

**Global 224: RESEARCH METHODS**  
**Fall 2018**  
**Class: Thursday, 3:30-6:20, 2011 SSMS**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course introduces Global MA students to the types of research design and methodologies most commonly employed in global studies research. For purposes of this course, research “design” is the art of asking questions in ways that elicit answers that: (a) could be surprising; and (b) are likely to be convincing to others; while methodologies are the ways one gathers the evidence the design calls for in order to answer these questions.<sup>1</sup>

Meeting criteria (a) and (b) requires you to clearly define all terms and concepts used to pose and explicate answers to your question, so that other people can challenge or extend your findings (using other research designs or different evidence) and/or utilize them in some way. To ensure the possibility of surprise, your question must admit more than one plausible answer; and you must do everything you can not to put your finger on the scales as you weigh these possible answers. You will not be successful. Nobody is. The important thing is that you try, and that you proceed with awareness of the myriad ways in which you can inadvertently tip the scales. If you do not, your conclusions are likely to be challenged successfully, and you are less likely to convince others of your answers.

To convince others you must meet their standards of evidence (or, in the case of theory, consistency). These standards vary across disciplines and fields of study, and also within them. This variation is related to epistemic differences, which can be sharp, and also influence the types of questions that are favored. It follows that the evidentiary standards one chooses to follow are a function of the types of questions one wishes to ask, and of the audience one wishes to convince. Global Studies is explicitly intended to synthesize questions and evidence from diverse disciplinary and epistemic traditions. It is also intended to convince audiences to consider answers emanating from traditions other than their own. To do good work in Global Studies, you must therefore understand the standards of evidence applied in the various research traditions upon which Global Studies draws and which it hopes to influence.

These, then, are our targeted learning outcomes. By the end of the quarter, you should be able to:

1. Better understand which types of research designs are useful for answering which types of questions.
2. Process any well-written journal article or book from any humanities or empirical social science discipline (excluding those using advanced quantitative techniques or advanced theory).
3. Sit through a research presentation and do the same.
4. Spot common errors in research design (fingers on scales).
5. Perform some basic research tasks that have proven useful to previous Global MA students, including: rapidly assessing the state of knowledge on a research question; conducting and annotating an interview; making and recording an ethnographic field visit; descriptive quantitative analysis (summary statistics/charts/decompositions/cross-tabs).
6. Distinguish correlation from causation; distinguish internal from external validity; understand necessary conditions, sufficient conditions, and how to test a theory; understand sampling.

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<sup>1</sup> For example: a set of comparative case studies selected to examine the influence of some variable is a design; a researcher can populate those case studies using (*inter alia*) ethnography, secondary quantitative data analysis, synthesis of prior research, or archival work. The line between design and methodology is admittedly fuzzy.

## Operating principles:

Social research is an art, honed through decades of practice in a messy, unpredictable field, not a science, developed in a laboratory. We need different tools for different tasks. Few, if any, academics have command of the complete set of tools. The strength of Global Studies lies in its intellectual diversity. And the secret sauce for a good research design is detailed prior knowledge of the context in which the study is to be conducted. Therefore...

- I will bring in experts to teach you about different design approaches, which we will study by reading about the approach, reading examples of their work and discussing it.
- We will not critique epistemologies, designs or methods from the outside. Rather, we will focus on how they work, and what their own practitioners feel they are and are not useful for.
- I can offer most of you only limited, generic advice on the design of your research projects. Always take the advice of your (prospective) thesis committee over mine.
- There will be homework and lots of research papers to read. Keep up.
- You will attend multiple research talks.
- I expect to see you at every Global Studies colloquium talk, unless you inform me of a conflict

## Grading and assignments:

- (30%) Preparation for class sessions: Have you done your assigned reading and thinking, and how well? Are you prepared to discuss the last colloquium talk? To be graded out of 10 after each class meeting based on your contributions. I will drop the lowest score. I will not share or debate these assessments with you.
- (46%) Homework assignments, @ variable percentages. Each will be graded and returned to you within two weeks of submission.
- (24%) Attend **at least 3** research talks and write up summaries of their research design and conclusions<sup>2</sup>. These must be research talks (i.e. they involve a scholar asking a question in a way that meets criteria (a) and (b) above). Short talks (less than one hour on presentations and questions) and advocacy talks (talks by activists or scholars wearing their activist hat) are not suitable for this assignment.<sup>3</sup> Space your talks out over the quarter, and write each one up within 24 hours of the talk. One of these talks must involve quantitative evidence, one must be a talk in the humanities, and (so long as you can find one) one talk must be a talk at the intersection of the humanities and social sciences. I will grade and return these to you, usually within a week of submission.

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<sup>2</sup> State the research question posed, defining all relevant terms; explain why the researcher thinks this question is interesting/important; enumerate the possible answers considered; explain what types of evidence were used to select the best answer(s); state the answer(s) the researcher deems most likely; evaluate/critique the work methodologically applying the evidentiary standards the researcher claims to adhere to. Not to exceed one page.

<sup>3</sup> Activism is not inimical to research or scholarship. Indeed, most engaging research is motivated by and informs activist impulses and activities. This assignment is intended to help you learn how to design research in ways that leave open the possibility of surprise. An “advocacy” talk, per my definition, begins with a relatively firm notion of the answer to a question, and tries to convince the audience to incorporate that answer into their own worldview or to take up a cause that this answer promotes.

**Workload:** You should not have to spend more than 7-8 hours working on this class outside of class meetings. Please fill in the weekly requests for info on Gauchospace so we can adjust either your work habits or course requirements to make sure the load remains manageable.

	Topic	Readings	Assignment due
<b>Session I, 27 September: Introductions</b>			
Part I	Introductions: What are research design and methodology? Types of questions; epistemology; key terms.	Trochim (pp. 1-7;11-18, Table of Contents)	
Part II	Epistemology	Firebaugh, Ch. 1 (briefly), Watts (P&C 176-7, 187-194); Hammersley (1992)	
<b>Session 2, 4 October: Types of Questions; Types of Designs</b>			
Part I	Types of questions & elements of research design	Leff (1964); Khan (1996); Svennson (2005); Olken (2005); Ferraz & Finan (2008); Witsoe (2012); Mehta & Jha (2014).	1. Process two studies to identify types of questions & elements of research design.
Interlude 2	How to read tables of summary statistics / regression results	Bellamare (2012)	
<b>Session 3: 11 October: (Post)Positivism</b>			
Part Ia	Sampling; internal vs. external validity	Trochim, Ch. 2	
Part 1b	Cranking out a rapid annotated bibliography	Course Notes; Note on VPNs	
Part 1c	Elements of (post)positivist epistemology: Propositional Logic; Falsification	VanEvera, Ch. 1 (Optional: King Keohane Verba, Ch. 1)	
Part II	Correlation vs. Causality (part 1), The Experimental approach	Shadish, Cook Campbell, pp. 1-26; Bertrand & Mullainathan	
<b>Session 4, 18 October: Causal Inference without experiments / Discourse Analysis</b>			
Part I	Causal inference without experiments	Pritchett & Summers	2. Annotated Bibliography A
Part II	The limits of positivism	Shadish, Cook Campbell, pp. 26-32	
Part III	Discourse Analysis: (Prof. Esther Lezra)	Lezra (2014, Ch. 3)	

<b>Session 5, 25 October: Synthesis/Global Pattern Recognition/Theory / Process Tracing</b>			
Part I	Synthesis/Global Pattern Recognition/Theory (Prof. Jan Nederveen Pleterse)	Pieterse (2017. Ch. 9)	3. Annotated Bibliography B
Part II	Process tracing	Collier (2011), Doyle (1892)	
<b>Session 6, 1 November (or replacement date): Historiography / Interviewing</b>			
Part I	Historiography (Guest Speakers – Prof. Cecilia Mendez and Stephan Miescher)	Truillot (1995, ch. 1-3), Mendez (TBD), Miescher (TBD)	
Part II	Interviewing technique (Principles)	Leech et al.; Rubin & Rubin	
<b>Session 7: 8 November: Ethnography; Descriptive Quantitative Methods</b>			
Part I	Descriptive quantitative Methods	Course notes	4. Bus Ethnography Field Notes
Part II	Ethnography (Guest Speaker - Prof. Casey Walsh)	Geertz (1973), Roseberry(2007); Walsh (2011); Reichman (2008)	
<b>Session 8: 15 November: Case Studies. Guest Lecture - Alison Brysk</b>			
Part I	Single and Comparative case studies (Prof. Alison Brysk)	Brysk - Global Good Samaritans	5. Bus Ethnography writeup
Part II	From comparative to quantitative	Brysk/Mehta (2014)	
<b>Session 9, 29 November: Lining up interviews / Turning internships into research</b>			
Part I	Interviewing in practice.	Frederick & Mehta (2018)	6. Case Selection
Interlude	Surveys	Grosh & Glewwe (1998)	
Part II	Turning internships into research (Guest Speaker – Prof. Richard Appelbaum)	TBD	
<b>Session 10: 6 December: Addressing normative questions / Wrap-up</b>			
Part I	Addressing Normative Questions (Prof. Giles Gunn)	Gunn (2017)	
Part II	Presenting written research (references, tables, charts)	Course notes	
<b>Before you leave on break</b>			7. Descriptive Quantitative methods

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