



How to do Undergraduate Research in International Studies INTL ST 620

Number of credits: 3

Meeting Times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:00pm - 5.30pm

Meeting Location: Van Vleck B139

Instructional Mode: Face-to-face only

This class meets for two 90-minute class periods each week during the semester. It also carries the expectation that students will spend around 6 hours per week working on course learning activities (reading, writing, studying, etc.) outside of the classroom. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

Primary Instructor

Siddharth Menon (he/him)

Office: 301 D Ingraham

Office Hours: Wednesday, 2:00pm - 4:00pm

Email: ssmenon@wisc.edu

Course Description

The research design process is one of the most important – and one of the most challenging – stages of conducting research in International Studies. This is where students get an opportunity to formulate their own unique research question, think through the broader methodology they will use to answer this question, pick the specific methods they will deploy to collect raw data from the “field”, learn how to navigate the political and ethical challenges they will face while conducting fieldwork in international settings, and decide which theories they will draw upon to contextualize their data so that they can answer their original research question. Now that you’ve acquired various concepts and theories from different courses during your time as an International Studies major, how do you apply these learnings in your field site so that you can collect data effectively and further your own individual research projects? This course will help students address this question by examining the different stages of the research design process for conducting social science research in International Studies. During the course, we will discuss the diversity of methods in the social sciences, the appropriateness of different methods for different research questions, and the standards by which each method should be evaluated.

Learning Outcomes

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

1. Design their own unique research projects
2. Evaluate the research designs of others by engaging in supportive peer reviews
3. Understand the diversity of research methods and strategies in International Studies
4. Develop an appreciation for how knowledge is acquired, produced, and disseminated
5. Communicate their ideas effectively and clearly

Outline of Course Content

This course is divided into two parts, Part A: Research Design and Part B: Research Methods. Part A introduces students to the principles of scientific inquiry and its critiques. Part B provides a survey of the different methods that social scientists use to collect data in their research. Both parts will start from a conventional, scientific perspective and move to a more qualitative, interpretive one.

Weekly Topics	Weekly Assignments
PART A: RESEARCH DESIGN	
Week 1. Introduction to the Course	
Week 2. Foundations of Social Sciences	Worksheet 1
Week 3. Different Paradigms	<i>Statement of Topic</i>
Week 4. Defining a Research Problem	Worksheet 2
Week 5. Moving from Ideas to Measures	Worksheet 3
Week 6. No Class	
Week 7. Sampling Strategies	Worksheet 4
Week 8. Critiques of the Scientific Method	<i>Revised Topic & Literature Review</i>
PART B: RESEARCH METHODS	
Week 9. Models and Experiments	Worksheet 5
Week 10. Spring Break	
Week 11. Surveys and Interviews	Worksheet 6
Week 12. Field Research and Ethnography	Worksheet 7
Week 13. Archive Sources and Discourse Analysis	Worksheet 8
Week 14. Ethics and Politics in Research	<i>Proposed Methodology</i>
Week 15. Student Presentations	<i>Project Presentation</i>
Week 16. Course Review	<i>Final Project Report</i>

Required Texts

There is only one required text for this course. You are welcome to rent or purchase a copy for yourself. They are also available via UW Libraries.

Babbie, Earl. (2017). *The Basics of Social Research* (7th edition). Cengage Learning.

In addition to the course text, you will be required to read and discuss published articles. They are available in PDF form through the course Canvas site. These publications will illustrate key themes, concepts and techniques that we are covering. You must complete the article by the Wednesday class of that week.

Other shorter supplementary reading materials and media will also be made available via the course Canvas site.

Grading

Your assignments will be carefully reviewed and graded according to transparent criteria. I will return your work within two weeks of receiving it, usually sooner. The grading scale follows the standard used in most UW courses.

A: 93-100

AB: 88-92

B: 83-87

BC: 78-82
C: 70-77
D: 60-69
F: 59 or lower

Grade contestations must be submitted in writing to me, and you will receive a response within a week. An “incomplete” grade can be awarded to any student who has completed most of the class in good faith but has experienced a medical or family-related issue that prevented them from finishing all the coursework on time. Please contact me as early as possible if you feel this applies to you.

Assignments

There are three ways in which you will be evaluated in this course:

Research Project (50%)

For the main piece of work in this class you will be asked to formulate your own unique research project, which will include an original research question and the appropriate methods to answer that question. This project requires you to put lecture material into practice. It also involves library research to identify and assimilate existing literature, thereby demonstrating the value of your own research project. You will write and rewrite sections of this project throughout the semester in order to sharpen your research focus.

Research Project Components:

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|-------------------------------------|-----|
| • Statement of Topic | 5% |
| • Revised Topic & Literature Review | 5% |
| • Proposed Methodology | 5% |
| • Project Presentation | 5% |
| • Final Project Report | 30% |

Worksheets (24%)

You will submit 8 worksheets during the semester, each of which is worth 3% of your total grade. Worksheets will include a series of prompts for you to respond to resulting in a 2-page double-spaced paper (~500 words).

Participation in Discussions (26%)

While attendance is required, it is only the first step toward meaningful participation in the course. You are expected to come to class fully prepared to engage in lively, pointed, and collegial discussion and analysis of the week’s assigned reading. The following criteria, adapted from a rubric created by Adam Nelson and Walter Stern, will be used to assess your participation grade.

A: This student always comes to class having completed assigned reading, ready to think carefully and the connections between readings and topics. They are willing to take the lead in discussion periodically, posing interesting questions or taking risks by answering tough questions. They also avoid dominating discussion, instead participating mindfully in discussion with other students, considering their ideas and responding thoughtfully and respectfully.

AB: This student does most of what an A student does but may be slightly deficient in one area – for instance, they may be a conscientious reader and thinker who tends not to listen to other students or otherwise dominates conversation instead of engaging in productive deliberation.

B: This student participates often, but not consistently. They may attend every class but they avoid taking the lead in discussion, instead only responding to questions or adding periodically to others' ideas.

BC: This student may be a regular but superficial discussion participant, not participating as fully as they should. At times the student may seem not to have done the readings, though they usually come prepared.

C: This student is intermittently prepared for class and rarely participates beyond the occasional superficial comment.

D: This student very rarely participates, and only in superficial ways.

F: This student has missed three classes without adequate explanation and/or attends most classes but never participates.

Rules, Rights & Responsibilities

See: <https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#rulesrightsandresponsibilitiestext>

Academic Calendar & Religious Observances

See: <https://secfac.wisc.edu/academic-calendar/#religious-observances>

Academic Integrity

By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/syllabus-statement/>

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools and applications (including, but not limited to, ChatGPT, DALL-E, and others) for course assignments and assessments does not support the learning objectives of this course and is prohibited. Using them in any way for this course is a violation of the course's expectations and will be addressed through UW–Madison's academic misconduct policy, specifically UWS 14.03(1)b (b) Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in

coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/instructor/>

Diversity & Inclusion

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world. <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

As your instructor, I recognize that my own profession has privileged certain people and excluded others—both in terms of the people it includes, and in terms of the perspectives and experiences that have been deemed worthy of analysis. I also acknowledge that the University of Wisconsin-Madison itself occupies the ancestral lands of the Ho-Chunk, a place their nation has called Teejop. In an 1832 treaty, the Ho-Chunk were forced to cede this territory. While we cannot simply undo all forms of injustice in a single course, it is important that we recognize our ongoing obligation to foster a more just and inclusive university. I take seriously my responsibility to create a learning environment where all students can participate in open and honest dialogue with one another. I expect all members of the class to contribute to a learning atmosphere that is respectful and inclusive and which recognizes the dignity of each member. I welcome disagreement and varying viewpoints as a productive and necessary part of intellectual inquiry, and I expect students to express disagreement in a respectful way.

WEEKLY TOPICS

PART A: RESEARCH DESIGN

Week 1. Introduction to the Course

This week will be an overview of the structure and content of the course.

Jan 22 - Discussion

Week 2. Foundations of Social Science

We will begin by sketching the foundations of social scientific research. By the end of the week, you should be able to better situate yourself and your research interests within the field.

Jan 27 - Lecture

Jan 29 - Discussion

Readings:

- Babbie, E. (2017). Chapter 1: Human inquiry and science. *The Basics of Social Research*. Cengage Learning.
- Menon, S. (Forthcoming). Sand, Plantation Urbanism, and the Extended Political Ecology of Infrastructures in India. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

Assignments:

- Worksheet 1 due by 12pm on Wednesday, Jan 29

Week 3. Different Paradigms

This week we'll compare different paradigms and examine the relationship between theory and empirics. We will also discuss how to go about constructing a literature review.

Feb 3 - Lecture

Feb 5 - Discussion

Readings:

- Babbie, E. (2017). Chapter 2: Paradigms, Theory and Research. *The Basics of Social Research*. Cengage Learning.
- Nadasdy, P. (n.d.). Advice on organizing your grant proposal. *Department of Anthropology, UW-Madison*.
- Przeworski, A. & Salomon, F. (1995). On the art of writing proposals. *Social Science Research Council*.
- Kelsky, K. 2011. Dr. Karen's Foolproof Grant Template. *The Professor Is In*.
<https://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/05/dr-karens-foolproof-grant-template/>

Activities:

- Statement of topic due by 12pm on Feb 5

Week 4. Defining a Research Problem

The objective this week is to delineate the different steps in a research project. We will then focus on how to operationalize a piece of research.

Feb 10 - Lecture
Feb 12 - Discussion

Readings:

- Babbie, E. (2017). Chapter 4: Research design. *The Basics of Social Research*. Cengage Learning.
- Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. C. & Williams, J. M. (1995). Part II: Asking Questions, Finding Answers. *The Craft of Research*. University of Chicago Press.
- Gorard, S. (2013). Chapter 3: Identifying Researchable Questions. *Research Design: Creating Robust Approaches for the Social Sciences*. SAGE Publications.
- Turabian, K. L. (2007). Moving from a topic to a question to a working hypothesis. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. University of Chicago Press.

Activities:

- Worksheet 2 due by 12pm on Wednesday, Feb 12

Week 5. Moving from Ideas to Measures

This week we will work through the idea that there are different ways to think about and measure social phenomenon, and different criteria to assess the quality of these measures.

Feb 17 - Lecture
Feb 19 - Discussion

Readings:

- Babbie, E. (2017). Chapter 5: Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement. *The Basics of Social Research*. Cengage Learning.
- Turabian, K. L. (2007). Finding Useful Sources. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. University of Chicago Press.
- Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. C. & Williams, J. M. (1995). From Problems to Sources. *The Craft of Research*. University of Chicago Press.
- Cresswell, J. W. (2013). Review of the Literature. *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE Publications.

Activities:

- Worksheet 3 due by 12pm on Wednesday, Feb 19

Week 6. No Class this Week

Feb 24 - No Class
Feb 26 - No Class

Week 7. Sampling Strategies

All empirical research involves some form of sampling, so you need to know which strategy is appropriate for which type of question. We'll also explore how diverse data is reduced into a more manageable form.

Mar 3 - Lecture
Mar 5 - Discussion

Readings:

- Babbie, E. (2017). Chapter 6: Indexes, Scales, and Typologies. *The Basics of Social Research*. Cengage Learning.
- Turabian, K. L. (2007). Engaging Sources. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. C. & Williams, J. M. (1995). Using Sources. *The Craft of Research*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Belcher, W. L. (2019). Reviewing the Literature. *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks*. University of Chicago Press.

Activities:

- Worksheet 4 due by 12pm on Wednesday, Mar 5

Week 8. Critiques of the Scientific Method

This week we'll look at how the scientific method has been critiqued from a range of perspectives including humanism, Marxism, feminism, antiracism and postmodernism.

Mar 10 - Lecture

Mar 12 - Discussion

Readings:

- Wynne, B. (1992). Misunderstood misunderstanding: social identities and public uptake of science. *Public Understanding of Science*, 1(3), 281-304.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599.

Activities:

- Revised topic & literature review due by 12pm on Wednesday, Mar 12

PART B: RESEARCH METHODS

Week 9. Models and Experiments

This week we begin exploring different techniques for collecting data. We start with the classic form of scientific data collection: the experiment.

Mar 17 - Lecture

Mar 19 - Discussion (Guest Lecture by Saloni Bhogale)

Readings:

- Babbie, E. (2017). Chapter 8: Experiments. *The Basics of Social Research*. Cengage Learning.
- McDermott, R. (2002). Experimental Methods in Political Science. *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 5:31-61.
- Duflo, E. (2010). Social experiments to fight poverty. *TED*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zvrGiPkVcs>

Activities:

- Worksheet 5 due by 12pm on Wednesday, Mar 19

Week 10. Spring Break

March 24 - No Class

March 26 - No Class

Week 11. Surveys and Interviews

This week we examine another classic form of social-science data collection: surveys and interviews.

Mar 31 - Lecture

Apr 2 - Discussion (Guest Lecture by Vignesh Ramachandran)

Readings:

- Babbie, E. (2017). Chapter 9: Survey research. *The Basics of Social Research*. Cengage Learning.
- Wolf, A. B. (2022). COVID and the Risky Immigrant Workplace: How Declining Employment Standards Socialized Risk and Made the COVID-19 Pandemic Worse. *Labor Studies Journal*, 47(3), 286-319.
- Notes from Below. (2018). The Workers' Inquiry and Social Composition: A new framework for class composition analysis. *Notes from Below*.
<https://notesfrombelow.org/article/workers-inquiry-and-social-composition>

Activities:

- Worksheet 6 due by 12pm on Wednesday, Apr 2

Week 12. Field Research and Ethnography

There is a longstanding tradition of field research in the social sciences. This week we focus on a popular example of that technique: ethnography.

Apr 7 - Lecture

Apr 9 - Discussion (Guest Lecture by Shahana Munazir)

Readings:

- Babbie, E. (2017). Chapter 10: Qualitative field research. *The Basics of Social Research*. Cengage Learning.
- Munazir, S. (2024). *Khidmat* as Understanding: Muslim Women, Marriage, and Ethics of Care in Muslim Households. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, 32.
- Munazir, S. (2025). Balancing Acts of Care from Kitchen to Cosmos. *Anthropology News* website, <https://www.anthropology-news.org/articles/balancing-acts-of-care-from-kitchen-to-cosmos/>

Activities:

- Worksheet 7 due by 12pm on Wednesday, Apr 9

Weeks 13. Archive Sources and Discourse Analysis

It isn't always possible or desirable to talk to people in order to collect data. This week we will consider basic unobtrusive methods and how to conduct archival research.

Apr 14 - Lecture

Apr 16 - Discussion (Guest Lecture by Shatrunjay Mall)

Readings:

- Babbie, E. (2017). Chapter 11: Unobtrusive research. *The Basics of Social Research*. Cengage Learning.
- Mall, S. (Forthcoming). Japan-India Encounters in the Nuclear Age: Pan-Asian Internationalism and the Global Cold War. *PhD Dissertation*.
- Burton, A. (2005). Introduction: Archive Fever, Archive Stories. In *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* by Burton, A. (Ed.). Duke University Press.

Activities:

- Worksheet 8 due by 12pm on Wednesday, Apr 16

Weeks 14. Ethics & Politics in Research

We save perhaps the most difficult topic for last: the question of ethics and politics in research. I will introduce you to some typical issues that arise in the practice of research, discuss various strategies for coping with these issues, and ask you to incorporate a discussion of ethics and positionality into the final draft of your research proposal.

Apr 21 - Lecture

Apr 23 - Discussion

Readings:

- Babbie, E. (2017). Chapter 3: The ethics and politics of social research. *The Basics of Social Research*. Cengage Learning.
- Goffman, A. (2014). Preface, Introduction, and Chapter 1: The 6th Street Boys and their legal entanglements. In *On the run: fugitive life in an American city*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lewis-Kraus, G. (2016). The Trials of Alice Goffman. *The New York Times*,

[nytimes.com/2016/01/17/magazine/the-trials-of-alice-goffman.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/magazine/the-trials-of-alice-goffman.html)

- McFate. M. (2005). Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of Their Curious Relationship. *Military Review* 85
- Berard, P. (2015). Occupation With a Human Face. *Jacobin*,
<https://jacobin.com/2015/12/counterinsurgency-human-terrain-system-montgomery-mcfate-petraeus>

Activities:

- Proposed methodology due by 12pm on Wednesday, Apr 23

Week 15. Student Presentations

This week students will get a chance to present their research projects in class and receive constructive feedback before submitting their final project report.

Apr 28 - Project Presentations

Apr 30 - Project Presentations

Readings:

No readings this week

Activities:

- Project presentation due in class

Week 16. Course Review

May 5 - Open office hours

May 7 - Open office hours

Readings:

No readings this week

Activities:

- Final project report due by 10pm on Friday, May 9