“Methods for Studying International Relations”

(Seminar, 12 ECTS points)

International Relations, University of Potsdam &
Joint M.A. Program in International Relations of the Free University Berlin,
Humboldt University Berlin, and the University of Potsdam

Winter Term 2004-2005

Goals
The purpose of this methods course is to provide students with an overview of the main methods used in international relations research, incl. case study, quantitative, and formal models. Participants will have to cope with a demanding reading load and application of the material covered in a variety of assignments. Students who have successfully taken this course will be prepared to make methodology-related decisions involved in preparing their M.A. thesis.

Logistics
Time: Inaugural Meeting: 30 Nov. 2004, 16:00 – 18:00 h, every Friday: 10 Dec. 2004 – 28 Jan. 2005, 12:30 h – 16:00 h.
Remark: All reading materials can be found in the “Semesterapparat” at the Bereichsbibliothek Babelsberg.

Prerequisites
Students should have taken introductory courses in Social Science Methodology (e.g., an introductory statistics course during their B.A. education) and enjoy thinking about social science phenomena from a methodological perspective. Students also must have active e-mail accounts, be able to use the World Wide Web (WWW). The course will be taught in English.

Course Requirements
This course combines
(i) intensive readings in advance of the sessions,
(ii) a series of exercises and short assignments (see below for details), and
(iii) oral participation.
Please advise the instructor during the first session if you do not need the standard course certificate (“Leistungsschein”).

Office Hours
After the seminar and by appointment (see contact address below).

Contact Address
Detlef Sprinz, Ph.D.
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Visitors: Building C.4, room 4, details at http://www.pik-potsdam.de/contact

E-mail: dsprinz@rz.uni-potsdam.de
Phone: (0331) 288-2555/-2532; Home Office: see personal webpage
Course Webpage: http://www.sprinz.org or http://www.uni-potsdam.de/u/sprinz.
### Overview

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### Course Requirements

1. **Five Two-Page Paper Assignments**

   The papers will be written according to the weekly schedule. Papers must be written in English. British and American English are equally permissible.

   **1.1 Remark:**

   The short papers shall not review the material presented in the assigned readings; it is assumed that you have read it! Instead, focus on the assignment (read the instructions carefully!) and innovate on it in a way not found in the assigned readings. Leave the reader with the impression that your ideas have been carefully chosen and could be expanded upon in a longer seminar paper. Recall: It is harder to write a convincing two-page paper than a long term-paper!

   **1.2 Format:**

   At minimum, leave one inch margins from all four edges of A-4 sheets. Footnotes are strongly discouraged. All text is 1.5-spaced, 10-12 point font. Papers exceeding the format requirements will not be accepted. Papers should start with the first and last name of the author, student identification number, name of university, week (see this syllabus), and topic (short).
1.3 Submission: Papers have to be submitted no later than the due date listed in the weekly schedule. Send the paper as attachment, formatted in Rich Text Format (RTF) to dsprinz@rz.uni-potsdam.de. Deadline is the Thursday immediately preceding the seminar session, 16:00 h (see weekly schedule for details). Students are responsible for checking their submissions for virus problems and for spell-checking the document prior to submission. Timely submission will be rewarded by a bonus (see below). In enforcing this submission policy, this instructor accepts delays caused by the University of Potsdam internet facilities. All University of Potsdam students are entitled to free Internet Technology facilities as well as relevant training in how to use them. Students from outside the University of Potsdam are encouraged to check with their home institution. Problems caused by outside internet technology providers are at the risk of the student (e.g., server is down, problems with file attachments, etc.).

1.4 Late Submission: Students have to submit potentially missing papers no later than 04 February 2005 (end of lecture period) via e-mail and by postal mail (see address on page 1). Submissions following this deadline will not be accepted.

2. Oral Participation The colloquium style of the course provides you with the opportunity to discuss the readings and relevant current developments as relevant to the topics covered in this course.

Grading

1. Short Papers: Four best (out of five) short papers, each weighting 17.5%. Total=70%.

2. Oral Participation: 30%. This also includes performance in class exercises.

Note: Papers submitted by the due date and time will be given a bonus of one third of a grade point. Verification is by the timestamp embossed in the e-mail by the (receiving) University of Potsdam server. Even if you submit late, you will be able to get the maximum grade, however, having a bonus enhances the likelihood of receiving a good course grade.

Textbooks

The following textbooks are used throughout this course:


Week 1: 30 Nov. 2004  
Course Overview

Overview of the Course & Requirements

Recommended Readings:

MNC, ch. 1

Week 2: 10 Dec. 2004  
Epistemological Foundations (Part 1 of 2)

Introductory Lecture
Colloquium

Required Readings:


Additional Readings:


Week 3: 10 Dec. 2004  
Epistemological Foundations (Part 2 of 2)

First Paper Due on Thursday, 09 Dec. 2004, 16:00 h, via e-mail (for details, see below).
Colloquium

Required Readings:


Paper: The reference below refers to 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 Weeks 2 & 3). The
relevant files will be supplied to you by the instructor via e-mail. Please make sure your e-mail account is ready to receive up to 0.5 MB in attachments.

**Week 4: 17 Dec. 2004**  
**Case Study Methods (Part 1 of 2)**

Introductory Lecture  
Colloquium  

**Required Readings:**  
MNC, chs. 2-5.  

**Additional Readings:**  

**Week 5: 17 Dec. 2004**  
**Case Study Methods (Part 2 of 2)**

*Second Paper Due on Thursday, 16 Dec. 2004, 16:00 h, via e-mail (for details, see below).*

Colloquium  

**Required Readings:**  
RSI, chs. 7 & 8.  

**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 in view of the readings for Weeks 4 & 5?


Introductory Lecture
Colloquium

Required Readings:
MNC, chs. 6-9.

Week 7: 07 Jan. 2005 Empirical-Quantitative Methods (Part 2 of 2)

Third Paper Due on Thursday, 06 Jan. 2005, 16:00 h, via e-mail (for details, see below).

Colloquium

Required Readings:


Additional Readings:
RSI, chs. 10 & 11.

Paper: Abstract a quantitative article from the 2003 or 2004 volumes of a major journal (e.g., Journal of Conflict Resolution, International Studies Quarterly, Conflict and Cooperation, International Organization, etc.) using the David Singer [The University of Michigan] tableau. The goal of this exercise is to abstract an article according to predefined categories and to focus on the interplay of theory and methodology.
Week 8: 14 Jan. 2005

Formal Modeling: Game Theory
(Part 1 of 3)

Introductory Lecture
Colloquium

Required Readings:
MNC, chs. 10-14.

Additional Readings:

Week 9: 14 Jan. 2005:

Formal Modeling: Game Theory
(Part 2 of 3)

Fourth Paper Due on Thursday, 13 Jan. 2005, 16:00 h, via e-mail (for details, see below).

Prisoners’ Dilemma Game Played in Class

Required Readings:

Additional Readings:

Course in Game Theory: http://william-king.www.drexel.edu/top/eco/game/game.html


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

(Part 3 of 3)

Simulation Exercise

Required Readings:


Additional Readings:


Week 11: 28 Jan. 2005  What Have We Learnt? – A Review & Outlook

Fifth Paper Due on Tuesday, 17 December 2002, 16:00 h, via e-mail (for details, see below).

Review & Outlook

Course Evaluation
Required Readings:

MNC, chs. 1 & 15.
RSI, chs. 1-2, 12 & 13.

Additional Readings:


Paper: You will construct a simple simulation exercise yourself using http://bdm.cqpress.com, describe the inputs used, as well as the main results.

Please choose a relevant political decision-making problem, preferably from international relations, and simplify it such that ideally between 4 and 6 actors (or aggregated groups) are involved. Research the issue using traditional and electronic sources. Simplify the problem and determine the crucial dimension to be used for coding the data for each group (position, resources, salience) (see Bueno de Mesquita (2003) and the web-based simulation software with the on-line tutorial -> http://bdm.cqpress.com).

Overall, I expect to receive a two-page paper, plus input and output files. In your paper, please describe the decision-making problem in compact form, describe the sources you used, and report the simulation results as well as possible sensitivity analyses. In addition, please sketch briefly an advanced research strategy that you would pursue if you were given more time.