

Researching International Politics: Qualitative Methods (JPM629)

Summer semester 2023/2024 6 ECTS

Mondays 15:30-16:50

The course is mandatory for the students of the following programmes:

Bezpečnostní studia

Mezinárodní vztahy

Master in International Relations (MAIN)

Master in International Security Studies (MISS)

Lecturers

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Please direct all communication regarding organisational issues to:

vit.stritecky@fsv.cuni.cz

Office hours (Vít Střítecký)

<https://calendar.app.google/A1CMdZvSK2AXj52K6>



Course Description

The course meets weekly in an 80-minute session. It introduces the fundamental research strategies and methodologies commonly used in International Relations and Security Studies, with a particular focus on qualitative research. The primary goal is for students to become familiar with the character of qualitative inquiry, the principles of qualitative research design, and a range of core methodologies, methods, and techniques used to study social phenomena qualitatively. Special emphasis is placed on understanding the logic of qualitative research design so that students can navigate the diverse landscape of qualitative approaches with greater independence. This foundation is intended to help students apply what they learn in the course to make competent and confident methodological choices when developing and writing their Master's dissertations.

Teaching Methods

The course is administered through Moodle, the Charles University e-learning platform. All course materials will be posted there, and you should enroll in the Moodle course as soon as possible using the course link provided below. Please note that Moodle is not a substitute for the SIS system. Moodle serves as a content management platform, whereas SIS is the official university system for course registration. To participate fully in the course, you must be enrolled in both SIS and Moodle.

The full Moodle link to the course is: <https://dl1.cuni.cz/course/view.php?id=8558>

Course Requirements

To complete the course successfully, students are required to complete the assigned tasks, which will be submitted primarily through Moodle. Although attendance at lectures is not mandatory, regular participation is strongly encouraged, as the sessions are designed to support successful completion of the assignments. Missing an assignment submission deadline will be excused only for documented medical reasons, and the medical certificate must be provided before the deadline. In such cases, the relevant assignment may be rescheduled. All assignments will be assessed according to the grading scale presented below. The assignments, including their dates, deadlines, and contribution to the final grade, are listed as follows:

Take-home Assignments

Literature Review (30%): Please check the assignment file in Week 4

Start date: 9 March

Deadline: 23 March

Research Design (30%): Research Design (30%): Students will select two articles and review them, focusing on key steps of the research design. The assignment is completed with two Moodle-based tests that assess the understanding of how the research was designed and conducted. The list of articles, along with guiding questions, will be made available on Moodle. The task is designed to develop students' ability to identify how published research is methodologically structured, including key design choices and their implications.

Start date: 13 April

Deadline: 27 April

Qualitative Data Analysis Exercise (30%): In this exercise, students will choose one of three provided datasets, each designed to fit typical research problems in IR and Security Studies. Students will submit a short report (approximately 1–2 pages) explaining how they would analyse the selected dataset while taking into account its specific characteristics. The report should identify the qualitative analysis method the student would use, describe how the method would be implemented in practice, and present preliminary results in the form of an initial thematic analysis. The purpose of the exercise is to demonstrate the ability to select an appropriate qualitative strategy and apply it to generate meaningful insights from empirical material. Detailed instructions and submission guidelines will be posted on Moodle.

Start date: 27 April

Deadline: 11 May

MA Dissertation Registration: Throughout the semester, students should begin developing ideas for their MA dissertation topic and consult these with a potential supervisor. As part of the official university process, the supervisor must register the

dissertation topic in SIS by 15 June. In the Security Studies programs (BS/MISS), students must prepare their MA dissertation project using the official SIS template. Supervisors will then upload the completed document to SIS by the end of September. In the IR programs (MV/MAIN), students will work on their MA dissertation projects during the winter semester and register for JPM958 I/JPM953 I. The projects must be finalized and uploaded to SIS by the end of the winter semester. This administrative process is separate from the assessment in this course. However, the course is designed to strengthen students' ability to plan and produce a coherent MA-level research project.

Start date: 16 February

Deadline: 15 June

Grading Scale

General Grade	Grade Specification	Percentage
A - excellent	Excellent upper (1)	100 – 96
	Excellent lower (2)	95 - 91
B – very good	Very good upper (1)	90 - 86
	Very good lower (2)	85 – 81
C - good	Good upper (1)	80 – 76
	Good lower (2)	75 – 71
D - satisfactory	Satisfactory upper (1)	70 – 66
	Satisfactory lower (2)	65 – 61
E - sufficient	Sufficient upper (1)	60 - 56
	Sufficient lower (2)	55 - 51
F - fail		50 - 0

Course Policies

General regulations

The general framework for study rules at Charles University is set out in the Code of Study and Examination. Under Article 6, paragraph 17, a student may not take an examination in any subject included in their study plan more than three times, which means that each student is entitled to two resit opportunities. No extraordinary resit date is permitted. If a student registers for an examination date but does not attend and does not properly excuse their absence, they will not be graded for that attempt. At the same time, this provision does not create any entitlement to arrange a special examination date.

Academic integrity

All written assignments submitted in the course must be original work produced by the student. Plagiarism, as defined by the Dean's Provision No. 18/2015, is treated as a serious violation of academic ethics and may be penalized in accordance with the faculty's disciplinary regulations. To support academic integrity, all submitted assignments are automatically checked through the Turnitin plagiarism detection system.

Grading and feedback

Because the course has a high number of enrolled students, grading is typically completed toward the end of the period allowed by the university rules. According to the Code of Study and Examination (Article 8, paragraph 10), this period is two weeks after the submission deadline. Students are therefore asked to be patient and to avoid contacting the lecturer responsible for grading if their grade does not appear in Moodle before the two-week period has passed.

Academic accommodations

Students with a documented disability who wish to discuss academic accommodations should contact Vít Strítecký during the first week of the semester.

Principles of communication

The teaching team aims to support students throughout the course, but this requires timely communication when difficulties arise. If you encounter a problem that affects your ability to keep up with the course, you are encouraged to inform the instructors as soon as the issue

appears. You do not need to share personal details; what matters is raising the issue early enough for support to be possible.

At the same time, the instructors are available to answer questions related to the course and its subject matter in order to support your learning. However, students are responsible for reading the syllabus and the Moodle course site carefully and using them as the primary guide for the course. For this reason, the teaching team will not respond to questions that can be answered simply by consulting the syllabus or the relevant sections of the Moodle site, including the Q&A section. Students should consult these sources first before contacting the instructors by email or during office hours.

Other policies

To protect privacy and personal data, course participants are not permitted to make audio or video recordings of classes. If a student requires accommodations due to a documented disability, audio recordings may be negotiated on an individual basis.

Structure of the Course

Week 1 (16 FEB)

Introductory Lecture (Střítecký): This session explains how the course is organized, what assignments you will complete, and how the MA dissertation registration process works. It also introduces the assessment matrix that reviewers will use when evaluating your MA dissertation. During the lecture, we will discuss the overall philosophy behind the matrix and walk through its key sections in detail. Because the matrix captures the core expectations of high-quality research, it should be treated as a practical guideline for planning and writing your dissertation. Finally, the lecture presents the MA dissertation project and outlines how you will develop it over the semester.

Week 2 (23 FEB)

Fundamentals of Qualitative Research Design (IR & Security Studies) (Střítecký):
This session focuses on assembling the fundamental components of qualitative research

design in International Relations and Security Studies from the ground up. Students will learn how to identify a research problem and translate it into clear, well-phrased research questions. The lecture also covers the basics of data collection and data analysis in qualitative research, including how and why to use triangulation. In addition, it addresses how to formulate research objectives and articulate the intended contribution of a project. The session concludes with an introduction to key research ethics principles and a review of citation and referencing standards required for academic work.

Compulsory Reading (37pp):

- Lamont, Christopher K. 2015. *Research Methods in International Relations*. Los Angeles: Sage, 37-62 (Chapter 2).
- Maxwell, Joseph A. 2012. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Los Angeles: Sage, 78-90 (Chapter 4).

Recommended Reading (24pp):

- Barkin, Samuel. 2008. “‘Qualitative’ Methods?” In *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, edited by Agata Klotz and Deepa Prakash, 211-220. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tracy, Sarah J. 2013. *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 21-36 (Chapter 2)

Week 3 (2 MAR)

Epistemology and Ontology (Tesař): This lecture introduces the philosophical foundations that underpin different methodological approaches in the social sciences. It explains how assumptions about what counts as knowledge, how social reality can be understood, and what constitutes valid evidence shape the choice of research methods. The session also highlights key contrasts among major methodological traditions and shows how these philosophical commitments influence research design, analysis, and the interpretation of findings.

Compulsory Reading (40pp):

- Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus. 2011. *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations. Philosophy of Science and its Implications for the Study of World Politics*. London and New York: Routledge. (Chapters 1 and 2)

Week 4 (9 MAR)

Communicating with Theories: Literature Review (Střítecký): This session focuses on how to integrate a theoretical and conceptual framework into your research. It introduces ways of “communicating with theory,” meaning how to use theories not only as background knowledge but as tools for guiding research design, shaping analysis, and interpreting findings. The lecture also presents analytical approaches to writing a literature review, with emphasis on treating the literature review as an active instrument for incorporating theories and concepts into your project. By the end of the session, students should be able to position their research within relevant scholarly debates and build a coherent framework that supports their research questions and analytical strategy.

Compulsory Reading (35pp):

- Lamont, Christopher K. 2015. *Research Methods in International Relations*. Los Angeles: Sage, 79-92 (Chapter 4).
- Randolph, Justus. 2009. “A Guide to Writing the Dissertation Literature Review.” *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation* 14(1): 13.
- Silverman, David, and Amir Marvasti. 2008. *Doing Qualitative Research: A Comprehensive Guide*. Los Angeles: Sage, 365-373 (Chapter 21).

Week 5 (16 MAR)

Basics of Qualitative Case Studies (Střítecký): This session introduces the fundamentals of case study design in qualitative research. It explains what distinguishes case studies from other research designs and presents key typologies used to classify different kinds of case studies. The lecture also discusses major paradigmatic approaches to conducting case study research and how these approaches shape choices about evidence, explanation, and inference. Finally, it highlights how case studies

interact with other qualitative methods, including where they overlap, how they can be combined, and what methodological trade-offs these combinations involve.

Compulsory Reading (59pp):

- Gray, David E. 2004. *Doing Research in the Real World*. Los Angeles: Sage, 123-151 (Chapter 6 Designing Case Studies).
- George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 355-356, 388-389, 405-406, 415-422 (Appendix with Case Study applications).
- Yazan, Bedrettine. 2015. "Three Approaches to Case Study Methods in Education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake". *The Qualitative Report* 20(2), 134-152.

Recommended Reading (19pp):

Gerring, John. 2005. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. CUP, 17-36 (Chapter 2)

Week 6 (23 MAR)

Explanatory Case Studies: Causal Mechanisms in Qualitative Research (Střítecký): This session focuses on how to analyse causality within cases by tracking causal mechanisms in qualitative research. It explains what it means to make causal claims in a within-case framework and how researchers can identify and assess the links between causes and outcomes. The lecture introduces two key approaches for this purpose: process tracing and congruence analysis. Students will learn the basic logic of each method, the kinds of evidence they rely on, and how they can be used to evaluate alternative explanations and strengthen causal inference in qualitative case study research.

Compulsory Reading (60pp):

- Evangelista, Matthew. 2015. Explaining the Cold War's End: Process Tracing All the Way Down? In *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, edited by Bennett, Andrew and Jeffrey T. Checkel. Cambridge: CUP, 153-185 (Chapter 6).

- George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 226-254 (Chapter 9 The Congruence Method).

Week 7 (30 MAR)

Explanatory Case Studies – Focus on Qualitative Causation II (Střítecký): Readings will be before the class.

Week 8 (6 APR) – Easter Monday

Week 9 (13 APR)

Visual Analysis (Tesař): This session moves beyond text-based methods to examine visual methodologies used in the study of international politics and security. It introduces key approaches for analysing visual materials—such as photographs, videos, maps, graphics, and other imagery—as sources of political meaning and evidence. The lecture discusses what visual data can reveal about security practices, identities, and power relations, and it outlines practical considerations for selecting, interpreting, and presenting visual materials in research. It also addresses methodological and ethical challenges specific to working with visual sources.

Compulsory Reading (55pp):

- Bleiker, Roland. 2018. 'Mapping Visual Global Politics.' In *Visual Global Politics*, edited by Roland Bleiker, 1–29. Abingdon; New York: Routledge.
- Schlag, Gabi. 2016. 'Imagining Security: A Visual Methodology for Security Studies'. In *Transformations of Security Studies: Dialogues, Diversity and Discipline*, edited by Gabi Schlag, Julian Junk, and Christopher Daase, 173–89. London and New York: Routledge.
- Robinson NT. 2014. Have you won the war on terror? Military videogames and the state of American exceptionalism. *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 43(2): 450-470

Week 10 (20 APR)

Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis (Földes): This session introduces several approaches to content analysis, including basic descriptive techniques as well as interpretive and more broadly qualitative strategies. It pays special attention to thematic analysis, explaining its purpose, main steps, and typical outputs. The lecture also clarifies how inductive, deductive, and abductive logics can be applied in qualitative analysis and how these reasoning strategies shape the development of categories, themes, and explanations. In addition, students will learn the core principles of coding, including how to build and refine a coding scheme and maintain analytical consistency. The session concludes with an overview of software-aided qualitative content analysis, focusing on how digital tools can support coding, data management, and transparent documentation of analytic decisions.

Compulsory Reading (46pp):

- Drisko, James W. and Tina Maschi. 2016. Content Analysis. New York: Oxford University Press, 1-8 (Introduction), 81-119 (Chapter 4).

Recommended Reading (25pp):

- Swain, Jon. 2018. *A Hybrid Approach to Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research: Using a Practical Example*. In *SAGE Research Methods Cases*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Week 11 (27 APR)

Discourse Analysis (Földes): This session provides an introduction to the principles of discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis, with an emphasis on how these approaches can be applied in research practice. It explains how discourse analysts study language and meaning-making as social processes and how critical discourse analysis connects discourse to power relations, hierarchy, and political or institutional contexts. The lecture also outlines core analytical steps, typical sources of data, and practical

strategies for using these methods to examine how issues, actors, and events are framed and contested.

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Compulsory Reading (38pp):

- van Dijk, Teun A. 2009. Critical Discourse Studies: A Sociocognitive Approach. In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, edited by Wodak, Ruth and Michael Meyer, 80-102. Los Angeles: Sage, 80-102 (Chapter 3).
- Neumann, Iver B. 2008. Discourse Analysis. In *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, edited by Agata Klotz and Deepa Prakash, 61-77. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 61-77 (Chapter 5).

Week 12 (4 MAY)

Engaging AI/LLM I (Strítecký): These sessions examine how advances in artificial intelligence—especially large language models (LLMs)—are likely to reshape social science research. They introduce the basic principles behind the technology and explain why LLMs matter for the ways researchers search for information, generate and refine text, and support analysis. The lectures also provide practical guidance on the current landscape of LLM tools, including their typical strengths, limitations, and appropriate use cases in academic work. Finally, the sessions highlight the ethical standards that should guide responsible use of AI in research, with particular attention to academic integrity, transparency, and proper scholarly practice.

Compulsory Reading:

- Grossmann, Igor et al. (2023). AI and the transformation of social science research. *Science*, Vol 380, Issue 6650, pp. 1108-1109
- Valdenegro, Daniel (2023). A Large Language Models Digest For Social Scientists. preprint <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/m74vs>

Week 13 (11 MAY)

Engaging AI/LLM II (Střítecký): These sessions examine how advances in artificial intelligence—especially large language models (LLMs)—are likely to reshape social science research. They introduce the basic principles behind the technology and explain why LLMs matter for the ways researchers search for information, generate and refine text, and support analysis. The lectures also provide practical guidance on the current landscape of LLM tools, including their typical strengths, limitations, and appropriate use cases in academic work. Finally, the sessions highlight the ethical standards that should guide responsible use of AI in research, with particular attention to academic integrity, transparency, and proper scholarly practice.

Compulsory Reading:

- Grossmann, Igor et al. (2023). AI and the transformation of social science research. *Science*, Vol 380, Issue 6650, pp. 1108-1109
- Valdenegro, Daniel (2023). A Large Language Models Digest For Social Scientists. preprint <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/m74vs>

Further Bibliography

- Babbie, Earl. 2007. *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Beach, Derek, and Rasmus B. Pedersen. 2016: *Causal Case Study Methods, Foundations and Guidelines for Comparing, Matching, and Tracing*. University of Michigan Press.
- Brinkmann, Svend. 2013. *Qualitative Interviewing*. Oxford: Oxford university press.
- Bryant, Antony, and Kathy Charmaz. 2019. *The SAGE Handbook of Current Developments in Grounded Theory*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Burnham, Peter et al. 2008. *Research Methods in Politics*. Houndmills – New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. 2nd edition. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Christensen, Maya Mynster. 2017. “Shadow Soldiering: Shifting Constellations and Permeable Boundaries in “Private” Security Contracting.” *Conflict and Society* 3(1), 24-41.
- Collier, David, and John Gerring. 2009. *Concepts and Method in Social Science: The Tradition of Giovanni Sartori*. New York: Routledge.
- Creswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Creswell, John W. 2002. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Creswell, John W. 2013. *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Cronin-Furman, Kate, and Milli Lake. 2018. “Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51 (3). Cambridge University Press: 607–14. doi:10.1017/S1049096518000379.
- Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 2000. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Drulák, Petr et al. 2008. *Jak zkoumat politiku. Kvalitativní metodologie v politologii a mezinárodních vztazích*. Praha: Portál.

- George, Alexander and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Gerring, John. 2001. *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Gerring, John. 2017. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Given, Lisa M. 2008. *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications. Volume I+II.
- Goertz, Gary. 2006. *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gray, David E. 2009. *Doing Research in the Real World*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Hendl, Jan. 2005. *Kvalitativní výzkum: základní metody a aplikace*. Praha: Portál.
- Hollis, Martin and Steve Smith. 1991. *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Johnson, Janet Buttolph, Reynolds, Henry T., and Jason D. Mycoff. 2015. *Political Science Research Methods*. Washington: CQ Press.
- King, Garry, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Klandermans, Bert, and Suzanne Staggenborg. 2002. *Methods of Social Movement Research*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kozinets, Robert V. 2019. *Netnography: The Essential Guide to Qualitative Social Media Research*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Maxwell, Joseph Alex. 2013. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Mc Cluskey, Emma, and Constadina Charalambous, eds. 2021. *Security, Ethnography and Discourse: Transdisciplinary Encounters*. London and New York: Routledge.
- McNabb, David E. 2004. *Research Methods for Political Science: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods*. New York: M.E.Sharpe,
- Milliken, Jennifer. 1999. "The Study of Discourse in IR: A Critique of Research and Methods." *European Journal of IR* 5(2): 225-254.

- Paulus, Trena M., and Jessica N. Lester. 2021. *Doing Qualitative Research in a Digital World*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Tracy, Sarah J. 2013. *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Van Audenhove Leo., and Karen Donders. 2019. Talking to People III: Expert Interviews and Elite Interviews. In Van den Bulck H., Puppis M., Donders K., Van Audenhove L., (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Methods for Media Policy Research*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16065-4_10
- van Dijk, Teun. 1993. Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis, *Discourse & Society* 4, no. 2: 249–83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>.
- Van Evera, Stephen. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Villegas, Dino. 2020. Political Netnography: A Method for Studying Power and Ideology in Social Media. In *Netnography Unlimited* (pp. 100-115). London and New York: Routledge.
- Vradi, Wanda. 2008. “The Strange Case of Ethnography and International Relations.” *Millennium* 37(2), 279-301.
- Yin, Robert K. 2018. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 6th Edition. Los Angeles: Sage.

Websites:

<https://www.methodspace.com/> (by SAGE Publishing)
<https://www.e-ir.info/2021/09/25/qualitative-quantitative-and-mixed-methods-approaches/> (E-International Relations)

Video Tutorials:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqHnHG5X2PXCSCMyN3_EzugAF7GKN2poQ (Fundamentals of Qualitative Research Methods by Yale University)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKCOLKADo2Q&t=52s> (How to Identify a Research Gap?)

Podcasts:

Charles University
Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Security Studies
Department of International Relations

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/qualitative-conversations/id1324213425>

(Qualitative Conversations)