RESEARCH METHODS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
B.A. Programme in International Relations
INT 205_Fall 2019/2020

Lecturer: Dr. Ibrahim Can Sezgin
Class Time: Friday 0900-1200
Location: Room MZ05
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Office Hours: Friday 1400-1630

Course Description

This undergraduate course introduces International Relations students to the fundamentals of the social sciences as a vocation as well as the nuts and bolts of conducting social sciences research. The course is designed to provide an overview of the important concepts of various research approaches, research design, data collection, methods of empirical as well as interpretative data analysis.

The course is composed of three parts. The first portion, Understanding the Big Picture, serves as an introduction focusing on fundamental issues, such as ways of identifying social phenomena, finding research puzzles, formulating research questions, discussing different types of epistemologies and describing the stages of a given research process. During this part of the course, students will experience how to operationalize, sensitize, or hermeneutic social phenomena in our socio-political world.

The second portion of the course, Understanding the Methodology, focuses on the various types of research strategies. In this part, students will learn about the characteristics and the trade-offs between qualitative and quantitative research and how to identify the components of the given research design.

The third part, Understanding the Methods, exposes students to the wide array of qualitative and quantitative tools that International Relations scholars use, allowing them to appreciate the diversity of methodological approaches.

By the end of the course, students should feel confident when dealing with academic literature and capable of understanding the structure of research in International Relations.
Objectives

The overarching course objective is for each student to
1. understand the terminology of social science research.
2. identify the components of a research design.
3. be familiar with basic methods commonly used in International Relations.
4. develop research questions and apply appropriate methods for research.
5. become sophisticated readers of academic literature, capable of understanding and evaluating published pieces of research.
6. be aware of the ethical principles and challenges of social science research.

Requirements

Students are expected to complete all baseline readings assigned each week prior to coming to class in order to participate in a fruitful discussion. Extensions in all forms will be granted only for extraordinary circumstances by notifying me well in advance.

Grading

Students with module requirements (6 ECTS / 7.5 credits in the local system):
(1) Regular participation.
(2) Reading of the literature (at least two articles for every meeting) including preparation of three questions concerning the baseline (20 %) [see the ‘weekly questions’ template in the cloud!]
(3) The assignment of the practice week. [see the ‘data’ and ‘report’ template in the cloud!]
(4) 20 to 30 min. presentation in a given meeting, and a hand-out (30 %) [see the ‘handout’ template in the cloud!]
(5) Term-Paper_word count should be between 3200 and 3500 NOT including the bibliography (50 %) [see the ‘term-paper’ template in the cloud!]

*No Certificate for attendance is awarded.

Important Dates

the first meeting: September 27th
the creative week (no class): November 15th
the last meeting: December 27th
the deadline for paper submission: January 14th (until 5 pm)

Statement of Diversity

During this course, I strive to create a teaching and learning environment that supports diversity in all manifestations, including sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, social class, disability status, country and region of origin, and political orientation. I have zero tolerance for violations of this principle and have clear procedures for responding to such behaviour.
Course Outline & Readings

September 27th. Course orientation—Syllabus review, and Q & A.
No readings

Part One. Understanding the Big Picture
This part serves as an introduction focusing on fundamental issues, such as ways of identifying social phenomena, finding research puzzles, formulating research questions, discussing different types of epistemologies and describing the stages of a given research process. During this part of the course students will experience how to operationalize, sensitize, or hermeneutic social phenomena in our socio-political world.

October 4th. Asking questions and finding puzzles.
Baseline

Suggested further readings

October 11th. Epistemologies: empiricism & social constructivism.
Baseline

Suggested further readings

October 18th. Research process.
Baseline
Suggested further readings


Part Two. Understanding the Methodology

This part focuses on the various types of research strategies. In this part, students will learn about the characteristics and the trade-offs between qualitative and quantitative research and how to identify the components of a given research design.

October 25th. Clusters of methodology: qualitative & quantitative.

Baseline


Suggested further readings


November 1st. Research design I: quantitative.

Baseline


Suggested further readings


November 8th. Research design II: qualitative.

Baseline

Suggested further readings

November 15th. Practice week
Assignment: Find a quiet street in Ankara. Find a corner where you can watch the cars passing by. Spend the same one hour at this corner in the following three days and note the colours, brands, and types cars (at least 90 cars). At the end, note this information on a simple Ms Excel, Open Office or Mac Numbers Table. In addition, note any other interesting/uncanny/puzzling observations you make on this street over three days. You will be providing the collected data with a brief field report. [see the ‘data’ and ‘report’ template in the cloud!]

Part Three. Understanding the Methods
This section exposes students to the wide array of qualitative and quantitative tools that International Relations scholars use, allowing them to appreciate the diversity of methodological approaches.

November 22nd. Case study method I: definitions & case selection.
Baseline

Suggested further readings

Baseline

Suggested further readings

Baseline

Suggested further readings

December 13th. Descriptive statistics II: data with averages and the variability.

Baseline

Suggested further readings

December 20th. Discourse analysis.

Baseline

Suggested further readings

December 27th. Wrap up – Evaluation, round of feedbacks and Q & A.

- Pinker, Steven (2018): Is the world getting better or worse? A Look at the Numbers. TEDx Talks, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCm9Ng0bbEQ. (Accessed 14.07.2019)