
Introduction to Peace Studies
PCE 201-001
[TERM]

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URL for Course Syllabus: TBA

Course Summary

The course reviews a wide range of theories exploring the nature and causes of conflict, the possibilities for conflict resolution, and the foundations of peace. It provides students with a set of tools for the analysis of contemporary conflicts and shows how evidence and theory can be effectively used to understand peace and conflict. The course draws on a wide range of disciplines, including sociobiology, anthropology, sociology, social psychology, economics, and political science. It also gives students a practical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches to conflict resolution and peace-building.

The goals of this course are threefold: 1) to introduce students to the background and characteristics of peace studies, 2) to explore the multitude of tools and explanations used by scholars in order to understand peace and conflict, and 3) to encourage students to begin to try their own hand at making sense out of a complex and interesting subject. The course begins with an introduction to peace studies, focusing on why this is a useful area of inquiry and how peace can be studied scientifically. Next, the course analyzes why people, groups and states fight, focusing on individual-, group- and state-level violence. The course concludes by analyzing approaches to conflict resolution, including negotiation, political institutions, and reconciliation.

This course has two main foci, which happen concurrently. The first focus, which will be the primary focus of the readings and lectures, is to introduce you to the subject of Peace Studies. The readings for this focus will come from a variety of sources, including academic journals and non-academic outlets (e.g., *Foreign Affairs*). The primary assessment for the first focus will be in the form of 4 quizzes during the semester.

The second focus is the generation of an original research paper. This will be the secondary topic of the lecture sessions, where your instructor will work with you to develop a research paper. Your primary assessment for the second focus will be in the form of a culminating assignment, which will be due in 4 phases throughout the semester.

Student Learning Outcomes and Course Foci

Course Foci: ‘Theories of Peace Studies’ & ‘Peace Studies and Scientific Inquiry’

This course has two main foci, which are aligned with the objectives for UK Core’s *Social Science Inquiry*. The first focus, which is the primary topic of lectures sessions, is to introduce the student to the primary theories and topics with Peace Studies. The second main focus of the course is to improve the student’s understanding of how the modes of scholarly inquiry in Peace Studies have led to the development of the discipline’s shared bodies of knowledge and the interplay between Peace Studies and its broader social context. We will explore a variety of approaches to research questions pursued by Peace Studies scholars, which should help prepare the students to critically evaluate a variety of social situations that they will confront in your everyday lives. This focus will culminate in the generation of an original research paper.

Learning Objectives

This course’s learning objectives are aligned with UK Core’s *Social Science Inquiry*. Below are the specific learning objectives and information about how each objective will be integrated into the course.

Learning Objective 1: The students will demonstrate knowledge of the theories associated with peace studies. The readings and lectures will provide the primary sources to reach this objective, and the quizzes will provide the primary assessment mechanism to reach this objective. Students will also explore some theory of peace studies in-depth as part of their research assignment, which also aligns with this objective.

Learning Objective 2: The students will demonstrate an understanding of methods and ethics of inquiry that lead to knowledge in Peace Studies. This objective will primarily be accomplished via the research assignment, which will have students use methods common to the social sciences to test their hypotheses. Students will also explore various methods and ethics of inquiry via the course readings and lectures.

Learning Objective 3: The students will demonstrate an ability to identify and use appropriate information resources to substantiate evidence-based claims in Peace Studies. This objective will be reached primarily in the second part of the research assignment, where students will be asked to develop a literature review for their assignment. Classroom discussions will provide information to aid the students in this process, and students will be expected to gather data and review academic literature related to their research assignment.

Learning Objective 4: The students will demonstrate knowledge of how the study of peace influences society. This objective will be reached with the readings, lectures and research assignment. Weekly readings will have at least some focus on how the specific topic influences society and policy today. Students will also be asked to summarize how the conclusions yielded from their research assignments provide practical implications for policy-makers.

Learning Objective 5: The students will demonstrate an ability to identify a well-formulated question pertinent to peace studies and to employ the discipline's conceptual and methodological approaches in identifying reasonable research strategies that could speak to the question. This objective will primarily be reached with the student's research assignment. Students will be asked to develop an original research question that can be answered using methodological approaches common to the social sciences. Lectures will provide information for the various ways that students may study their research question.

Required Readings

All required readings and videos will be available on the course's BlackBoard site. You will need to purchase nothing for this course.

Earning Grades

You will be graded in two ways. The first is a set of quizzes over the assigned readings and lecture notes, which come primarily from the course readings. The purpose of these quizzes is to make sure that you are keeping up with the readings and learning the material. They are meant to be easy for those who are putting in the required time and effort. The second set of assessments comes from the various stages of your research assignment. This assignment will be due in various stages.

I will calculate your final grade based on the following:

Quiz 1: (date TBA): 10% of total grade

Quiz 2: (date TBA): 10% of total grade

Quiz 3: (date TBA): 10% of total grade

Quiz 4: (date TBA): 20% of total grade (cumulative final)

Research Assignment, Part 1: Introduction (due date TBA): 10% of total grade

Research Assignment, Parts 1-2: Literature review (due date TBA): 10% of total grade

Research Assignment, Parts 1-3: Theory (due date TBA): 10% of total grade

Research Assignment, Parts 1-4: Research design (due date TBA): 10% of total grade

The final 10% of your grade will be based on your attendance and participation. You will lose 20% of this grade for each unexcused absence (i.e., if you miss 5 sessions, the best you can do in the course is a B). You must do more than simply attend the sessions to receive your attendance/participation grade. I expect regular participation and will count you as absent if you fail to participate in the recitation sessions.

Final course grades will be based on the following scale:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

E = below 60

Midterm grades will be posted by [date TBA] and will be based on the grading criteria in the syllabus.

Absences

Students need to notify the professor of absences prior to class when possible. S.R. 5.2.4.2 defines the following as acceptable reasons for excused absences: (a) serious illness, (b) illness or death of family member, (c) University-related trips, (d) major religious holidays, and (e) other circumstances found to fit “reasonable cause for nonattendance” by the professor.

Students anticipating an absence for a major religious holiday are responsible for notifying the instructor in writing of anticipated absences due to their observance of such holidays no later than the last day in the semester to add a class. Information regarding dates of major religious holidays may be obtained through the religious liaison, Mr. Jake Karnes (859-257-2754).

Students are expected to withdraw from the class if more than 20% of the classes scheduled for the semester are missed (excused or unexcused) per university policy.

Students may be asked to verify their absences in order for them to be considered excused. Senate Rule 5.2.4.2 states that faculty have the right to request “appropriate verification” when students claim an excused absence because of illness or death in the family. Appropriate notification of absences due to university-related trips is required prior to the absence.

Missed Exams

Make-up exams (for missed examinations) will only be given for documented excused absences as defined by the University (Senate Rule V.2.4.2) and are scheduled as needed. A missed exam will result in a score of zero for that exam, unless an acceptable written excuse is presented within 48 hours of the missed examination.

Late Assignments

The due dates/times for each phase of your research assignment are listed above. You will immediately lose 20% off the assignment’s grade if it is not turned in before class ends on the listed date. You will lose an additional 20% off the assignment’s grade for each 24 hour period that the assignment is late (i.e., after 5:00pm on the 4th day, you will have a zero for the assignment).

Academic Integrity

Per university policy, students shall not plagiarize, cheat, or falsify or misuse academic records. Students are expected to adhere to University policy on cheating and plagiarism in all courses. The minimum penalty for a first offense is a zero on the assignment on which the offense occurred. If the offense is considered severe or the student has other academic offenses on their record, more serious penalties, up to suspension from the university may be imposed.

Plagiarism and cheating are serious breaches of academic conduct. Each student is advised to become familiar with the various forms of academic dishonesty as explained in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Complete information can be found at the following website: <http://www.uky.edu/Ombud>. A plea of ignorance is not acceptable as a defense against the charge of academic dishonesty. It is important that you review this information as all ideas borrowed from others need to be properly credited.

Part II of *Student Rights and Responsibilities* (available online <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html>) states that all academic work, written or otherwise, submitted by students to their instructors or other academic supervisors, is expected to be the result of their own thought, research, or self-expression. In cases where students feel unsure about the question of plagiarism involving their own work, they are obliged to consult their instructors on the matter before submission.

When students submit work purporting to be their own, but which in any way borrows ideas, organization, wording or anything else from another source without appropriate acknowledgement of the fact, the students are guilty of plagiarism. Plagiarism includes reproducing someone else's work, whether it be a published article, chapter of a book, a paper from a friend or some file, or something similar to this. Plagiarism also includes the practice of employing or allowing another person to alter or revise the work which a student submits as his/her own, whoever that other person may be.

Students may discuss assignments among themselves or with an instructor or tutor, but when the actual work is done, it must be done by the student, and the student alone. When a student's assignment involves research in outside sources of information, the student must carefully acknowledge exactly what, where and how he/she employed them. If the words of someone else are used, the student must put quotation marks around the passage in question and add an appropriate indication of its origin. Making simple changes while leaving the organization, content and phraseology intact is plagiaristic. However, nothing in these Rules shall apply to those ideas which are so generally and freely circulated as to be a part of the public domain (Section 6.3.1).

Please note: Any assignment you turn in may be submitted to an electronic database to check for plagiarism.

Student Conduct

Students are expected to maintain decorum that includes respect for other students and the professor, to regularly log in to the course, and to display an attitude that seeks to take full advantage of the educational opportunity. All students are expected to be prepared to work and actively participate in class activities.

Disabilities/ Medical Conditions

If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (Room 2, Alumni Gym, 257-

2754, email address jkarnes@email.uky.edu) for coordination of campus disability services available to students with disabilities.

Classroom Expectations

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. If you miss a class you are still responsible for the information covered, the teaching assistant and the instructor will not provide you with their notes. I expect all students who attend class to arrive on time and ready to start class. It is disrespectful to the instructor and your classmates to show up late or leave early. During class please refrain from all disruptive behavior, including (but not limited to) reading newspapers, sleeping, talking during lecture, cell phone and pager use, and insulting classmate or instructors.

Please be aware that the instructor's pet peeve is students packing up their stuff before class ends. I will never keep you late for class because it is rude to assume that my lecture is more important than your time. Likewise, I will consider it rude if you assume that packing up your items is more important than my lecture. In regards to cell phones, it is absolutely rude to text or talk on the phone during class. That being said, I understand that you have lives and issues that may require immediate attention (as do I). If something important arises, please simply remove yourself from class momentarily and take care of the issue.

Blackboard

This course utilizes Blackboard for both the lecture and recitation sessions. You are expected to check Blackboard regularly for all information pertaining to this course. At the end of the syllabus you'll find minimum technology requirements that you will need to access and use Blackboard. It is your responsibility to obtain these requirements.

Class Preparations

You are expected to come prepared to class. This means that you have (1) read the material being discussed, (2) listened to the podcast for each session (where applicable), and (3) watched the videos for each session (when applicable).

On the Blackboard page you will see many links for each session under "Lecture info." These links will take you to youtube pages. I want to be explicit about how these links are to be used. First, you will not be tested on anything from these links. The information required for your exams will come from the readings and lectures. Second, these links are meant to either (1) reinforce the topics covered in class, (2) spur you to think more deeply about the concepts from class, or (3) do both 1 and 2. Third, most of these links are not intended to provide you with objective information. You'll frequently see people explaining only one side of very complex issues (e.g., Ron Paul and Kofi Annan discussing their views on humanitarian interventions). I have zero interest in indoctrinating you to one point of view or another. These clips are simply meant to make you think.

Technology

In order to participate in this course, you will need access to a computer with the minimum hardware, software and internet configuration described at this site: :

<http://wiki.uky.edu/blackboard/Wiki%20Pages/Bb9%20Hardware%20and%20Software%20Requirements.aspx>

Note: the use of Internet Explorer is NOT recommended for use with Blackboard. Firefox is the recommended Internet browser for the course. You can download Mozilla Firefox (free) at this site: <http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/upgrade.html>

You will need to install a number of plugins on your computer. The links to the specific plugins required for this course can be also be found your course. If using a UK computer these plugins should be already installed.

To check if your browser has Flash, Adobe Acrobat Reader and QuickTime movie player, click this link: <http://wiki.uky.edu/blackboard/Wiki%20Pages/Browser%20Check.aspx>. If you do not have these, you can download them from this site.

To download Windows Media Player, click this link:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/player/10/default.aspx>

Students and faculty can download Microsoft Office Suite (including Word and PowerPoint) from this site: <https://download.uky.edu/>.

If you experience technical difficulties with accessing course materials, the Customer Service Center may be able to assist you. You may reach them at 859-218-HELP (4357) or by e-mail at helpdesk@uky.edu. Please also inform the course instructor when you are having technical difficulties.

The **Teaching and Academic Support Center** (TASC) website (<http://www.uky.edu/TASC/>) offers additional information and resources that can promote a successful “online course” learning experience. They may also be reached at 859-257-8272.

Course Schedule

Section 1:

What is Peace Studies? Why should we care? What makes Peace Studies a scientific enterprise?

Week 1: Conflict, Violence, and Peace

Readings:

1. Fisk and Schellenberg. 2000. "Shaping a Vision: The Nature of Peace Studies." Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press. Read preface and Chapter 1 only.
2. Katz, Neil H. 1989. "Conflict resolution and peace studies." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 504:14-21.

Week 2: The Scientific Approach to Peace Studies

Readings:

1. Groom, A. J. R. 1998. Paradigms in conflict: The strategist, the conflict researcher and the peace researcher. *Review of International Studies* 14:97-115.
2. Kay, Barbara. 2009. "Barbarians within the Gate." *National Post*.
3. Bawer, Bruce. 2007. "The Peace Racket." *City Journal*.
4. Horowitz, David. 2004. "One Man's Terrorist is Another Man's Freedom Fighter." *Students for Academic Freedom*.

Section 2: Causes of Conflict

Why do people, groups, and states fight?

Week 3: Conflict at the Individual Level I: Nature and Nurture

Quiz 1: Covering content from weeks 1-2.

Readings:

1. Mead, Margaret. 1990. "Warfare is only an invention—Not a biological necessity." *The Dolphin Reader*. 2nd edition. Douglas Hunt, Ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, pp. 415-421.
2. Barlett, Anderson and Swing. 2009. "Video game effects—Confirmed, suspected, and Speculative: A review of the evidence." *Simulation & Gaming* 49(3):377-403.
3. Silver, Eric. 2006. "Understanding the relationship between mental disorder and violence: The need for a criminological perspective." *Law and Human Behavior* 30(6):685-706.

Week 4: Conflict at the Individual Level II: Psychological Discontent

Readings:

1. Berkowitz, Leonard. 1989. "Frustration-Aggression hypothesis: Examination and reformulation." *Psychological Bulletin* 106(1):59-73.
2. LeBlanc, and Barling. 2004. "Workplace aggression." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 13(1):9-12.
3. Victoroff, Jeff. 2005. "The mind of the terrorist: A review and critique of psychological approaches." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49(1):3-42.

Week 5: Conflict at the Group Level I: Culture, Social Behavior, Conflict

Research Project Part 1 due

Readings:

1. Gates, Scott. 2002. "Recruitment and allegiance: The microfoundations of rebellion." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46(1):111-130.
2. Coughlin and Venkatesh. 2003. "The urban street gang after 1970." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29:41-64.
3. Pulliam, H. Ronald. 1982. "A social learning model of conflict and cooperation in human societies." *Human Ecology* 10(3):353-363.

Week 6: Conflict at the Group Level II: Stereotypes and Cognitive Distortion

Readings:

1. Rydgren, Jens. 2007. "The power of the past: A contribution to a cognitive sociology of ethnic conflict." *Sociological Theory* 25(3):225-244.
2. Schaller and Abesysinghe. 2006. "Geographical frame of reference and dangerous intergroup attitudes: A double-minority study in Sri Lanka." *Political Psychology* 27(4):615-631.
3. Fiske, Susan. 2002. "What we know now about bias and intergroup conflict, the problem of the century." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 11(4):123-128.

Week 7: Conflict at the Group Level III: Ethnocentrism

Readings:

1. DeSteno, Dasgupta, Barlett, and Cajdric. 2004. "Prejudice from thin air: The effect of emotion on automatic intergroup attitudes." *Psychological Science* 15(5):319-324.
2. Hammond, and Axelrod. 2006. "The evolution of ethnocentrism." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50(6):926-936.
3. Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. "The clash of civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72(3):22-49.

Week 8: Civil Violence I: Theories of Civil Violence and Revolution

Quiz 2: Covering content from weeks 3-7.

Readings:

1. Goldstone, Jack A. 2001. "Toward a fourth generation of revolutionary theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 4:139-187.
2. Senechal de la Roche, Roberta. 2001. "Why is collective violence collective?" *Sociological Theory* 19(2):126-144.
3. Snyder, Robert S. 1999. "The end of revolution?" *The Review of Politics* 61(1):5-28.

Week 9: Civil Violence II: Greed versus Grievances in Civil Conflict

Research Project Parts 1-2 due

Readings:

1. Regan and Norton. 2005. "Greed, grievance, and mobilization in civil wars." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49(3):319-336.
2. Blanton, Mason and Athow. 2001. "Colonial style and post-colonial ethnic conflict in Africa." *Journal of Peace Research* 38(4):473-491.
3. David and Gagne. 2006/2007. "Natural Resources: A Source of Conflict?" *International Journal* 62(1):5-17.

Week 10: Interstate Violence I: Power and Conflict

Readings:

1. Caprioli, Mary, and Peter F. Trumbore. 2005. "Rhetoric versus reality: Rogue states in interstate conflict." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49(5):770-791.
2. Waltz, Kenneth. 2000. "Structural realism after the Cold War." *International Security* 25(1):5-41.
3. Mowle, Thomas S. 2003. "Worldviews in foreign policy: Realism, liberalism, and external conflict." *Political Psychology* 24(3):561-592.

Week 11: Interstate Violence II: The Democratic Peace

Readings:

1. Oneal, John R., and Bruce Russett. 1999. "The Kantian peace: The pacific benefits of democracy, interdependence, and international organizations, 1885-1992." *World Politics* 52(1):1-37.
2. Maoz, Zeev, and Bruce Russett. 1993. "Normative and structural causes of democratic peace, 1946-1986." *American Political Science Review* 87(3):624-638.
3. Kadera, Kelly M., Mark J. C. Crescenzi, and Megan L. Shannon. 2003. "Democratic survival, peace, and war in the international system." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(2):234-247.

Section 3: Conflict Resolution

How can conflict be resolved? Is violence the answer...always, sometimes, or never?

Week 12: Peace and Justice

Quiz 3: Covering content from weeks 8-11.

Readings:

1. Bar-Tal, Daniel. 2000. "From intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis." *Political Psychology* 21(2):351-365.
2. Kaufman, Stuart J. 2006. "Escaping the symbolic politics trap: Reconciliation initiatives and conflict resolution in ethnic wars." *Journal of Peace Research* 43(2):201-218.
3. Dzur, Albert W. 2003. "Civic implications of restorative justice theory: Citizen participation and criminal justice policy." *Policy Sciences* 36(3/4):279-306.

Week 13: Violence and Nonviolence

Research Project Parts 1-3 due

Readings:

1. Galtung, Johan. 1965. "On the meaning of nonviolence." *Journal of Peace Research* 2(3):228-257.
2. Lipsitz, Lewis, and Herbert M. Kritzer. 1975. "Unconventional approaches to conflict resolution: Erikson and Sharp on nonviolence." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 19(4):713-733.
3. Schock, Kurt. 2003. "Nonviolent action and its misconceptions: Insights for social scientists." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36(4):705-712.

Week 14: Negotiation

Readings:

1. Lewicki, Roy J., Stephen E. Weiss, and David Lewin. 1992. "Models of conflict, negotiation and third party intervention: A review and synthesis." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 13(3):209-252.
2. Bell, Christine. 2006. "Peace agreements: Their nature and legal status." *The American Journal of International Law* 100(2):373-412.
3. Barak, Oren. 2005. "The failure of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, 1993-2000." *Journal of Peace Research* 42(6):719-736.

Week 15: Designing Political Institutions

Quiz 4: Covering content from weeks 12-15.

Readings:

1. Bellows, John, and Edward Miguel. 2006. "War and institutions: New evidence from Sierra Leone." *The American Economic Review* 96(2):394-399.
2. Morgan, Rhiannon. 2007. "On political institutions and movement dynamics: The case of the United Nations and global indigenous movement." *International Political Science Review* 28(3):273-292.
3. Gibson, Clark C., and Tomas Koontz. 1998. "When 'Community' is not enough: Institutions and values in community-based forest management in southern Indiana." *Human Ecology* 26(4):621-647.

Week 16: Finals Week

Research Project Parts 1-4 due on [date/time TBA]

Cumulative final exam on [date/time TBA]

Research Assignment Instructions

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT PART 1: DEVELOP A RESEARCH QUESTION AND INTRODUCTION

Overview:

The purpose of this assignment is to develop a question and introduction for your research assignment. We will discuss how to develop a research question in a general sense, and we'll read about how to develop a good research question. You need to develop a research question. You'll be working with this topic for the rest of the semester, so choose wisely. I strongly recommend that you begin by reviewing "Step 1: Choosing a Topic to Research" (on the following pages in this packet).

Directions:

Develop a research question. In developing the question, you should briefly explain why this is an interesting research question for both policy and academia. You should also draw upon at least 2 academic articles to situate your question in previous literature. Your question should have something to do with peace studies. I do not want to read about your views on abortion or why we should legalize pot, unless you can make clear links to peace studies. I've had student who think they know nothing about peace studies come up with amazing papers by thinking more carefully about their personal interests. For example, a student interested "only in sports" developed a great paper about how international sporting events (e.g., the Olympics) promote peace by promoting norms of peaceful interactions. Another interested "only in chemistry" considered how scientists working across borders make it easier to solve global health crises. It is honestly difficult to come up with a subject that cannot be connected with peace studies (including pot and abortion, to tell you the truth), so think creatively and broadly.

Technical Requirements

All parts of the cumulative assignment should be double-spaced, 12pt font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins. See below for guidelines specific to each part.

	Min. # of academic sources	Minimum page length	Maximum page length
Part 1	2	1	1.5
Part 2	4	1.5	2.5
Part 3	2	2	3
Part 4	1	1.5	3

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT 1: CHOOSING A RESEARCH TOPIC AND DEVELOPING AN INTRODUCTION

Background

The purpose of this handout is to provide practical guidance for developing a research question. This is the first stage in your research assignment.

Step 1: Choosing a Topic to Research

It is helpful to start with a broad topic and narrow it down to a theoretically and empirically interesting research question or puzzle. Keep in mind that you will spend many months developing and researching a topic for an independent study, senior seminar paper or directed research project, and possibly over a year for a senior honors thesis. So, being passionate about your research topic, while not necessary, does help you get through it.

Choosing a topic, and then developing a question to answer, is often the hardest part of research. Follow these guidelines to get started:

1. Begin by defining a general area of interest. This may come from a passion of yours, a topic you explored in a previous class, a topic you find puzzling or odd, or a required topic for a seminar.
2. Brainstorm. This is called the "starburst" phase of research because you are thinking about many issues within a general area of interest. You might begin reading up on various issues within your general area of interest that lead you to other ideas.
3. While the starburst phase is critical to develop your future research questions, you cannot get stuck here for too long. Depending on the type of project you're doing and the amount of time you have, you will need to make a decision on your topic. Students rarely begin with too narrow of a topic.
4. Hone in on specific aspects of your general interests and make a list. This is critical to developing a question or series of questions (which is your next step in the research process).

Step 2: Developing a Research Question: Turning a Topic into a Research Question

Almost every capstone research project begins with a research puzzle and governing question. The puzzle and the question guide the selection of the remainder of the steps in the research process: identifying appropriate theories, selecting sources of data and information, choosing methodologies, and ultimately, the findings of the project as appropriate for your discipline.

Research Puzzle

A research puzzle is a question or paradox about the causation or the consequences of a particular phenomenon. A "good" research puzzle is theoretically and empirically interesting. The puzzle should make a reader think and typically resonates with readers because a particular phenomenon does not appear to match theoretical expectations. A research puzzle also calls for specific measurable components to the question.¹

¹ TIP: Open-ended questions that begin with phrases such as, "how can we understand" or "how can we explain," often lead to vacuous answers. For example, almost anything qualifies as an answer to the question, "How can we

Governing Question

Your governing question is the question that directs the structure of your research project. It is the question, or questions, you ask to explain your research puzzle. Your governing question derives from competing observations, i.e., observations that appear to be in tension with one another and to indicate a puzzle, problem, discrepancy, mystery or surprise. As you begin to investigate and evaluate scholarly literature, you may need to return to your governing question and revise it. You may find, particularly when abroad, that it is not possible in practice to solve the puzzle or to answer the question. There may also be ethical considerations that limit the scope of your research question. This is all part of the research process.²

Your governing question informs your research, which, in turn, informs your governing question. Throughout each step of the research process, you need to be reading the literature, identifying the main arguments, evaluating the explanations of key scholars, and determining the practical and ethical constraints of your proposed research question. You might find out that you're asking the wrong questions and therefore need to revise your governing question. You might find a more interesting puzzle as you delve deeper into the existing literature. You might also find that someone else has already answered your specific question. Having a governing question allows you to be flexible in your research plan and to be open to the possibility of change.

Step 2a: How to Develop a Good Research Puzzle

Reading is the most important strategy for developing a good research puzzle. Skim a few articles in recent or bound issues of scholarly journals and see what scholars disagree about. "Review articles" in journals that discuss controversies or areas of study are excellent places to start. Look at the footnotes in your reading assignments for classes. Often times the footnotes or endnotes in an article will highlight existing theoretical or historical debates. Who is citing whom? Who always gets mentioned? Find a particular issue, event or process that sparks your interest. Figure out what the important debates are, and what arguments there are on the topic.

Disciplinary differences exist in identifying a good research puzzle. Your research puzzle and subsequent governing questions may be determined by the discipline you're working in. A challenge for interdisciplinary research, as in International Relations, is how to negotiate an acceptable approach with your advisors.

Keeping disciplinary differences in mind, a good research puzzle may arise from:

1. A historical controversy: Did something happen, or not? And why?
2. Contemporary policy debates: What is the best way to deal with a problem?
3. Theoretical debates: Is one side right or are both sides right?

understand the nuclear revolution?" A better approach might focus on tangible consequences of nuclear weapons or the threatened use of nuclear weapons in the foreign policy of a major state.

² TIP: Research plays a role in every step of the process from identifying a topic to defining a puzzle and developing a question. Once you have transformed your general topic interests into a specific puzzle, you can begin to list your research questions. Are there answers to these questions? What kind of evidence would be necessary to answer these questions? Are there constraints (practical and/or ethical) to investigating the answers? These issues will most likely drive which question, or questions, you decide to focus on for your research.

4. Accepted wisdom: Can you explain it in a better way?
5. From our own observations and experiences. Expect to spend almost as much time defining your puzzle and deciding how to handle it (methodologies) as you spend in researching and writing it!

Step 2b: Types of Research Questions

Disciplinary differences may also dictate the types of research questions you will ask. Keep in mind that no particular research question is "better" or "superior." The only criterion is "appropriate." And whether it is appropriate depends on your interests and what you want to discover. Research is about choices, and often the choice is yours.

Descriptive Questions:

Ask us to precisely describe general patterns, tendencies or a set of facts. A descriptive question is a "what happened" question. Example: What was the role of the UN in the 2003 invasion of Iraq? What does this answer tell us about the role of IOs in the international security environment?

Theoretical Questions:

Explore the full set of factors that cause a condition, event or process. An example is: "Why does democracy develop?" or "Why do states fight each other?" Look for different answers to this question in the literature and evaluate these theories or come up with your own.

Causal Questions

Ask whether a change in one variable will bring change to another variable. An example is "Does the development of capitalism lead to the development of democracy?" The hypothesis implicit in this question is that capitalism leads to democracy, and possibly that more capitalism leads to more democracy.

Predictive Questions

Ask what the likelihood is that X will occur. An example is: Will China try to reclaim Taiwan using military means? What factors will affect the outcome?

Policy Arguments

Ask whether one policy is better than another. How do the policies accomplish their objectives? Involves cost/benefit analysis. Are there bad side effects from the policies? Do they achieve the stated objective? Are there other side benefits? An example is: Should the US support an invasion of Iran if they continue their nuclear ambitions? Should the US ease sanctions on Cuba?

Normative Questions

Questions that ask about preferences or values about what ought to happen. An example is: "Should the US give up its nuclear weapons program?" or "Is torture sometimes necessary?"

Step 2c: Importance of Defining (Operationalizing) Terms

On the example in the previous section (4b) of whether capitalism leads to democracy, we need

to think of ways to measure and test those two variables. How will we measure the "degree" of capitalism so that we can tell if there is a relationship between it and democracy?

On the example of whether capitalism leads to democracy, we need to think of ways to measure and test those two variables. How will we measure the "degree" of capitalism so that we can tell if there is a relationship between it and democracy? How are we defining and measuring democracy so that we can tell if there is more or less of it? For the latter, we might consider the following measures of democracy: the existence of formal elections; the "free and fair" nature of the elections; the responsiveness of elected officials to public concerns; freedom of the press; voter turnout; development of certain civic values. Which one or ones we choose is determined by how we define democracy and what we really think it means. Each is a concrete way to measure democracy.






Example of refining topic from broad to narrow (too broad to manageable).

Below is a brief narrative of how I arrived at the research question for a paper I recently published.³

I was reading on CNN.com about the rivalry developed between Hugo Chavez and President Bush. The article mentioned evidence that Bush (via the CIA) had allegedly attempted to overthrow Chavez in a coup in 2002. This got me thinking about how international actors might influence regime change [**general issue**]. I decided to focus on the US as a potential change agent because there's plenty of information about US activities. I also decided to focus on Latin America for regime change because few external actors other than the US are relevant to the region [**narrowing the focus for practical considerations**]. A review of the literature revealed very little work in this area aside from a handful of specific case studies. This revealed a major hole in the literature – we don't know if international actors even matter for coup attempts [**narrowing the focus based on a review of the existing literature**]. This allowed me to develop a very simple research question: How do signals (relations) from the US to states in Latin America impact the likelihood of coup attempts?

³ This paper is available at: http://www.uky.edu/~clthyn2/thyne_JPR_coups.pdf

**RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT PART 1:
DEVELOP A RESEARCH QUESTION AND INTRODUCTION**

Criteria	Score (1-5)
Did the student develop a research topic that is sufficiently narrow for an article-length research project? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Did the student draw upon appropriate sources in formulating the research question? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Did the student adequately justify the importance of this question for both policy and academia? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Did the assignment meet the technical requirements (length, font, writing style)? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Does the assignment represent undergraduate-level work? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT PART 2: DEVELOP A LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview:

The purpose of this assignment is to develop a literature review for your research assignment. Our class discussion should give you a good background on developing a literature review, and you've read an excellent student example on how to develop a good literature review. For this assignment, you are asked to write a literature review for your research assignment. This should flow seamlessly from your previous assignment (writing a research question), as it does for the examples from published work.

Directions:







Begin by revising the earlier parts of the research assignment (question) based on your previous grading rubric. Next, develop a literature review. The review should flow seamlessly from your previous assignment (writing a research question), as it does for the examples you covered in class. The Knopf article explains "three contexts for literature reviews" (page 127). Your literature review should be geared towards the second context he explains (a preliminary step in a larger research project). Students usually write successful literature reviews by focusing on their independent and dependent variables. For example, if I'm interested in how civil wars impact education, I would begin by reviewing the literature on the impact of civil wars generally, which will likely focus on refugees, lower economic growth, and deaths. Next, I would review the literature that explains education, which will likely cover concepts ranging from curriculum and budgeting. The most critical step will be in critiquing each area of literature, which sets up the hole that your theory will seek to fill. It's quite likely that few have attempted to connect your IV with your DV, which sets up a very easy and interesting critique of the literature. This is what the student did in the excellent example, though it's certainly not the only way to conclude a good literature review.

Technical Requirements

All parts of the cumulative assignment should be double-spaced, 12pt font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins. See below for guidelines specific to each part.

	Min. # of academic sources	Minimum page length	Maximum page length
Part 1	2	1	1.5
Part 2	4	1.5	2.5
Part 3	2	2	3
Part 4	1	1.5	3

**RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT PART 2:
DEVELOP A LITERATURE REVIEW**

Criteria	Score (1-5)
Did the student adequately revise the previous assignment (research question) based on your feedback? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Does the literature review flow seamlessly from the research question (i.e., is the project culminating into something coherent)? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Does the literature review do a good job in reviewing the relevant work for the chosen topic? Are the most relevant pieces covered? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Is the literature review organized properly? Does it simply introduce a 'laundry list' of work (bad), or is it organized thematically (good)? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Did the assignment meet the technical requirements (length, font, writing style)? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Does the assignment represent undergraduate-level work? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT PART 3: DEVELOP A THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

Overview:

The purpose of this assignment is to develop a theoretical argument for your research assignment. You've seen examples of how previous students have developed theories. You've also learned about several of the major theoretical approaches to studying peace. The purpose of this project is to develop your own theory, which will provide a potential solution to your research question.

Directions:

Begin by revising the earlier parts of the research assignment (question and literature review) based on your previous grading rubric.

Next, develop a theory. The theory you develop should transition nicely from the earlier sections of this project, including the research question and the literature review. The paper you submit for this assignment will include the research question, the literature review, and the theory. Your theory should include at least 4 academic sources (from either journals or books).

The theory should be original, which means that you are providing an explanation that is not found elsewhere in the literature. You should, however, draw on similar arguments or examples to develop your argument. You should identify an explicit and testable hypothesis from your theory. For example, you might be interested in how the spread of technology impacts conflict between states. In your literature review, you might have found that people explain how technology impacts many things (e.g., economic growth, trade), but nobody has really examined the impact of technology on warfare. This sets up a hole for your theory. In your theory, you work to connect technology with the likelihood of warfare. Technology might improve the ability of leaders to communicate to solve disputes peacefully, which should lower conflict. Technology might also allow the media to play a stronger role of "watch guard" over the leadership, which might make them less likely to engage in conflict. Technology might also decrease the value of territory (versus economies dominated by agriculture, for example), which might decrease the likelihood of conflict. Many more ideas could come here. The point is that each provides a mechanism by which technology should decrease the likelihood of conflict...explaining these mechanisms and providing examples of these mechanisms is how you write a strong theory.

Technical Requirements

All parts of the cumulative assignment should be double-spaced, 12pt font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins. See below for guidelines specific to each part.

	Min. # of academic sources	Minimum page length	Maximum page length
Part 1	2	1	1.5
Part 2	4	1.5	2.5
Part 3	2	2	3
Part 4	1	1.5	3

**RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT PART 3:
DEVELOP A THEORETICAL ARGUMENT**

Criteria	Score (1-5)
Did the student adequately revise the previous assignment (research question and literature review) based on your feedback? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the theory flow seamlessly from the research question and literature review (i.e., is the project culminating into something coherent)? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the theory draw upon relevant work to justify the argument? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the theory use relevant examples to justify the argument? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the theory produce at least 1 testable hypothesis? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the assignment meet the technical requirements (length, font, writing style)? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does this assignment represent undergraduate-level work? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	<input type="checkbox"/>

RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT PART 4: DEVELOP A RESEARCH DESIGN

Overview:

The purpose of this assignment is to develop an empirical test of the hypothesis (or hypotheses) developed in your theoretical argument. This is the next step in your research assignment. You've seen examples of how previous students and scholars have developed and presented their empirical analyses. Now it is your turn to set up a research design to provide tests of your hypothesis.

Let me be clear that I do not expect your design to be anything near as sophisticated as what you have seen in published work. As scholars, we spend literally months or years developing robust tests of our hypotheses. Here, I expect to see that you understand the basic concepts of empirical testing of hypotheses. You are also not required to actually perform any empirical tests. Rather, you should set up a design that could be performed if you had adequate time and funding.

Directions:

Begin by revising the earlier parts of the research assignment (question, literature review and theory) based on your previous grading rubric.

Second, describe your research design. This should include a discussion of your (1) unit of analysis, (2) dependent variable, and (3) independent variable(s). You are not expected to include control variables in your tests, though you might want to discuss a couple of control variables that might be relevant for future research. As you discuss your research design, be sure to explain how the variables match up with the concepts from your theory. For example, if your theory predicts that high levels of state wealth should make coups less likely, you need to briefly explain why your variable (e.g., GDP/capita) is a good indicator of the theoretical concept (e.g., state wealth).

Third, explain how you could perform tests of your hypotheses. You can explain either a qualitative or quantitative approach. Quantitative approaches are expected to be very simple tests, such as crosstabulations, scatterplots, etc. For example, if my hypothesis is that higher levels of democracy should increase state wealth, I might explain how a correlation between the FreedomHouse indicator and GDP would provide evidence of this relationship. If I were taking a qualitative approach, I might explain how I could choose 6 states (3 democracies and 3 non-democracies), and then examine state levels of wealth in each country.







Technical Requirements

All parts of the cumulative assignment should be double-spaced, 12pt font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins. See below for guidelines specific to each part.

	Min. # of academic sources	Minimum page length	Maximum page length
Part 1	2	1	1.5
Part 2	4	1.5	2.5
Part 3	2	2	3

Part 4	1	1.5	3
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**RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT PART 4:
DEVELOP A RESEARCH DESIGN**

Criteria	Score (1-5)
Did the student adequately revise the previous assignment (research question, literature review, and theory) based on your feedback? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Did the student discuss the unit of analysis? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Did the student identify the dependent variable and explain why this measure captures his/her theoretical concept? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Did the student identify the independent variable and explain why this measure captures his/her theoretical concept? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Did the student make a clear link between his/her research design and the theory/hypotheses presented in the previous section? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Did the assignment meet the technical requirements (length, font, writing style)? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	
Does this assignment represent undergraduate-level work? Comments: [professor/TA comments here]	