

Research Methods in International Policy

INSTRUCTOR	Ryan Powers
MEETINGS	Tuesdays, 2:55–5:35 p.m. 6th Floor Conference Room, 110 E. Clayton St.
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Consistent with University of Georgia policy, this course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Course Description

This is an introductory course focused on the application of research methods and techniques in order to understand and analyze international policy. It emphasizes asking and answering policy questions using social science approaches, covering both qualitative and quantitative methods. We will consider the fundamentals of research design—including concept formation, hypothesis construction, measurement, causal inference, and program evaluation—and students will apply these tools by critically assessing existing work and developing their own research design over the course of the semester.

Prerequisites: None.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and operationalize concepts relevant to international policy analysis.
- Construct testable hypotheses grounded in theory.
- Make proper causal inferences and recognize common threats to inference.
- Execute a research design using qualitative and/or quantitative methods appropriate to the question at hand.

Course Materials

Readings will be posted on ELC.

Grading

Your final grade will be calculated on the basis of the following:

- Reading Discussion Leadership — 50 pts
- Policy Discussion Leadership — 50 pts
- Participation — 55 pts
- Research Question and Hypothesis — 25 pts (*due Sept. 1*)
- Bibliography — 25 pts (*due Sept. 8*)
- Literature Review and Theory — 50 pts (*due Oct. 20*)
- Research Design — 50 pts (*due Nov. 3*)
- Final Presentation — 50 pts (*Nov. 17*)
- Final Paper — 100 pts (*due Thu., Dec. 10, 11:59 p.m.*)

TOTAL: 455 points

Grading Scale

- A: 93–100 A-: 90–92
- B+: 87–89 B: 83–86 B-: 80–82
- C+: 77–79 C: 73–76 C-: 70–72
- D+: 67–69 D: 63–66 D-: 60–62
- F: 59 and below

Assignments

Assignments should be submitted to the eLearning Commons by 11:59 p.m. on the day before class unless otherwise specified. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of one-half letter grade per day.

- **Reading Discussion Leadership.** You will be assigned a day to lead discussion on that week's readings, including the substantive and methodological issues raised by the authors.
- **Policy Discussion Leadership.** You will be assigned a day to lead discussion on a media story or policy paper of your choice, critiquing its major claims and the evidence used to support them.
- **Participation.** You are expected to arrive having completed the assigned readings and prepared to contribute meaningfully to discussion.
- **Research Paper Components.** Over the course of the semester you will submit a research question and hypothesis, an annotated bibliography, a literature review and theory section, and a research design. Each component will receive feedback in advance of the final paper.
- **Final Paper.** A 12–15 page research design paper on a topic of your choice in international policy. Due Thursday, December 10, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.
- **Final Presentation.** A 10–12 minute presentation of your research design, followed by discussion and feedback.

Attendance

Attendance is essential to your success in this seminar. You are expected to come to every meeting having read the assigned material closely enough to participate in detailed, critical discussion. If you must miss a class for a legitimate reason (illness, family emergency, university-sanctioned travel), please notify me in advance when possible.

Make-Up Procedures

If you miss a deadline or class meeting due to a documented, legitimate reason (e.g., illness, family emergency, or university-sanctioned travel), contact me as soon as possible to arrange a make-up. Make-ups for reading or policy discussion leadership will be rescheduled when feasible. Late submissions for research paper components will be accepted with prior approval.

Course Outline

Readings will be posted on ELC and should be completed prior to the class meeting for which they are assigned.

1. **August 18** • Course Introduction
2. **August 25** • Putting the Science in Social Science
3. **September 1** • Theory, Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables
Due: Research Question and Hypothesis
4. **September 8** • Descriptive Inference
Due: Bibliography
5. **September 15** • Causality I
6. **September 22** • Causality II
7. **September 29** • Observational Design and Measurement I
8. **October 6** • Observational Design and Measurement II
9. **October 13** • Errors and Pitfalls in Inference
10. **October 20** • Bivariate Relationships
Due: Literature Review and Theory
11. **October 27** • Multivariate Relationships
12. **November 3** • Qualitative Methods and Case Selection
Due: Research Design
13. **November 10** • Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs
14. **November 17** • **Final Presentations**

• *November 23–27*: No class — Thanksgiving Break.

• *December 1*: No class — UGA Friday-schedule day; Tuesday classes do not meet.

• *Thursday, December 10, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.*: Final Paper due via ELC.

University Policies

Academic Honesty

UGA Student Honor Code: “I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others.” A Culture of Honesty, the University’s policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at honesty.uga.edu.

In this course specifically, academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) submitting another student’s work as your own, fabricating data or sources, misrepresenting the provenance of quotes or evidence, and failing to disclose the use of generative AI where disclosure is required (see below).

Generative AI

You may use generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini) to support your learning in this course—for example, to clarify concepts, generate practice questions, or help debug code or statistical output. You may **not** use generative AI to draft prose for graded written assignments (research question, bibliography, literature review, research design, or final paper) unless I explicitly permit it for a given task. When you do use generative AI for any graded work, you must disclose which tool(s) you used and briefly describe how you used them. You are responsible for the accuracy and originality of everything you submit; verify factual claims against authoritative sources. Undisclosed or uncritical use of generative AI will be treated as academic dishonesty.

Accommodations

In accordance with UGA policy, “[s]tudents with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in order to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the instructor or designate during regular office hours or by appointment.” More information about accommodations available to students with disabilities is available from the [Disability Resource Center](#).

Recording Policy

In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course.

UGA Well-being Resources

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community.

Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

- Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
- Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
- University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
- Health Promotion / Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu
- Accessibility & Testing: accessibility.uga.edu

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting well-being.uga.edu.