

Winter 2023 | P2

KMVBS: Concepts and Research Methods in Security Studies

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General Information

This course is an introduction to doing research in Political Science in general, and Security Studies in particular.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- critically evaluate and assess methodological choices in the field of Political Science, in particular with regard to the identification of research assumptions, evaluation of the power of arguments, implementation of research methods and resulting validity;
- formulate their own research questions and then propose a suitable research design for their inquiry;
- appropriately organize their own research projects in Security Studies;
- conduct basic data analysis.

Who takes this class?

The class is required for graduate students in Security Studies. Unregistered students, both graduate and undergraduate, from other programs at the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations at UMB are also welcome — if there are free seats in the room.

Course Details

This course consists of weekly lectures and by-weekly seminars/labs. The working languages for this course are English and Slovak. In terms of prerequisites, for some parts of the course, mainly for the quantitative section — we will assume a working knowledge of computers and a *very basic* familiarity with high-school level algebra. Now this might seem scary for some of you but given this is only an introductory class covering multiple research approaches, of which the quantitative strategy is only one, we will not get into any advanced number crunching — but from time to time be prepared to see some numbers and letters in close proximity. To successfully pass this course you must satisfactorily complete both the formative coursework and the summative assessment. To help you in your learning, each one of you will be assigned to a small study group. The aim of such groups is to focus on jointly reviewing material from class as well as jointly working on your coursework.

Formative coursework

Participation in formative activities is a mandatory prerequisite for admission to the summative assessment. Formative coursework, however, does not contribute to the final mark that you will get for this course. Many of the formative assessments are group activities, both in doing as well as reviewing, so prepare to not only submit/present but also to review others' work. Besides this active participation in seminars/labs is expected.

- Problem set (group activity);
- verbal commentary on another groups' problem set (group activity);
- a draft version of your research proposal of circa 1000 words (individual activity);
- verbal/written commentary on another student's draft research design (individual activity).

Extra credit

Students who successfully complete the Introduction to R online course posted in moodle will receive 5 extra points that will be added to their final grade. A proof of completion must be submitted to me one day prior to the first R Lab session, otherwise, the student will not receive the extra points.

Summative assessment

The summative assessment is the result of your individual work — it is not a group activity. The assessment consists of two parts, which are due on the same date. Please bear in mind that your submitted summative assessment will undergo a plagiarism check.

- Research project (2000 words; 80% of Final Grade). Within the research project, you will be expected to define the research context of your chosen topic, including the research problem you want to study; subsequently, formulate a research question and set out and appropriately describe the research design to be applied. The language of submission can be either English or Slovak, in terms of formatting please format the text in line with disciplinary practices. The research project is submitted electronically via Moodle in an anonymized form, with the first page of the submission being the course cover sheet. Please see [Schmitter](#) (2002) for a template on how your research proposal should look like.
- Exam (20% of Final Grade). A combination of closed and open-ended questions. The online exam will be available for completion starting three days before your summative assessment deadline, you may take the exam anytime during these three days. Please bear in mind that the exam will be timed, and you will only have one attempt at your disposal. You will complete the exam in an anonymized form. I will provide more details about the exam as it approaches.

Marking

Marking criteria for the Research project are published on Moodle, to interpret the marking criteria please use them in conjunction with the provided marking conversion table. If you fail the summative assessment, you have the option to resit it only once — this possibility however does not apply if you have plagiarized your submission or otherwise gravely breached applicable academic misconduct regulation — in such a case your final course mark will be Fx without the possibility to resit.

Late Submission

Late submission is possible, however, be aware of the consequences. If you submit your summative assessment within 24 hours after the deadline a penalty of 10 points will be applied. If you submit your summative assessment more than 24 hours after the deadline, your final course mark will be equal to zero. In case of serious unpredictable personal events (hospitalization, family members' funeral, etc.) or force majeure that would prevent the submission of your summative assessment, you may fill out a Mitigating Circumstances

Form — a link to the form is available on Moodle. The MCF application should be sent ideally no later than 5 days after the summative assessment deadline. An MCF request may be approved or rejected.

Readings

Literature (reading material) for lectures will be listed on Moodle. Literature is divided into 3 categories: (i) Core, (ii) Recommended, (iii) Further. Obviously, read the required (Core) readings and any others that pique your curiosity. I recommend studying the relevant literature before each lecture — please bear in mind that you must be well acquainted with the assigned core readings (at the latest) by the start of the lecture pertaining seminar.

- Core - mandatory literature/mandatory materials.
- Recommended - recommended literature/recommended materials.
- Further - additional literature/additional materials.

Besides having core assigned readings for lectures, you might also have special readings/materials for seminars/labs. Whenever there is a reading material/s assigned to a seminar/lab you are required to become thoroughly acquainted with it so that you can actively participate in the classroom discussion/activity.

Computing

For the quantitative section of this class, we will use R to conduct data analysis. R is free, open-source and available on all major platforms; you can download it at <https://cran.rproject.org>. To effectively utilize R, you will need to download an integrated development environment. You may choose whichever one you like and feel comfortable with, however, I strongly suggest RStudio. The learning curve for RStudio is somewhat steeper than for some other environments like Jamovi (i.e., it takes more time to learn it), however in terms of what you can do with RStudio once you decide to tackle more advanced problems, RStudio takes the lead. You can download RStudio at <https://www.rstudio.com>. Please, bear in mind that due to time constraints we will only cover a basic introduction to R during class, for the R labs we will presume knowledge at the Introduction to R class published in moodle.

Schedule

Lecture I. — The Nature of the Scientific Inquiry

Lecture II. — From Research Questions to Inquiry

Seminar I. —

Lecture III. — The Application and Development of Theories and Concepts

Lecture IV. — Research Designs and Ethics

Seminar II. —

Lecture V. — Quantitative Research Inquiry I.

Lecture VI. — Quantitative Research Inquiry II.

Lab I. — R Lab

Lecture VII. — Quantitative Research Inquiry III.

Lecture VIII. — Quantitative Research Inquiry IV.

Lab II. — R Lab

Lecture IX. — Qualitative Research Inquiry II.

Lecture X. — Qualitative Research Inquiry III.

Lab III. — Qualitative Methods Lab

Lecture XI. — Where to go from here

Class protocol

As we will be covering a lot of ground in this class, regular attendance at all meetings (i.e., lectures, and seminars) is hence essential for your learning. Seminar participation is mandatory — I will take a register at the beginning of the session. If you cannot attend a seminar, please email me. If you miss more than one seminar you will be expected to provide appropriate evidence of your absence, such as a doctor's note. An unexcused absence may result in a Fx0 mark for the course. If not instructed otherwise, laptops may only be used during class for note-taking.

Difficulties and Disabilities

If you are in need of special help, you may want to consider getting in touch with the university's Counseling and Support Center — poradenstvo.umb.sk. If you are a student with a disability that needs special accommodations, please book a meeting with me during the first two weeks of the semester.

Using Generative A.I.

If you use generative AI tools, you must document this. Include a paragraph at the end of your work explaining what tool(s) you used, what prompts you asked, and how you integrated the output into your work. Make it clear what aspects of your work were generated by AI. AI-generated materials are prone to errors and bias. You are responsible for verifying the accuracy of any material generated by AI. If it is not clear whether you are allowed to use generative AI on a particular assignment or for a particular purpose, consult with me.

Academic Integrity

You are required to conduct yourself and do your work in line with applicable Academic Integrity regulations at UMB. Plagiarism (including self-plagiarism) as well as any other academic misconduct will not be tolerated.

Changes and Revisions

Please note that I reserve the right to make changes to the content, dates or teaching arrangements set out in this syllabus — if this happens, changes will be duly communicated to you and noted on Moodle.