INTL 6010: Research Methods in International Policy
University of Georgia, Department of International Affairs

Course Instructor Information
Dr. Andrew Owsiak
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Office Hours: Thursdays, 9:00-11:00am

Course Meeting Information
Fall 2025
Tuesdays, 9:35am-12:25pm
115 Candler Hall (IA Building)
https://uga.view.usg.edu

Course Description

Policy analysts consume and produce knowledge. Excelling at such tasks requires the analyst to know some fundamental principles of "good" policy research. On the consumer side, how do we evaluate claims about the efficacy of policies, as well as the evidence used to support those claims? On the production side, how do we generate a tractable question to investigate, and how do we design a study to answer that question competently? With respect to the latter, for example, how do we make an argument and generate a hypothesis from it? How do we gather the appropriate data—whether quantitative or qualitative or both—to evaluate the hypothesis? How do we entertain the possibility that our hypothesis is incorrect? How do we present our results convincingly—in writing or visually—and how do we adjust that presentation for the audience receiving our results? More broadly, how do we approach existing research, as well as our own, skeptically?

This course addresses the above questions. Its structure highlights the various steps in the non-linear research process. Along the way, it also considers best practices in, pitfalls that researchers encounter during, and common errors researchers make within the research process. Students apply these various insights to a long-term (collaborative) policy-relevant research project—a project that prepares them not only for their upper-level seminars, but for their individual capstone project as well.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, students will be (better) able to:
- Generate policy-relevant research questions to study
- Consume existing policy research, scholarly research, and news stories skeptically (e.g., identify unsubstantiated theoretical or empirical claims, or note shortcomings)
- Synthesize existing research—and marshal it in support of an argument/purpose
- Make a theoretical argument, which includes conceptualizing key terms, elaborating assumptions, outlining the argument's logic, and deriving hypotheses
- Determine the methodological approach and data needed to evaluate an argument, being mindful of any limitations that accompany them
- Generate and explain descriptive statistics
- Present an argument (and/or evidence) concisely, adjusting the presentation for the audience at hand
- (Collaborate with peers to) complete a long-term, policy-based research project
- Write more concisely—and edit their own and others' work
- Better understand how to complete their capstone project

Course Reading Material

The required textbook for this course is:

- Rassel, Gary, Suzanne Leland, Zachary Mohr, and Elizabeth O'Sullivan. (2021) *Research Methods for Public Administrators*, 7th edn. New York: Taylor & Francis.

Students can access an electronic version of this textbook through the UGA Library's website. Those students who wish to purchase a printed copy of the textbook can do so either through the UGA bookstore or their preferred online retailer.

The instructor makes all other required readings—that is, anything *not* within the required textbook—available electronically through the course's eLearning Commons (eLC) website (log-in using UGA Single Sign On at: https://uga.view.usg.edu/).

Course Requirements

The requirements for this course, and the percentage that each contributes to the final grade, are:

1. *Professionalization* (20%). A career in policy (or any profession) requires thoughtful, productive participation, and we will therefore practice this skill during the course. Every student should (i) complete the required readings for each class session *before* that session begins, (ii) prepare some thoughts on each required reading (e.g., questions or critiques), (iii) attend each class session, (iv) contribute meaningfully to each class session's discussion and activities, and (v) engage enthusiastically throughout the entirety of our class sessions. *Unexcused absences affect your final course grade.*

2. *Quizzes* (10%). Students will complete a series of unannounced in-class quizzes on the required course readings. Each quiz will cover the required readings assigned for the class in which the quiz occurs. Students may use any of their own hand-written notes to complete a quiz. (Note: To prevent accessing the readings—and therefore giving an advantage to some students over others—the instructor will not allow students to use their laptops, tablets, or phones to complete the quizzes.)

3. *Lab Assignments* (30% total; 15% each). Students will complete two lab assignments during the semester. The instructor will introduce these assignments—and their due dates—in class.

4. *Diplomacy Lab* (40% total, as divided below). Professional work often involves collaboration, research, data analysis, and report writing. To develop these skills—and to better prepare students to undertake their individual capstone project later in the degree program—students will complete a collaborative research project under the State Department's Diplomacy Lab initiative. A detailed description of this *student-led* project, as well as a list of its expected deliverables, appears on the course website. Students will work toward those deliverables through the following components and deadlines:

   a. *Collaborative Literature Review* (10%): A 4 to 6-page, focused synthesis of policy *and scholarly* research on an instructor-approved theme that relates to the Diplomacy Lab project (e.g., the relationship between China and the G77 or what issues are important to the G77). This is due **September 16**.
   b. *Collaborative Case Report* (10%): A 5 to 8-page report on one of the subthemes related to the Diplomacy Lab project (e.g., a specific issue the G77 negotiates over). This is due **October 14**.
   c. *Additional Research Tasks* (10%): Students will next work on the various tasks needed to create the project deliverables. This may include, *inter alia*: (i) gathering secondary or coding original data, (ii) mapping coalitions within the G77, (iii) drafting sections of the final report (e.g., on previous research, the project's research design decisions and methods, the empirical analysis, and so on), (iv) providing feedback to peers, (v) editing the report (including one's own writing, as well as that of others), and (vi) the infamous "other duties as assigned." This is due **November 11**.

d. *Reflection* (10%): A 2 to 3-page reflection paper that connects the student's work on the Diplomacy Lab project with the required course readings. This is due **December 2**.
e. *Final products*: A full draft of all expected project deliverables is due **November 25**. The final version of these deliverables is due **December 2.**
f. *Project Presentation*: The class presents (i.e., gives a briefing on) its final project to the State Department at the end of the semester—on a date to be determined with our State Department contact.
g. *Meetings with Instructor*: Students will meet with the instructor *at least* three times during the semester—once **before September 16 (first team)**, once **between September 17 and October 14 (second team)**, and once **between October 15 and November 18 (individual)**. Teams and individuals can set these meetings via the instructor's office hour scheduler (see the link on the course website).
h. *Group Contribution Feedback*: The instructor will ask each student to evaluate the contribution of other members of the students' collaborative team(s). If these evaluations indicate that a particular student has not contributed meaningfully to the final products or their various components, then the instructor may adjust the student's grade accordingly. These evaluations are due **November 25**.

Grade Distribution

A	93.00-100.00	C	73.00-76.99
A-	90.00-92.99	C-	70.00-72.99
B+	87.00-89.99	D	60.00-69.99
B	83.00-86.99	F	Below 60.00
B-	80.00-82.99		
C+	77.00-79.99		

Course Policies

1. *Respectful Learning Environment.* All participants in the course will treat one another—as well as their ideas and comments—with respect. It is normal to make mistakes with difficult material, as well as to disagree in a professional setting. This disagreement, however, will occur respectfully in our class discussions. Towards the goal of creating a respectful, inclusive classroom environment, students will: (i) use language that does not insult others or their point of view, (ii) keep cell phones *turned off and put away* during our class meetings, and (iii) use laptops for educational purposes *only*. Any student that does not follow these guidelines may be asked to leave the classroom and/or remove the distracting technology.

2. *Course Material Copyright/Recording Policy.* The course material—including (but not limited to) all documents provided in the eLC course website, quizzes, graded assignments, handouts, and in-class lectures—are copyrighted. Students may therefore *not* record lectures (audio or video), distribute course materials, or post any content from the course online *without the instructor's express, written permission.* For the sake of student privacy, students may also *not* record our class sessions or meetings (audio or video). The instructor will automatically make exceptions to this policy for any student that obtains an accommodation to record course meetings through the Accessibility and Testing Office. Any exempted student, however, agrees not to distribute the recordings (including online) *and* to destroy the recordings immediately after the course concludes.

3. *Attendance.* Class attendance is *required* for this course, particularly because some activities cannot be replicated (e.g., our discussions or in-class labs/exercises).

4. *Missing Class.* Students who are unable to attend a class meeting (i) will not receive credit for participating in that meeting and (ii) are responsible for obtaining any notes for that meeting from another student.

5. *Make-Up/Extension Policy.* Make-up exams or assignment extensions *may* be offered, but *only* with the approval of the instructor—generally for documented, emergency situations. The instructor will administer any approved make-up exams during the course's regularly scheduled, semester final exam period—on Tuesday, December 9 at 8:00am.

6. *Assignment Grade Appeal.* If a student believes that the instructor inaccurately graded an assignment, they may appeal that assignment's grade. To initiate an appeal, the student must—within two weeks of receiving the graded assignment—submit both the (originally) graded assignment *and* a written memo to the instructor. In this memo, the student should explain *in detail* why they believe the assignment grade should be different than the one originally assigned. The instructor will then review the memo, re-read the assignment, and issue a new grade. The new grade may be lower, equal to, or higher than the original grade and will not be subject to additional appeal under this policy.

7. *Academic Honesty.* As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to follow the University's academic honesty policy ("A Culture of Honesty") and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty," including policies that cover plagiarism and unauthorized assistance. Students are responsible for informing themselves about these standards before performing and submitting any academic work. They may direct specific questions they have regarding the policy—or its application to course assignments—to the instructor. Please note that all suspected violations of this policy will be handled according to the guidelines set forth within the policy.

8. *Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools.* Students may <u>*not*</u> use word-mixing or artificial intelligence-based software (e.g., ChatGPT) to generate <u>*any*</u> part of the work required in this course. *Those who do not adhere to this policy will receive a grade of zero on the work in question and/or a failing grade in the course.*

9. *Accommodations.* Students that require a potential accommodation (i) must register with the Accessibility and Testing Office on campus (706-542-8719, https://accessibility.uga.edu/), and (ii) should discuss any accommodations that office recommends with the instructor at the outset of the course.

10. *Exceptions and Modifications to Policies.* Any exceptions or modifications to the above rules (or more broadly, the syllabus) are given at the instructor's discretion, but only with *prior approval*—and generally only under *extenuating* circumstances. Any exception/modification requires appropriate documentation from the student. (Note: Please schedule routine medical visits around the course schedule.)

Course Schedule
The general schedule for the course appears below. *Please note well:* The instructor may—as needed—make changes to this schedule, give further guidance on assignments, or adjust the required work to meet particular course (or student) needs. *If you are unclear about anything, please ask the instructor.*

Students should complete the readings/assignments listed under a class session *before* that class session begins. Under assigned reading, RLMO refers to the required textbook.

Unit	Week	Date	Required reading	Topics	Items due
Introduction	1	Aug 19	• How to Be a Graduate Student • RLMO, Ch. 1 • Goertz (2021) • "Airline Close Calls…" (2023)	• Introductions • Course overview • Diplomacy Lab overview • Causal arguments	• None

				• ODNI (2021)	• Theoretical figures	
Designs for description	2	Aug 26	• RLMO, Ch. 2 • Knopf (2006) • Baglione, Ch. 4 • Mahoney & Vanderpoel (2015)	• Descriptive designs • Survey data • Process tracing • Meta-analysis • Literature reviews	• None
Designs for explanation	3	Sep 2	• RLMO, Ch. 3 & Ch. 12 (null and research hypotheses section only) • Powers and Renshon (2023) • Mitchell & Owsiak (2021) • *AJIL Unbound*	• Validity • Causal relationships • Generalizability • Experiments	• None
Measuring variables	4	Sep 9	• RLMO, Ch. 4 • Goertz (2020), Ch. 2-3 • Lai & Slater (2006) • Elkins (2019)	• Concept formation • Typologies • Measurement • Trouble-shooting measures	• Lab assignment #1
Indices	5	Sep 16	• RLMO, Ch. 10 • Bernhard et al. (2017) • Goertz et al. (2023)	• Creating indices • Replication	• Collaborative literature review • Instructor meeting #1
Sampling	6	Sep 23	• RLMO, Ch. 5 • Seawright & Gerring (2008) • Ross (2004) • Habyarimana et al. (2007)	• Sampling • Case Selection	• None
Using existing data	7	Sep 30	• RLMO, Ch. 9 • Gibler, Miller, & Little (2016) • Hegre et al. (2017) • Colpus dataset codebook (find & examine)	• Using big data	• None
Univariate analysis	8	Oct 7	• RLMO, Ch. 11 • Samii (2013) • Hensel et al. (2024) • Owsiak et al. (2021)	• Data analysis • Data visualization • Descriptive statistics • Factor analysis	• None
Bivariate analysis	9	Oct 14	• RLMO, Ch. 12 • Goldring & Matthews (2023) • Ásgeirsdóttir & Steinwand (2018) • Ward (2016)	• Hypothesis testing • Bivariate statistics • Statistical v. practical significance	• Collaborative report • Instructor meeting #2

Nominal and ordinal variables	10	Oct 21	• RLMO, Ch. 13 • Mousseau (2009) • Gleditsch & Ward (2013) • Berejikian & Zwald (2020)	• Contingency tables	• None
Regression and correlation	11	Oct 28	• RLMO, Ch. 14 • Owsiak (2013) • Jackson et al. (2022) • Daxecher & Prins (2015)	• Interpreting regression results • Model fit • Replication*	• Lab assignment #2
Talking to subjects	12	Nov 4	• RLMO, Ch. 6 • Mendez (2020) • Beber et al. (2017) • Kao & Revkin (2023)	• Surveys • Interviews • Focus groups • Exam review	• None
Data through questions	13	Nov 11	• RLMO, Ch. 7 • Suong et al. (2023) • Schenoni et al. (2024), including Appendix B and review materials	• Question wording • Pre-testing • Peer-review process	• Additional research tasks
Human subjects research	14	Nov 18	• RLMO, Ch. 8 • McDermott & Hatemi (2020) • Bruck (2015) (survey, measurement, conflict)	• Ethics • Confidentiality • Processes for protecting human subjects	• IRB certifications due (x2) • Instructor meeting #3
Presenting research findings	15	Nov 25	• RLMO, Ch. 15	• Best practices • Archiving replication data • Course conclusion	• Draft project deliverables • Group contribution feedback
Final course deadlines		Dec 2	• None	• None	• Reflection • Final project deliverables