignments**

The requirements for this course are not like your other courses. In the briefest form, all students must complete a research project, including its component steps. You will have a menu of options for each component step, which are described on the course project handout, and you can do more than one item at any stage if you so choose. This project and its steps account for 50% of your term grade (1000 points). The other 50% is composed of encounters with IR research and research techniques. You must do at least one activity from each of the five areas – Synthesize, Practice, Apply, Respond, and Extend (SPARE) – but again, you have a menu of opportunities. You may do as many activities as you like, up to earning the entire 1000 points available in this part of the course. You are responsible for tracking your points earned, so be aware of where you are and what opportunities remain to you in the term. All deadlines are firm; once an assignment's due date has passed, you will not be able to go back and do it later. A consolidated list of deadlines appears on the course Blackboard site.

The SPARE and Research Project handouts, and the regular Syllabus Addenda detailing specific activities for each class, constitute official course documents having equal authority with this syllabus.

### **Green Teaching**

This is a Certified Green Course. This means, for example, that I will not hand out many printed materials. I will use Blackboard extensively to post handouts, collect assignments, and provide you with feedback on assignments. To help make our class as green as possible, I encourage you to buy used books, minimize paper use by submitting assignments electronically as instructed, and read course readings online rather than printing copies. If you choose to print, please print double-sided, and recycle the paper after the end of the semester. We will collectively determine a policy on the use of laptops in class for note-taking.

### **Other Policies**

**Attendance.** Attendance itself is not mandatory. If you elect Participation as a component of your grade, however, then you are strongly encouraged to document the causes of your absence and/or to notify your participation partner(s) in advance of these events. If you have a documented reason for absence (i.e., significant illness; religious or other University commitment notified to me in advance), I will accept up to one late assignment.

**Communication.** Email is often the best way to reach me as I can check it from any location. During the work week, I usually try to respond within 24 hours, though sometimes travel prohibits that. On Mondays and Thursdays, you can try calling me in my office; outside of those days, you may contact me at home if you feel it necessary between the hours of 8 AM and 10 PM.

**Special Learning Needs.** If you have special academic needs, including but not limited to those which may entitle you to academic accommodations, please consult with the Office of Disability Support Services in 206 Mary Graydon Center. They will help you to arrange for the necessary documentation. I am also happy to discuss more informal adaptations with anyone at any time.

**Academic Integrity.** Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course.

**Emergency Preparedness.** In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring

that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site ([www.prepared.american.edu](http://www.prepared.american.edu)) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/ college-specific information.

### **Tentative Schedule**

Please come to class prepared to discuss readings on the date where they appear below. I reserve the right to make minor modifications to the schedule based on, e.g., the availability of guest presenters or special opportunities. Such modifications will be announced in class and on the regular Syllabus Addenda that I will distribute every 3-4 classes. Where [Article] is listed, a specific citation will be provided on the Addendum and a link posted on Blackboard once I have more information about class interests. The Addenda replace any topics or readings listed here. ER and BB indicate electronic reserve and Blackboard, respectively.

#### **Unit 1:**

##### ***Monday, August 24, 2009: Overview and the Scientific Method***

Read King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, 3-12, 32-33. Princeton UP, 1994. BB.

##### ***Thursday, August 27, 2009: Reading International Relations***

Read Powner, *Reading and Understanding Political Science*, link on BB. Manuscript, U Michigan, 2007.

Read Edwards, *How to Read a Book*, link on BB. Manuscript, U Michigan, 2005.

##### ***Monday, August 31, 2009: Research Questions and the Research Project***

Read Blythe, "On Asking Productive Research Questions." Link on BB. Hypertext document: U of Illinois – Purdue University Fort Worth, n.d.

Read Empire State College. "Developing a Research Question." Link on BB. Hypertext document: State University of New York – Empire State College, n.d.

##### ***Thursday, September 3, 2009: Managing and Navigating Information***

\*Class will meet in Bender Library foyer (by the information desk) at 9:55 for a session with our reference librarian, Melissa Becher.

Complete the AU Library's Information Literacy Tutorial, link on BB.

##### ***Monday, September 7, 2009: Labor Day***

Classes do not meet.

\*\**Research questions due on BB by 10 AM.*

##### ***Thursday, September 10, 2009: Doing a Literature Review***

Read Knopf, Jeffrey. "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science and Politics* (2006): 127-132. BB.

Read Brown-Syed, Christopher. 2003. "What is a Peer-Reviewed Journal?" Link on BB.

Read Helen V. Milner and Bumba Mukherjee, "Democratization and Economic Globalization." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 163-181. Link on BB.

Read one additional literature review (see Addendum)

##### ***Monday, September 14, 2009: Concepts, Measurement, Operationalization, and Levels of Analysis***

Read Manheim, Rich, Willnat, and Brians, *Empirical Political Analysis*, Ch 5 (hereafter MRWB). ER.

## **Unit 2: Quantitative Tools**

### ***Thursday, September 17, 2009: Experiments, Surveys, and Survey Experiments***

Read MRWB Ch 6 (97-114, 137-52, 159-62). ER.

Read Inglehart, Excerpt from "World Values Survey." BB.

### ***Monday, September 21, 2009: Survey & Experimental Research in Comparative & International Politics***

Read Habyarimana et al., "Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?" *American Political Science Review* 101,4 (2007): 709-726.

Read Croco, "The Flip Side of Flip-Flopping," manuscript, University of Maryland. BB.

Read Croco, TESS proposals, manuscripts, University of Maryland. BB.

### ***Thursday, September 24, 2009: Data Collection and Description***

Read Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, *Political Science Research Methods*, Ch 11 (Hereafter J&R). ER.

Read Widner, "Codebook for Constitutions Projects I and II," manuscripts, University of Michigan. BB.

### ***Monday, September 28, 2009: Analyzing Two Variables***

\*Note: Class will meet in a computer lab (location TBA).

Read J&R 12: 339-71.

### ***Thursday, October 1, 2009: Applications of Bivariate Analysis***

Read [2 of 3 articles]. (See Addendum)

### ***Monday, October 5, 2009: Analyzing Three or More Variables***

\*Note: Class will meet in a computer lab (location TBA).

Read J&R 12:372-402.

### ***Thursday, October 08, 2009: Applications of Multivariate Analysis***

Read [2 of 3 articles]. (See Addendum)

### ***Monday, October 12, 2009: Crossing the Divide: Content Analysis***

Read MRWB 10

Read Nicole Deitelhoff, "The Discursive Process of Legalization: Charting Islands of Persuasion in the ICC Case." *International Organization* 63,1 (2009): 33-66.

Read Ian Budge, "Excerpt from Comparative Manifesto Project"

## **Unit 3: Qualitative Tools**

### ***Thursday, October 15, 2009: Case Selection, Within-Case Methods, and Research Ethics***

Read John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*, Ch 10. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. BB.

Complete the AU Library's Academic Integrity Tutorial, link on BB.

### ***Monday, October 19, 2009: Process Tracing***

Read Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Ch 10. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. BB. (Hereafter B&G)

Read [2 articles]

### ***Thursday, October 22, 2009: "Comparative" Case Approaches***

Read Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant, and Zig Layton-Henry, *Research Methods in Politics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, Ch 3, BB. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. (Hereafter BGGL)

Read Whitney E. Louderback, "The Implementation of Negotiated Settlements after Intrastate Wars," pp 1-48, 67-76. B.A. Thesis, College of Wooster, Wooster, OH. BB.  
Review Louderback, "Poster: "The Implementation of Negotiated Settlements after Intrastate Wars."" BB.

***Monday, October 26, 2009: Structured Focused Comparison***

Read G&B 10. BB.

Read Erik Ramstad, "The Effects of Scientific Uncertainty and Issue Symmetry on the Overall Rigidity of International Environmental Agreements," pp 5-63, 78-89. B.A. Thesis, College of Wooster, Wooster, OH.

***Thursday, October 29, 2009: Discourse Analysis***

Read BGGL 10: 236-248.

Review Deitelhoff (see Oct 12)

Read J.C. Sharman, "Power and Discourse in Policy Diffusion: Anti-Money Laundering in Developing States." *International Studies Quarterly* 52,3 (2008): 635-656. Link on BB.

***Monday, November 2, 2009: Qualitative Data Gathering: Elite and Semi-Structured Interviewing***

Read BGGL 9. BB.

Read John Odell, Breaking Deadlocks in International Institutional Negotiations," *International Studies Quarterly* 53,2 (2009): 273-300. Link on BB.

Read John Odell, excerpt from manuscript.

***Thursday, November 5, 2009: QDG: Ethnography and Participant Observation***

Read BGGL 10: 221-236. BB.

***Monday, November 9, 2009: QDG: Archival Research and Primary Sources***

Reading TBA.

**Unit 4: The Grand Tour**

***Thursday, November 12, 2009: Mixed Method Madness***

Read [2 articles]

\* Paper Drafts due on BB, 9:55 AM.

***Monday, November 16, 2009: Exemplary Mixed Method Research I***

[Read 2-3 articles]. (See Addendum.)

***Thursday, November 19, 2009: Exemplary Mixed Method Research II***

[Read 2-3 articles]. (See Addendum.)

***Monday, November 23, 2009: Exploratory Data Analysis – OR – Posters and Presentations III***

Read MRWB 13. BB.

***Thursday, November 26, 2009: Thanksgiving holiday***

Classes do not meet.

***Monday, November 30, 2009: Posters and Presentations I***

***Thursday, December 3, 2009 Posters and Presentations II***

***Thursday, December 10, 2009: Final Project Deadline***

Projects must be submitted on Blackboard by 11:00 AM today (the end of our regularly scheduled final exam period).