



IR RESEARCH METHODS LAB

Scientific supervisor: prof. Alessandro Colombo

N. hours: 20 (10 classes)

N. maximum participants: 30

Eligible participants: students of the Master's Programme in International Relations **REL**

N. ECTS: 3 ECTS among the 9 ECTS for "elective activities" ("a scelta libera")

Final evaluation: exercises and attendance (at least **90%**)

Learning objectives: The overall objective of this course is to show students when qualitative and quantitative methods are appropriate for an IR research question and how to engage in such research, through the analysis of some existing qualitative and quantitative works and a hands-on experience in producing original IR data. More in detail, this consists in, first, **showing students how to design IR research** and compare the merits and limits of different methods used in IR works. Then, students will **learn some basic principles of bivariate statistical analysis** as well as of **qualitative process tracing** and will learn how to apply these skills to fundamental IR research questions around concepts of power and war. Finally, students will **practise these skills by participating in an original data collection**. In this practical experience, students will have to structure an effective data collection and deal with consistency and reliability issues related to it. The final evaluation will be based on the quality of their data collection, which includes practising both qualitative and quantitative research methods. No previous knowledge of qualitative techniques, software of data collection, and statistical analysis is required for participating in this course.

Content of the course: The course is divided into three parts. The **first part** addresses the promises and pitfalls of qualitative and quantitative research in IR. Students will reflect on how to pose research questions and how to develop an effective research design in IR, contrasting quantitative and qualitative approaches to IR research. The **second part** presents some principles of bivariate statistics and of process tracing which will be used to explore how some major studies and data projects applied different research methods in order to investigate fundamental IR research questions on power and war. The **third part** involves the students in a hands-on experience with an original IR research project. They will be asked to do a data collection either by conducting interviews or reviewing open sources, including public archives, on an assigned country and to record the information collected into a pre-set template provided by the instructors.

Course structure

- I. **13/05, 12.30-14.30, aula E (via Pace 10):** Introduction to the course: promises and pitfalls in quantitative and qualitative IR research
- II. **19/05, 12.30-14.30, aula 13:** Research questions and design in IR: contrasting the quantitative and qualitative approaches
- III. **20/05, 12.30-14.30, aula E (via Pace 10):** Principles of bivariate statistical analysis
- IV. **26/05, 12.30-14.30, aula 24:** Quantitative research on power: the Correlates of War project
- V. **27/05, 12.30-14.30, aula E (via Pace 10):** Quantitative research on conflicts and protests: UCDP/PRIO and ACLED projects
- VI. **09/06, 12.30-14.30, aula 24:** Principles of process tracing, qualitative interviewing techniques, and archival research
- VII. **10/06, 12.30-14.30, aula E (via Pace 10):** Qualitative research on military intervention: process-tracing the 2003 Iraq war
- VIII. **16/06, 12.30-14.30, aula 24:** When the data we need is missing: ideating a new research project (archival work, field interviews, data management)
- IX. **17/06, 12.30-14.30, aula E (via Pace 10):** Exercise: data collection (I)
- X. **23/06, 12.30-14.30, aula 13:** Exercise: data collection (II)

Registration: Participants should send an email to simone.dossi@unimi.it to register for the course (**before May 1, 2022**) or to ask for information.