



CONCEPTS AND METHODS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Scientific Supervisor: Prof. Alessandro Colombo

Instructors: Dr. Tiziana Corda and Dr. Martino Tognocchi

N. hours: 20 (10 meetings)

N. maximum participants: 30

Eligible participants: students from GOV, IPLE, REL and SIE

N. ECTS: for GOV, IPLE and SIE students, 3 ECTS as “further training activities” (“ulteriori attività formative”); for REL students, 3 ECTS as “elective courses” (“crediti a scelta libera”)

Final evaluation: attendance (at least **75%**) and project activity or academic essay (“passed or fail”)

Learning objectives: The overall objective of the course is to show students how to develop an effective research design in International Relations (IR), contrasting quantitative and qualitative approaches. Throughout the course, students will familiarize with some of the **key concepts of the international politics lexicon** and with the main **components of an effective research design**; then they will learn some basic principles of **statistical analysis** as well as of **qualitative process tracing** and **archival research**, and see how these skills have been applied to fundamental IR research questions in the literature; finally, they will have the chance to practise these skills by participating in a **collective research project**, which incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research methods seen in previous classes. No previous knowledge of qualitative techniques, software of data collection, and statistical analysis is required for attending the course.

Content of the course: The course is divided into three parts. The **first part** deals with some of the key concepts of IR to problematize the intellectual building blocks upon which the discipline is constructed and represented. To do so, this part presents the concepts ‘anarchy’, ‘enmity’, and ‘society’ with a critical and genealogical approach to emphasize the contextual and historical situatedness of such concepts. Specific readings (available beforehand online) are required as preparatory materials before each class on concepts. The **second part** introduces the core components of an effective research design in IR and presents the major research methods and related techniques used in the field. Finally, the **third part** involves the students in a hands-on experience in which they see how to apply those newly-acquired techniques in IR research.

Evaluation criteria: Students can **either write an academic essay** (2,500 words max) on a topic discussed and agreed in advance with the instructors **or participate in a collective research project**. The latter consists of a data collection and analysis on a pre-set topic: students will have to collect information related to the topic on an assigned country by consulting primary and secondary sources, including public archives, or using other techniques learnt in class; record it into a template provided by the instructors; and analyse it in a short text. In both cases, the final assignments must be submitted to the instructors **by July 1st**.

Course structure

- I. 22/04, 8.45-10.15, aula 27: Introduction to the course
- II. 24/04, 8.45-10.15, aula 27: Approaches to concepts and ideas in International Relations
- III. 29/04, 8.45-10.15, aula 27: International anarchy: history and theory of a foundational concept
- IV. 06/05, 8.45-10.15, aula 27: The concept of enmity in International Relations
- V. 13/05, 8.45-10.15, aula 27: International society and its influence in International Relations
- VI. 20/05, 8.45-10.15, aula 27: Research questions and design in IR: quantitative vs qualitative approaches
- VII. 27/05, 8.45-10.15, aula 27: Principles of bivariate statistical analysis
- VIII. 03/06, 8.45-10.15, aula 27: Principles of process tracing, qualitative interviewing, archival research
- IX. 10/06, 8.45-10.15, aula 27: Developing an original IR research project: introduction to the collective project
- X. 17/06, 8.45-10.15, aula 27: Developing an original IR research project: practical challenges

Registration: To register for the course, students are required to fill in this form **before April 22, 2024**: forms.gle/tuA9VJre5g94YrJT6. For further information, please contact the instructors via email (tiziana.corda@unimi.it; martino.tognocchi@unimi.it).