International Relations 513
Social Scientific and Historical Research Methods
Spring 2009

When: Tu 5:30-8:20 pm
Where: VKC 204
Office Hours: Tu 2:00-3:30
Professor Gerardo Munck
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1. Course Description

This course offers an introduction to research methods. Emphasis is placed on the two central goals in social science analysis: the generation of descriptions and the identification of causal relationships. Various methodological options will be considered. However, an emphasis will be placed on the options that define the experimental, qualitative and quantitative traditions.

2. Requirements

i) Short papers (7 five page, double-spaced, papers (no papers longer than this will be accepted); worth a total of 50% of the final grade). These papers should summarize the key issues in the assigned readings, highlight their significance and implications for research practices, and offer critiques where appropriate.

ii) Final assignment (10 page, double-spaced, paper, 30% of the final grade). As a final assignment, students will be asked to discuss the main insights they have gained about research methods.

iii) Class participation (20% of the final grade) on the basis of the required readings, each and every week, and various exercises that will be announced prior to the relevant class.

3. Books to Purchase

Regarding the readings, articles, which make up much of the readings, are available on the Blackboard (under “Course Information”). In addition, the following required book can be purchased at the university bookstore.

Part I. Introduction

1. Starting Out: Research Questions and Ideas (Jan. 13)


Part II. Concepts, Measures, and Descriptions

3. Some Basic Ideas about Concepts and Measures (Jan. 27)

Shively, The Craft of Political Research, Chs. 4 & 5, on “Problems of Measurement.”
Shively, The Craft of Political Research, Ch. 3, on “Importance of Dimensional Thinking.”
4. Developing Simple and Composite Measures (Feb. 3)


Przeworski, Adam and Henry Teune, The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry (New York: Wiley, 1970), Ch. 6, on “Establishing Equivalence.”


5. The HDI as an Example (Feb. 10)


6. Unit Selection and Data Presentation (Feb. 17)


Part III. Explanation, Causation and Causal Models

7. On Explanation and Causation (Feb. 24)


8. Varieties of Causal Models (March 3)


Part IV. Causal Theorizing and Assessment

9. The Experimental Tradition (March 10)


Spring Recess: March 16-21
10. The Quantitative Tradition I (March 24)

11. The Quantitative Tradition II (March 31)

12. The Qualitative Tradition (April 7)

13. Combining the Quantitative and Qualitative Traditions (April 14)
Part V. Conclusion

14. Debating Research Methods (April 21)


15. Further Perspectives on Research Methods (April 28)
