Methods for Studying International Relations/World Politics

Syllabus

Summer 2016

Professor Detlef F. Sprinz, Ph.D.

Purpose and Contents

The purpose of this methods seminar is to provide students with an overview of the main methods used in international relations/world politics research, incl. experimental methods, case studies, quantitative methods, and formal models. Central to this course is the application of methods. Students who have successfully taken this course will be prepared to make methodology-related decisions in their future research (e.g., MA thesis) and take more specialized methods courses.

Logistics

Time: → Course Overview
Location: University of Potsdam, Griebnitzsee, 3.06.S12 (check email for additional sessions)
Study Areas:
- MA Internationale Beziehungen (U Potsdam, FU Berlin, HU Berlin)
- MA Political Science (U Potsdam) (please verify with Dr. Kletzin, SoWi Examination Board)
- MA Verwaltungswissenschaft (U Potsdam) (please verify with Dr. Kletzin, SoWi Examination Board)
Prerequisites:
- Enrollment in an eligible MA program.
Course Registration: https://puls.uni-potsdam.de (Course Number: 428111). If you do not have access to this registration facility, please contact the coordinator of your program.
Capacity:
- 25 students. Priority will be given to students with mandatory curricular requirements.
ECTS Credits: 10
Remarks:
- This course is especially targeted to students of the MA Internationale Beziehungen as well as students interested in broad exposure to methods.
- The seminar is an intensive reading course with frequent assignments.
- It is important not to underestimate the workload! Start reading as early as possible and use any intermissions to go ahead with your readings.
Course website: https://moodle2.uni-potsdam.de/course/view.php?id=10326
Contact Details:
- dsprinz@uni-potsdam.de (include “Methods IR 2016” in the subject line)
- Skype: sprinz.teaching
- Office Hours: by appointment
- www.sprinz.org
Code of Conduct

All students are assumed to be familiar with and will abide by the rules of proper academic conduct as specified by the University of Potsdam and their respective inter-university academic programs. In case various programs and universities offer different rules and procedures, the more stringent code of conduct will apply. You are expected to undertake all your assignments independently of other students. By submitting your first assignment, you agree to abide by these rules. In the past, some students appeared to have fallen in love with around-the-clock reachability, their smartphones, tablets, social networks, etc. During our seminar sessions, I expect you to concentrate on this course.

Course Requirements

This seminar combines

- intensive readings in advance of the sessions, and
- a series of 4 short papers (dual degree MAIB students: 2 papers) (see below for details.

The short papers will be written according to the schedule (see below) and are 500-750 words each in length (everything included).

In the papers, you should not review the material covered in the required readings; it is assumed that you have read it. Instead, focus on the assignment (read the instructions carefully!) and innovate in a way not found in the readings. Leave the reader with the impression that your ideas have been carefully chosen and could be expanded upon in a longer paper. Please note that keeping it short is the art of structuring one’s mind and concentrating on the main points rather than on peripheral considerations. It is more difficult to write a convincing short paper than a long paper!

Papers include your student ID number (no names, please), university, paper & module number (see overview), and word count (all included) on the first page. At a minimum, leave one inch margins from all four edges of A4-sized sheets. Footnotes are strongly discouraged. All text is 1.5-spaced, 11-12 point font. Paper length will be strictly enforced. Papers shall be submitted – in PDF format – via Moodle2 by the due date and time (→Course Overview). Missing the deadline will incur a penalty of one third of a full grade per hour. Extensions will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances, following written petition.

Students are expected to attend all sessions. In case you cannot submit assignments due to medical reasons, you must submit an appropriate medical certificate. In addition, in case you need accommodations (“Nachteilsausgleich”), please inform the instructor to this effect ahead of time and provide the necessary documentation.
Course Requirements & Grading

Assignments: Four short papers, each weighting 25%.

Students who do not need a course grade (e.g., dual degree MAIB students) have to actively participate in the course and submit at least two papers at the level of a passing grade.

Sustained oral engagement in the seminar is expect of every student.

Textbook

The following textbook is used throughout this course and has been put on reserve at the University Library at Griebnitzsee:


Course Overview

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<th>Topic</th>
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<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>21 April 2016</td>
<td>10:00-11:30h</td>
<td>Course Overview</td>
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<tr>
<td>What If - Counterfactuals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21 April 2016</td>
<td>11:35-13:05h</td>
<td>Counterfactuals in Political Science</td>
<td>in class readings</td>
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<td>Epistemological Foundations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28 April 2016</td>
<td>14:00-15:30h</td>
<td>Select Epistemological Foundations</td>
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<td>Experiments</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28 April 2016</td>
<td>15:45-17:15h</td>
<td>Experimental Design (1)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>12 May 2016</td>
<td>14:00-15:30h</td>
<td>Experimental Design (2)</td>
<td>#1: Investment dartboard paper (due 11 May 2016, noon)</td>
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<td>Case Study Methods</td>
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<td>Case Study Methods (1)</td>
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<td>26 May 2016</td>
<td>14:00-15:30h</td>
<td>Case Study Methods (2)</td>
<td>#2: Case study paper critique (due 25 May 2016, noon)</td>
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<td>Quantitative Methods</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26 May 2016</td>
<td>15:45-17:15h</td>
<td>Quantitative Methods (1)</td>
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### Modules and Assignments

Additional required or additional readings may be announced throughout the course.

**Module 1: Course Overview**

Overview of the Course & Requirements – Q&A

**Module 2: Counterfactuals**

Colloquium

**Required Readings:**

**Additional Readings:**
Module 3:  Select Epistemological Foundations

Colloquium

Required Readings:

Additional Readings:

Module 4:  Experiments (1)

Colloquium

Required Readings:

Additional Readings:
Methods for Studying International Relations/World Politics


**Module 5: Experiments (2)**

Colloquium

*First Paper Due on 11 May 2016, noon, to be submitted via Moodle2.*

**Required Readings:**


**Paper:** You will be given access to information on a stock market competition between three major groups (Investment Dartboard). Please review the history of all completed and the “current” competitions. Subsequently analyze and summarize the findings and evaluate them from a methodological perspective (see readings for Modules 2-5). The relevant files will be supplied to you via Moodle2.

**Additional Readings:**


Module 6: Case Study Methods (1)

Colloquium

Required Readings:

Additional Readings:

Module 7: Case Study Methods (2)

Second Paper Due on 25 May 2016, noon, to be submitted via Moodle2.

Colloquium

Required Readings:
Steinberg, Paul F. 2015. Can We Generalize from Case Studies? Global Environmental Politics 15(3): 152-175, doi: 10.1162/GLEP_a_00316.

Additional Readings:
Paper: Homer-Dixon (1996) presents a comparative case research strategy for the investigation of environmental security problems. Which are the main advantages and disadvantages of his approach?

Module 8: Quantitative Methods (1)

Colloquium

Required Readings:

Module 9: Quantitative Methods (2)

Third Paper Due on 01 June 2016, noon, to be submitted via Moodle2.

Colloquium

Required Readings:

Additional Readings:

Paper: Abstract a quantitative article from the 2014, 2015, or 2016 volumes or online advanced publication of an international relations or political science journal (e.g., American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, Conflict and Cooperation, International Interactions, International Studies Quarterly, International Organization, Journal of Conflict Resolution, Journal of Peace Research, World Politics, etc.) using the Singer & Packer (2003) tableau (→Moodle2). The goal of this exercise is to abstract an international relations article according to predefined categories and to focus on the interplay of theory and methodology. Please enclose an electronic copy of the journal article with your paper.
Module 10: Game Theory (1)

Colloquium

Required Readings:

Additional Readings:

Module 11: Game Theory (2)

*Fourth Paper Due on 08 June 2016, noon, to be submitted via Moodle2.*

Prisoners’ Dilemma Game Played in Class

Colloquium

Required Readings:

Additional Readings:

Paper: Discuss the Prisoner’s Dilemma (PD) game: For which types of problems in international relations/world politics is the PD game a good representation and for which types of problems is it inadequate?

Module 12: What Have We Learned? – A Review & Outlook

Review & Outlook
Course Evaluation

Required Readings:


**Additional Readings:**

