MA Research Methods of IR

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| **Credit level:** 7 |
| **Length:** semester 1 |
| **ECTS credit value:** 8 |
| **College and School:** Lazarski University in Warsaw, Faculty of Economics and Management |
| **Module Leader:** Dr. Christopher Lash |
| **Host Course:** MA International Relations |
| **Pre-requisites:**N/A |
| **Co-requisites:**N/A |
| **Special features:**N/A |
| **Access restrictions:**N/A |
| **Summary of module content:** The module aims to provide a supportive environment in which to develop ideas regarding the most advanced and final stage of the MA programme in International Relations, the MA thesis. It will deal with issues such as the finding and appropriate use of source materials and the designing and structuring of theses. The module also aims to provide knowledge on methodological issues (both qualitative and quantitative) relating to the undertaking of a major research project in International Relations. Finally, students will be familiarized with theoretical approaches characteristic to modern political science and international relations. |

**Assessment Methods**

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| Rank | Assessment type | Assessment name | Weighting | Qualifying set (where the minimum mark required applies across multiple assessments) |
| 1 | Essay | Methodology essay | 30 |  |
| 2 | Coursework | Thesis prospectus | 70 |

**Synoptic assessment**

N/A

**Learning outcomes**

1. Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of IR theories and research methods, critically assessing their application in the field.
2. Apply research theories and methods to the fields of International Relations and European Studies, demonstrating critical thinking and methodological rigor.
3. Design research projects and papers, including MA theses, and to formulate and defend their designs as thesis prospectuses.
4. Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the practical importance of qualitative and quantitative methods, emphasizing their practical application in the development of an MA thesis.

**Course outcomes the module contributes to:**

* L7.3 Undertake sustained research in the areas of international relations, democratic politics, security, and related areas.
* L7.6 Manage your own further learning self-critically.
* L7.7 Use acquired knowledge and understanding to initiate your own or your employer’s research projects in international relations, politics, or related fields.
* L7.8 Work independently and self-critically on research tasks in a well-organized manner and within time and informational constraints.
* L7.9 Develop with confidence and competence a research strategy, working hypothesis, and methodology in international relations and politics more generally and practice research, hypothesis adaptation, and data collection.

**Indicative syllabus content**

* Supportive environment in which to develop ideas for the thesis.
* Help to find an appropriate MA thesis topic.
* Focus on how to write a MA thesis. The nuts and bolts.
* Advice on how to design and structure the MA thesis.
* Help on defining appropriate research hypotheses.
* Advice on how to access and use sources appropriately and to avoid plagiarism.
* Introduction into Qualitative and Quantitative research methods.
* IT skills which can be used to develop an extended research project.
* Knowledge of the most important IR research methods and theories and how to apply them to an extended research project

**Teaching and learning methods**

The module is conducted in the form of seminars and practical classes/workshops, which will cover the indicative content. There are two broad aspects of the module, firstly, providing students with structural and practical awareness of how to go about writing the thesis and secondly providing various methodological and theoretical approaches which can be used when researching their thesis. Meetings will consist of partly traditional seminars, along with practical classes/workshops with group work activities which permit the students to practice some of the skills necessary to carry out a thesis. There will be also computer lessons where various IT skills are conveyed and students have hands-on practice. Finally in workshops students will give non-assessed presentations related to the content of the thesis in which the module leader and students will be able to give constructive feedback on the research direction taken.

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| Activity type | Category | Student learning and teaching hours\* |
| Lecture | Scheduled |  |
| Seminar | Scheduled | 45 |
| Tutorial | Scheduled |  |
| Project supervisor | Scheduled |  |
| Demonstration | Scheduled |  |
| Practical classes and workshops | Scheduled | 15 |
| Supervised time in studio/workshop | Scheduled |  |
| Fieldwork | Scheduled |  |
| External visits | Scheduled |  |
| Work based learning | Scheduled |  |
| Scheduled online learning | Scheduled |  |
| Other learning | Scheduled |  |
| Total scheduled |  | 60 |
| Placement | Placement |  |
| Independent study | Independent | 140 |
| Total student learning and teaching hours |  | 200 |

\*hours per activity type are indicative and subject to change.

**Assessment rationale: why has this assessment been used for this module?**

**1. Methodology essay – 1,500 words**

A methodological essay will allow students to describe how they understand qualitative and quantitative methods and techniques they were introduced to during the class. This type of an assessment will also provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their level of understanding of covered methods by applying them to real-life situations via data analysis. This assessment corresponds to LOs 1 and 2.

**2. Thesis prospectus – 3,000 words**

The thesis prospectus is a piece of work which shows the progress a student has made towards their thesis before they have to write the final thesis. As part of the prospectus the student needs to write an introduction which sets out the primary topic of the thesis and the research questions and hypotheses the student has chosen. The prospectus also provides a methodology section which sets out any theoretical perspectives they aim to use, explains the structure of the thesis and why the research questions and hypotheses have been chosen. The prospectus also contains a short literature review, an expected results section and a bibliography section. By writing the prospectus the students have the chance to get feedback on whether their thesis is on the right lines before the bulk of the writing process is carried out. This type of assessment directly addresses LOs 3 and 4.

Students will also be informed about the ethical considerations of AI usage in preparing their methodological essays and thesis prospectuses. They may use it for tasks such as preliminary research, literature inquiry, brainstorming ideas, fact-checking and cross-referencing sources.

**Assessment criteria: what criteria will be used to assess my work on this module?**

As for the methodological essay students’ work will be graded on the British scale and will be evaluated based on four equally weighted criteria, each worth 25% of the final mark: the quality of writing, the appropriate application of methodological models, the quality of argument and analysis, and the use of references and citations.

As for the thesis prospectus students’ work will be graded on the British scale and will be evaluated based on four equally weighted criteria, each worth 25% of the final mark: Research Question & Hypothesis: its clarity, logic, its import, Methodology and operationalization of selected method/model, Literature Review and Sources used (and their quality) and The quality of the writing (its logic, its clarity, and its accessibility).

The assessments in general to what extent the student has demonstrated the ability to:

* Articulate how their work situates itself within general methodological and theoretical approaches in the field of International Relations
* Apply research methods and theories to the study of case studies which are relevant to the fields of International Relations and European Studies.
* Analyse in which ways qualitative and quantitative methods can be used in the writing of MA theses.
* Design research papers in structurally and methodologically appropriate ways which can be implemented in the writing of MA theses.

**Sources**

**Essential Reading**

Jackson, K., Sorensen, G., Jackson, R. (2022) *Introduction to international relations: Theories and approaches*, 8th ed.

Matthews, B., Ross, L. (2010) *Research methods: A practical guide for the social sciences*, 1st ed.

Roselle, L., Spray, S. (2020) *Research and Writing in International Relations,* 3rd ed.

**Recommended Reading**

Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., Williams, J. M. (2016), *The Craft of Research*, 4th ed..

Field, A. (2013) *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*, 4th ed.

Harvey, M. (2020) *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*, 3rd ed.

Marsh, G., Stoker, G. (eds.) (2017) *Theories and methods in Political Science*, 4th ed.