

Department of Political Sciences

Advanced International Relations: Methods and Concepts

Prof. Enrico Calossi, Massimiliano Andretta, Eugenio Pizzimenti



1.2 Course aims

The aim of the course is threefold. In the first part of the course (taught by prof. Pizzimenti and Andretta), qualitative and quantitative methods for political science analysis will be presented. The second part of the course (taught by Enrico Calossi), will present important concepts used in International Relation, while the third part (also under responsibility of Enrico Calossi) will deal with some important actors of the global politics (precisely, the European Union).

In details, in the first part, the course aims at providing students with the basic knowledge in the field of the comparative method; second, the course is intended to introduce the logic of qualitative research design and methods. Particular attention will be paid to the “quest for common standards”, by focusing the discussion of methodology on convergence and divergence between qualitative and quantitative approaches. The course will provide a snapshot of the most employed tools for qualitative research as well as practical guidelines to conduct comparative analysis of a small number of cases (“small N”) and many (potential) variables.

The second part of the course, thanks to the theoretical knowledge and theories learned in basic international relations courses, will present and address some important concepts that define and shape an international milieu, such as hegemony, power, non-state actors, religion, alliances, cooperation, etc. In the third part of the course (taught by Enrico Calossi) also the role of an important international organization will be addressed: the European Union.

1.3 Learning outcomes

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

- apply terminology, theories, concepts and methods of Comparative Politics to current events and specific cases at the International level.
- Individuate and discuss the role of important actors of the global politics.

1.4 Course requirements



Having attended a class on International Relations theories is recommended.
Students will be required to attend not less than 90% of classes and be prepared for class discussions.
Reading of the assigned materials and active engagement in class discussions is compulsory.

Participation in class in

1.5 Grading plan

34% of final mark is given by an exam (oral or written) based on the first part of course.
67% of grades is given by the second part. In detail, 40% due to an oral exam and 27% given by the evaluation of a student's presentation in class.

Part II

2.1 Course content

Part I: Methods in IR

- Topic 1. The comparative method
- Topic 2. Qualitative vs Quantitative approaches
- Topic 3. The Method of Process Tracing.

2.2 Course content and readings by topics

Detailed Time Table

Topic 1 – The comparative method (6 Lectures)

Lecture 1 (Pizzimenti)

The comparative method: historical evolution
Basic concepts and definitions
Why and how to compare?
Sources of bias in comparative research design

Lecture 2 (Andretta)

The problem of inference in analyzing political phenomena;
The main assumptions underlying quantitative research designs;



Lecture 3 (Pizzimenti)

Comparative research design
Levels of analysis
Strategies with different number of cases

Lecture 4 (Pizzimenti)

Classification and typologies
Triangulation
Nominal categories

Lecture 5 (Andretta)

The guidelines of an “ideal” research design;
The “problem” of Selection Bias: Case Selection procedures;
The definition of the Universe of Cases;

Lecture 6: (Pizzimenti)

What is process tracing?
When is it useful to employ process tracing?
Necessary and sufficient conditions: 4 tests

Lecture 7: (Andretta)

Measurement and Data Collection;
Bridging the Quantitative-Qualitative divide;

Part I: Concepts and actors in IR

Topic 3. Concepts in IR and International Organizations (European Union)

➔ ***Book: Jackson, Sorensen, Moller (2019) Introduction to International Relations***

Lecture 8

Realism (Ch 3)

Lecture 9

Realism + Liberalism (Chs 3, 4)

Lecture 10

Liberalism (Ch 4)

Lecture 11

International Political Economy (Ch 6)

Lecture 12



International Political Economy: current issues (Ch 7)

Lecture 13

Constructivism (Ch 8)

Lecture 14

Some selected current issues (Ch 11)

→ **Book: Cini, Borrigan (2019) European Union Politics**

Lecture 14

The idea of Europe. Towards the integration process (slides)

Lecture 15

The steps of the Integration (Chs 2, 3)

Lecture 16

The European Commission (Ch 11)

Lecture 17

The European Council and the Council of the European Union (Ch 12)

Lecture 18

The European Parliament (Ch 13)

Lecture 19

The policy making in the EU (Ch 16)

Lecture 20

Some policies: the Economic and Monetary Union, The Common Agricultural Policy (Chs 23, 24)

Questions to answer

Topic 1. The comparative method

- The content of comparison

- When, what and how to compare
- Forms and types of comparative analysis
- Sources of bias in comparative research;
- Which are the main levels of analysis
- Which are the main strategies in selecting cases
- Most similar and most dissimilar systems logics;
- The “golden laws” of comparative research designs
- Differences between classification and typologies

Topic 2. Qualitative vs Quantitative approaches

- Descriptive Inference (pro and cons)
- Causal Inference (pro and cons)
- What does Causal Homogeneity mean
- What does Independence of Observations mean
- What does Conditional Independence mean
- How to select cases
- Strategies to avoid selection bias
- How to operationalize concepts
- Contamination between qualitative and quantitative research designs

Topic 3. The Method of Process Tracing

- The role of the theory
- How to create sequences of events
- The different reliability of the 4 main tests used in process tracing

Topic 4. Concepts in IR

- What are the determinants of Realism?
- What are the determinants of Liberalism?
- What are the current issues of International Political Economy?
- What are the key points of Constructivism?
- Environmental issues
- Relationships between states and nonstate armed groups.
- What is the role of Ethnic and religious insurgents.
- Terrorists: a new threat?

Topic 5: The International Organizations (IOs)

- From the firsts to the most recent IOs
- What is Europe as a continent?
- What are the main steps of the EU Integration?



- Describe the main tasks of the European Commission
- Differences and functions of The European Council and the Council of the European Union
- Role of the European Parliament
- Describe the policy making in the EU
- Describe the Economic and Monetary Union
- The Common Agricultural Policy: still crucial for the EU?