

Research Design for Global Affairs

GLAF 30001 (Section 01)

Fall 2026

Instructor: Marc Jacob, *Assistant Professor of Democracy and Global Affairs*

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Class times: TR 3:30pm-4:45pm

Classroom: DeBartolo Hall 232

Student hours: Tuesdays, 4:45-5:30 p.m., in the classroom, or by appointment

Instructor's office: Hesburgh Center Room 236

Canvas: the GLAF 30001 course page

"All things are difficult before they are easy."

Thomas Fuller (1608-1661), English churchman and historian

Course Description

This course provides students with the tools and knowledge to design research projects in global affairs. Students will learn how to identify meaningful research questions, build theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and choose appropriate methods, including qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, to effectively answer different research questions. The course familiarizes students with key steps in developing research designs, how to make and justify methodological choices in research projects, and how to turn a research design into a research proposal. The course structure moves through the various stages of social science research, from theory building, ethics and IRB, literature review and proposal design, methods for collecting and analyzing data, to research proposal development. This course is required for students in the Global Affairs major.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will have learned to:

1. identify meaningful research questions in global affairs and situate them within relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks;
2. specify and measure social science concepts and assess the internal and external validity of a research design;
3. evaluate and justify methodological choices (i.e., qualitative, quantitative, or mixed) based on the research question, the cases selected, plausible alternative explanations, and ethical considerations;
4. develop core research skills including literature review, research design, data collection, and analysis;
5. communicate research effectively in writing and in visual form, and give useful critical feedback on the research designs of others.

Course Structure

Course Materials

There is no textbook to purchase. All required readings are posted as PDFs on Canvas or are available through Hesburgh Libraries. The readings draw most heavily on Toshkov, *Political Analysis* (2016); Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (2012); and Goertz, *Social Science Concepts* (2006). Poster printing for the final poster session is covered by the Keough School.

Peer Groups

In the first week you are assigned to a small peer group, which stays together for the whole semester. Your group is the standing audience for your project: you workshop research questions and concepts together in class, exchange written feedback at each major milestone, read one another's draft posters in Session 17, and meet with me as a group on 12/03 or 12/04 to talk through your final proposals. Documenting the feedback you gave and received is a graded component of the Research Portfolio, and the quality of your contribution to your group is part of your attendance and contribution score.

Assessments

For all assignments, please review the instructions and rubrics on the Canvas course page before you begin working on them. All submissions must be made through Canvas unless otherwise noted.

CITI Certification

The CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) Certification ensures that students understand ethical standards and principles in conducting research. Completing this certification will introduce key topics such as informed consent, data confidentiality, and the responsible conduct of research, all of which are critical when working with human subjects.

Research Portfolio

The Research Portfolio supports your ongoing engagement with course materials and the development of your own research project. It is due before the midterm quiz and focuses on the material covered in the first half of the semester: your research question, your key concept, your provisional case selection, and the alternative explanations you will need to address. It is returned with feedback within one week, so that you can use it both for the midterm quiz and for the final proposal.

Midterm Quiz

The midterm quiz is written in class and covers Sessions 1-12. It consists of short-answer questions and one applied item in which you diagnose the research design of a short vignette. Nothing from the second half of the course appears on it. A review sheet is distributed in Session 12.

Research Poster and Peer Review

In place of an oral presentation, you produce a research poster presenting your design, and you stand with it during the poster session in Session 23. You upload the poster one week in advance, and Canvas assigns you one classmate's poster to review in writing.

The poster itself is required but carries no points; what is graded is the *peer review* you write. The skill being assessed is the one that matters most for your own final proposal: reading a research design carefully and saying precisely what is and is not working in it. Because your poster is not graded, it is the safest place all semester to find out that an idea does not hold together. Note that failing to upload a poster on time deprives a classmate of the material they need for a graded assignment, and will be deducted from your attendance and contribution score.

Research Proposal

The Research Proposal is the cornerstone of the course. It culminates in a full research proposal that includes a straightforward question, theoretical motivation, methodological strategy, ethical reflection, and feasibility discussion.

Class Attendance and Contribution

Active participation in class discussions and workshops is essential for success in this course. You are allowed one (1) unexcused absence. Excused absences include those permitted by University policy and verified as per section 3.1 (pages 5-7) of the Undergraduate Academic Code. For each additional unexcused absence, your attendance and contribution score will be reduced by 25 points.

Grading Policy

Assignment	Points	Percentage (%)
CITI Certification	50	5
Research Portfolio	100	10
Midterm Quiz	150	15
Poster Peer Review	100	10
Final Research Proposal	400	40
Class Attendance and Contribution	200	20
Total	1000	100

Graded work is returned within two weeks via Canvas. The Research Portfolio is returned within one week, so that its feedback is useful to you before the midterm quiz.

Regrading Requests

Students requesting a regrade must submit a one-page written explanation outlining why the grade is not adequate, referencing specific criteria or errors in the evaluation of the assignment. Regrading requests should be thoughtful and based on the assignment's rubric or guidelines. Please note that upon review, the grade may remain unchanged, increase, or decrease. Requests must be submitted within one week of receiving the graded assignment.

Life Happens Clause

We all navigate complex and multifaceted lives, and I approach challenges with understanding and flexibility. To support this, you may invoke the "Life Happens Clause" for one assignment during the semester, granting you a 3-day extension without requiring an explanation. This clause is designed to provide grace when unexpected circumstances arise. It can be applied to any assignment.

Late Submission Policy

Assignments submitted after the deadline will incur a penalty of 5% per day (including weekends), up to a maximum of 25%. Submissions more than five days late will not be

accepted unless prior arrangements have been made. If you anticipate a delay, please communicate with me as early as possible. Note that you may use the “Life Happens Clause” (see above) once during the semester for a 3-day extension without penalty or explanation.

Final Grading

Letter Grade	Range (%)	Points
A	100% to 94%	1000 to 940
A-	<94% to 90%	<940 to 900
B+	<90% to 87%	<900 to 870
B	<87% to 84%	<870 to 840
B-	<84% to 80%	<840 to 800
C+	<80% to 77%	<800 to 770
C	<77% to 74%	<770 to 740
C-	<74% to 70%	<740 to 700
D	<70% to 64%	<700 to 640
F	<64% to 0%	<640 to 0

Course Policies

Accessibility and Accommodations

It is the policy and practice of The University of Notre Dame to provide reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. Students who have questions about Sara Bea Accessibility Services or who have, or think they may have, a disability are invited to contact Sara Bea Accessibility Services for a confidential discussion by emailing at sarabeacenter@nd.edu or by phone at 574-631-7157. Because the University’s Academic Accommodations Processes generally require students to request accommodations well in advance of the dates when they are needed, students who believe they may need an accommodation for this course are encouraged to contact Sara Bea Accessibility Services at their earliest opportunity. Additional information about Sara Bea Accessibility Services and to learn more about the student process for requesting accommodations, please contact Sara Bea Accessibility Services.

Inclusion

I am committed to and strive to maintain a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. In this class, we will not

discriminate on the basis of race, gender, sex, age, economic class, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

Mental Health & Wellness

Care and Wellness Consultants provide support and resources to students who are experiencing stressful or difficult situations that may be interfering with academic progress. Through Care and Wellness Consultants, students can be referred to The University Counseling Center (for cost-free and confidential psychological and psychiatric services from licensed professionals), University Health Services (which provides primary care, psychiatric services, case management, and a pharmacy), and The McDonald Center for Student Well Being (for problems with sleep, stress, and substance use). Reach out to Care and Wellness Consultants to learn more.

Title IX & Support Resources

The University of Notre Dame provides services for those who have been affected by sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating or domestic violence, stalking and any conduct that creates a hostile environment. For help and further information, including contact information for on and off-campus resources, please consult the University's Office of Institutional Equity.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is an integral part of this course and must be maintained at all times. I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. The University's Honor Code serves as a vital reminder of our shared purpose as scholars and members of a broader community. It also provides clear guidelines on policy violations and the associated procedures. Adherence to these principles ensures a fair and enriching academic environment for all. Where you collaborate - in peer groups, in workshops, or in the poster peer review - attribute your classmates' contributions fairly.

AI Usage Policy

Generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude) may be helpful for brainstorming, clarifying concepts, or refining your writing, but their use is optional and not expected. You are free to complete all work without AI, and in many cases, that may be best. If you do choose to use AI, it should support (not replace!) your own thinking and learning. The quality of your work should reflect your own ideas, analysis, and effort, not what AI produces. Using AI to complete readings, write content on your behalf, or fabricate sources is prohibited. If you use AI on a graded assignment, you must include a short disclosure stating what tool you used, what you used it for, and how it helped.

Inappropriate or undisclosed use may be treated as academic misconduct. When in doubt, ask; I am happy to help you use these tools responsibly.

Smart Use of Technology

Laptops and tablets are welcome for note-taking, workshop exercises, and looking things up; phones should be away. Please refrain from activities unrelated to class, as they distract not only you but also those around you. If you need to take care of something urgent, please step into the hallway. Technology failures are facts of life rather than emergencies: back up your work, save often, and start early.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Course materials are for use in this course only. Please do not upload them to external sites or share them outside the class without my permission. Peer feedback, including the poster peer review, stays within the class. Write it as you would want to receive it.

Resilience

In the event of an emergency situation or disruption to normal campus operations (weather, health emergency, etc.), our class will shift to remote instruction using Zoom, as well as other synchronous and asynchronous course materials. Any changes will be communicated through email and/or Canvas.

Academic Writing

Notre Dame's University Writing Program offers a range of opportunities for students to receive feedback on their writing and advice on the writing process. Please visit the Writing Center for more information and to schedule an individual writing consultation. I strongly recommend booking one before the final proposal deadline.

Schedule

Introduction and Foundations of Research Methods

Week 1

- **Session 1 (08/25): Introduction and What Is Research?**

- Booth, Wayne C.; Colomb, Gregory G.; Williams, Joseph M. (2008): *The Craft of Research*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1.
- McNabb, David E. (2021): *Research Methods for Political Science: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*. Third Edition. New York: Routledge. Chapter 1.

- **Session 2 (08/27): Foundations of Social and Global Affairs Research**
 - Gray, David (2004): *Doing research in the real world*. Los Angeles: SAGE. Chapter 2.

Week 2

- **Session 3 (09/01): Social Science Concepts and Measurement**
 - Goertz, Gary (2006): *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 2.
 - *Recommended*: Toshkov, Dimitar (2016): *Political Analysis: Research Design in Political Science*. Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 5.
- **09/03: No Class** (*APSA Annual Meeting*)

Week 3

- **Session 4 (09/08): Theory and Research Design**
 - Toshkov, Dimitar (2016): *Political Analysis: Research Design in Political Science*. Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 6.
 - Bryman, Alan (2012): *Social Research Methods*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 20-27.
- **Session 5 (09/10): Finding a Research Topic and Asking Good Questions**
 - Toshkov, Dimitar (2016): *Political Analysis: Research Design in Political Science*. Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 2.
 - Mullaney, Thomas S.; Rea, Christopher G. (2022): *Where Research Begins: Choosing a Research Project That Matters to You (and the World)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1.

Week 4

- **Session 6 (09/15): Internal Validity and External Validity**
 - Crano, William D.; Brewer, Marilynn B.; Lac, Andrew (2023): *Principles and Methods of Social Research*. Fourth Edition. New York, NY: Routledge. Chapter 2.
- **09/17: No Class** (*Book Workshop*)

Week 5

- **Session 7 (09/22): Research Ethics**
 - Fujii, Lee Ann (2012): "Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45(4): 717-723.
 - *Recommended*: Bryman, Alan (2016): *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 6.

- **Session 8 (09/24): The Literature Review**

- Knopf, Jeffrey W. (2006): “Doing a Literature Review.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(1): 127-132.
- *Recommended:* Bryman, Alan (2012): *Social Research Methods*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 5.

Assignment Deadline

CITI Certification: Due Friday, 9/25, 5 p.m., on Canvas.

Week 6

- **Session 9 (09/29): Primary and Secondary Sources**

- Bryman, Alan (2012): *Social Research Methods*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 23.

- **Session 10 (10/01): Case Selection and Alternative Explanations**

- Gerring, John; Seawright, Jason (2021): *Finding your social science project. The research sandbox*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6.
- Toshkov, Dimitar (2016): *Political Analysis: Research Design in Political Science*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 258-269.

Assignment Deadline

Research Portfolio: Due Friday, 10/02, 5 p.m., on Canvas. Returned with feedback by 10/08.

Week 7

- **Session 11 (10/06): Campus Opportunities** (*evening session, 6:15-7:30 p.m.; no 3:30 p.m. class that day*)

Speakers:

- Representatives from the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies, the Nanovic Institute for European Studies, and the Klau Institute for Civil and Human Rights, among others.

- **Session 12 (10/08): Review and Portfolio Workshop**

- No new reading. Re-read your portfolio feedback and bring questions. Review sheet for the midterm quiz distributed in class.

Week 8

- **Session 13 (10/13): Midterm Quiz** (*in class, closed book, covers Sessions 1-12*)

- 10/15: No Class

Week 9

- 10/20: No Class (*Mid-Term Break*)
- 10/22: No Class (*Mid-Term Break*)

Research Methodologies

Week 10

- **Session 14 (10/27): Ethnography and Participant Observation I**
 - Fujii, Lee Ann (2015): “Five stories of accidental ethnography: turning unplanned moments in the field into data.” *Qualitative Research* 15(4): 525-539.
- **Session 15 (10/29): Ethnography II (Workshop Session)**

Week 11

- **Session 16 (11/03): Quantitative Approaches I (Introduction)**
 - Bryman, Alan (2012): *Social Research Methods*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapters 7 and 15.
- **Session 17 (11/05): Poster Workshop**
 - No reading. Bring a draft poster; template distributed in advance on Canvas.

Week 12

- **Session 18 (11/10): Quantitative Approaches II (Workshop Session)**
 - Jacob, Marc S. (2025): “Citizens as a democratic safeguard? The sequence of sanctioning elite attacks on democracy.” *American Journal of Political Science* 69(2): 455-470.
- **Session 19 (11/12): Interviews and Focus Groups I (Introduction)** (*with Professor Laura Gamboa*)
 - Mosley, Layna (2013): *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 1-28.
 - *Recommended*: Bryman, Alan (2012): *Social Research Methods*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapters 17, 20, and 21.
 - *Recommended*: Soest, Christian von (2023): “Why Do We Speak to Experts? Reviving the Strength of the Expert Interview Method.” *Perspectives on Politics* 21(1): 277-287.

Week 13

- **Session 20 (11/17): Interviews and Focus Groups II (Workshop Session)**

- Herman, Lise Esther (2023): *Democratic Partisanship*. Edinburgh University Press. Chapter 3.

- **Session 21 (11/19): Content Analysis**

- Bryman, Alan (2012): *Social Research Methods*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 13.

Week 14

- **Session 22 (11/24): Policy Research and Mixed Methods**

- Stoker, Gerry; Evans, Mark (2016): Evidence-based policy making in the social sciences. In Gerry Stoker, Mark Evans (Eds.): *Evidence-based policy making in the social sciences*: Bristol University Press, pp. 15-27.
- Miller, Daniel C.; Pushpendra Rana; Katia Nakamura; Samantha Irwin; Samantha H. Cheng; Sofia Ahlroth; Emilie Perge (2024): “Policy Brief. A global review of the impact of forest property rights interventions on poverty.” *FLARE/Keough School Policy Brief Series*. Notre Dame, IN: Keough School of Global Affairs.
- *Recommended*: Gough, David; Tripney, Janice (2016): Systematic reviews for policy, pp. 43-67; Bryman, Alan (2012): *Social Research Methods*. Chapters 26 and 27.

- **11/26: No Class** (*Thanksgiving Break*)

Developing Research Designs

Week 15

- **12/01: No In-Person Session**
- **12/03 and 12/04**: Peer groups schedule individual meetings with the instructor (Thursday and Friday, 45 minutes per group, in Hesburgh Center 236). Sign-up details will be posted on Canvas.

Assignment Deadline

Research Poster: Upload as PDF by Tuesday, 12/01, 5 p.m., on Canvas. Required, but not graded. Canvas then assigns you one classmate’s poster to review.

Poster Peer Review: Due Saturday, 12/05, 5 p.m., on Canvas.

Week 16

- **Session 23 (12/08): Final Poster Session** (*gallery walk and discussion*)

Week 17 (Exam Week)

Assignment Deadline

Final Research Proposal: Due Thursday, December 17, 9 p.m., on Canvas.