

ANGLO-AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
School of International Relations and Diplomacy

IRS288 International Relations Research Methods

Course Description

This is an introductory course in concepts and methods of IR and political science research. Its overarching goal is to provide you with the specific language and tools necessary to read, understand, critically evaluate, and start performing empirical IR and political science research. This involves (1) familiarizing you with the history and philosophy of science; (2) equipping you with the basic toolkits of quantitative and qualitative research methods; (3) explaining the logic of causal inference; (4) teaching you rudimentary descriptive and inferential statistics, and (5) introducing you to hypothesis testing. Throughout the semester repeated emphasis will be placed on the limits of the empirical approach to the study of politics and IR.

Location and Schedule

This course meets Fridays 8-10:45 a.m., room 3.26.

Instructor

Milan Babík (milan.babik@aauni.edu)
Office Hours: Fridays 2-3 p.m. or by appointment

Reading Materials

The following required course books are on reserve at AAU Library:

- Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1970)
- Janet Buttolph Johnson, H.T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff, *Political Science Research Methods*, 8th ed. (CQ Press, 2016)
- Jay L. Devore and Roxy L. Peck, *Statistics: The Exploration and Analysis of Data*, 6th ed. (Duxbury Press, 2007)

In addition, other required readings are available on our NEO/MyLearning course site.

Requirements and Assessment

Your final grade will be based on your performance in the following categories:

- a) Attendance & Participation (15%)

This refers to your regular attendance, which is mandatory, and to your involvement in discussion, which is expected. Attendance will be taken at the beginning and end of each class, and absences will only be excused in exceptional circumstances (severe illness, family emergency). You must notify me in advance, secure my permission, and arrange to make up any missed work. See Appendix I for further details.

- b) Response Paper (15%)

This paper is to be 3-4 pages long (A4, double-spaced, 12pt. font Times New Roman, 1" margins) and answer the following question: Is scientific progress possible? It is due in hard copy at the beginning of class on Friday, September 25, and must be informed by course readings covered up to that date. Late submissions will not be accepted, and plagiarism and/or the use of generative AI are strictly prohibited. See Appendix II for further details.

c) Two Statistics Problem Sets (15% each)

Two take-home statistics problem sets will be assigned. The first one will be handed out on Friday, November 6, and due in hard copy at the start of class on Friday, November 20. The second one will be handed out on Friday, November 20, and due in hard copy at the start of class on Friday, December 11. You are required to complete them individually and without any help other than your course materials (readings, lecture notes). Late submissions not accepted.

d) Midterm Examination (20%)

This examination will take place in class on Friday, October 23, starting at 8:30 a.m. You will complete it by hand and have 75 minutes for it.

e) Final Examination (20%)

This test will cover the entire course and take place in class on Friday, December 11, starting at 8:30 a.m. You will complete it by hand and have 2 hours for it.

Course Outline

I. History and Philosophy of Science

- Sept. 4 Welcome and Introduction: Why Research Methods Matter
- Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (Basic Books, 1959), 13-42.
- Sept. 11 Induction, Deduction, Verification, Falsification
- Popper, *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 78-84, 251-54, 311-317.
 - Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, chaps. 1-4.
- Sept. 18 Paradigms, Normal Science, and Scientific Revolutions
- Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, chaps. 6-12.
 - Popper, *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 44-48, 311-17.
 - Stephen Toulmin, "Does the Distinction between Normal and Revolutionary Science Hold Water?" and Karl R. Popper, "Normal Science and Its Dangers," in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), 39-58.

II. Qualitative Methods

- Sept. 25 Critical Theory and Constructivism
- E.H. Carr, "The Science of International Politics," in idem, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939* (Palgrave, 2016 [1939/1946]), vii-21.

- Gabriel Almond and Stephen Genco, "Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics," in *A Discipline Divided: Schools and Sects in Political Science*, ed. Almond (Newbury Park, Ca.: Sage, 1990), 32-65.
- Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford University Press, 1990), chap. 2.
- Response paper (hard copy) due at the beginning of class.

Oct. 2 Case Studies, Content Analysis, and Narrative Analysis

- Alasdair MacIntyre, "Is a Science of Comparative Politics Possible?" in idem, *Against the Self-Images of the Age* (Schocken, 1971), 260-79.
- Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, chaps. 3-4.
- Milan Babik, "Narrative Theory," in idem, *The Poetics of International Politics* (Routledge, 2019), chap. 1.

Oct. 9 Framing a Research Puzzle: Concepts, Variables, and Causal Chains

- Johnson et al., *Political Science Research Methods*, 74-82 and chaps. 4 and 5.
- Jillian Schwedler, "Puzzle," *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research* (Fall 2013), 27-30.
- Adam Przeworski and Frank Salomon, "The Art of Writing Proposals" (1995).

Oct. 16 Measurement, Hypothesis Formulation, and Criteria for Causality

- Johnson et al., *Political Science Research Methods*, 104-121, 135-162, 166-79.
- Malcom Gladwell, "The Order of Things: What College Rankings Really Tell Us," *New Yorker*, February 14 & 21, 2011.

Oct. 23 Midterm Exam (in-class, 8:30 a.m. start)

Oct. 30 No Class – Midterm Break

III. Quantitative Methods

Nov. 6 Descriptive Statistics: Measuring the Center and Variability

- Johnson et al., *Political Science Research Methods*, chap. 11.
- Devore and Peck, *Statistics*, 71-88, 93-94, 139-46, 151-54, 168-74.

Nov. 13 Inferential Statistics: Correlation and Linear Regression

- Devore and Peck, *Statistics*, 113-14, 189-223.

Nov. 20 Probability & Population Distributions (incl. Standard Normal)

- Devore and Peck, *Statistics*, 295-327.
- Statistics Problem Set I due at the beginning of class

Nov. 27 Point Estimation and Confidence Intervals

- Devore and Peck, *Statistics*, 369-71, 376-83, 389-94.

Dec. 4 Hypothesis Testing: Procedures, Outcomes, Errors

- Devore and Peck, *Statistics*, 417-21, 423-26, 429-40.

Dec. 11 Final Exam (in-class, 8:30 a.m. start)

- Statistics Problem Set II due at the beginning of class

Other Notes and Comments

Smartphones or other electronic devices including laptops and tablets are not allowed in the classroom. Please turn them off and stow them away before entering.

Appendix I: Attendance Policy

General

In-person class attendance is mandatory at AAU, and you must attend at least two thirds of sessions in this course. If you do not meet this condition and most of your absences are excused, you will be administratively withdrawn from the course. If you do not meet this condition and most of your absences are unexcused, you will receive a grade of “FW” (Failure to Withdraw).

Late Arrivals/Early Departures

Arriving in class late or leaving class early shall be considered an absence. Attendance will be taken at the beginning and end of each class. It is your responsibility to place your name and signature on the attendance sheet.

Excusing an Absence

Absence can only be excused for valid reasons (severe illness, family emergency, etc.). Should these cause you to miss a class and you would like to be excused, please submit an Absence Excuse Request Form to the Dean of Students within one week of the absence. Do not forget to supplement the form with documents providing reasons for the absence. Whenever possible, inform me of your absence in advance.

Should you miss a class session during the Add/Drop period due to a change in Registration, the absence will be excused if you submit an Absence Excuse Request Form along with the finalized Add/Drop form.

Make-up Options

If your absence has been excused by the Dean of Students, you are entitled to make up missed exams and assignments provided their nature allows it. Coursework missed due to unexcused absences cannot be made up and will be penalized according to the assessment guidelines specified in the syllabus.

You are responsible for contacting me within one week of the date your absence was excused to arrange make-up options.

Appendix II: Policy on AI and Plagiarism

General

Plagiarism obscures the authorship of a work or the degree of its originality. You are expected to create and submit works of which you are the author. Among other things, this means that you are strictly prohibited from using generative AI such as ChatGPT in any part of this course.

Examples

Plagiarism can apply to all works of authorship: textual, verbal, visual, audiovisual, and more. Here are some examples:

- *Verbatim plagiarism*: verbatim use of another's work, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement of the source and designation as a verbatim quotation
- *Paraphrasing plagiarism*: paraphrasing someone else's work, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement of the source
- *Data plagiarism*: use of other people's data without proper acknowledgement of the source
- *False quotation*: publishing a text that is not a verbatim quotation as a verbatim quotation
- *Fictitious citation*: quoting, paraphrasing, or referring to an incorrect or a non-existent work
- *Inaccurate citation*: citing sources in such a way that they cannot be found and verified
- *Ghostwriting*: commissioning work from others and passing it off as one's own
- *Patchwriting*: using someone else's work or works (albeit with proper acknowledgement of sources and proper attribution) to such an extent that the output contains almost no original contribution
- *Self-plagiarism*: unacknowledged reuse of one's own work (or part of it) that has been produced or submitted as part of another course of study or that has been published in the past
- *Collaborative plagiarism*: delivering the result of collective collaboration as one's own individual output

Penalties and Disciplinary Procedures

The minimum penalty for plagiarism is a failing grade for the assignment and a report to your Dean. In instances of small-scale plagiarism, novice students may receive the benefit of the doubt if it is reasonable to assume that the offence resulted from ignorance rather than intent.

Acts intended to make plagiarism more difficult to detect constitute an aggravating circumstance. Such conduct includes, for example, the additional modification of individual words or phrases, creation of typos, use of machine translation tools, creation of synonymous text, and more.

Depending on the type and degree of offence, the Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Intentional or repeated plagiarism automatically entails a disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.