

Research Methods and Ethics

ANTH-3500 (3 credits)

Belgrade, Budapest, and Vienna: Comparative European Perspectives on Conflict and Democracy

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Course Description

The Research Methods and Ethics (RME) course provides theoretical, conceptual and practical tools for identifying and conducting field research and/or an internship in the Balkans. Emphasis is placed on grappling with methodological and ethical challenges in learning and researching issues related to peace and conflict studies in this part of the world, or in entering an internship site. Students will discuss particular ethical considerations in studying and researching topics pertaining to post-conflict transformation in the post-Yugoslav region. The course prepares students to record, interpret, and analyze information obtained from primary sources by developing students' better understanding and awareness of cultural differences and their own positionality.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Practice standard qualitative research methods in social sciences in order to write a final paper based on field-work/internship, including the formation of research question, observation, interviewing, data-processing, as well as self-reflection on researcher's/intern's position, responsibilities, role and experience in the field;
- Design a project that makes use of unique human and physical resources available (i.e. ISP advisers, internship mentors, scholars in local think-tanks, activists in local civil society organizations, etc.);
- Demonstrate ability to critically analyze other cultural settings, also including their own;
- Define and deal with ethical questions that arise from conducting internship and/or field research, particularly in post-conflict/transitional societies, from the position of

outsiders;

- Reflect on benefits, as well as shortcomings of conducting independent research/ internship within strictly defined time-frame, and produce recommendations accordingly;
- Discuss country-specific findings regarding peace and conflict analysis in the Balkans and Central Europe.

Assignments Overview

1. **Class Participation:** The depth and quality of students' participation in all aspects of the course is considered for evaluation, including participation in lectures, discussions, exercises, etc.
2. **Literature Review Assignment:** Critical reading, synthesis and presentation of the selected literature and its connection to the selected research question.
3. **Interview Guide Assignment:** Based on the research question identified in the Literature Review Assignment, students should prepare questions for an in-depth semi-structured interview and identify and justify their target population.
4. **ISP/ Internship Final Proposal:** A progressively sophisticated series of 5-6-page (double spaced) proposals, which will have been developed in stages and supervised by the RME lecturer.

Class Participation

Adequately prepare for class sessions. Actively contribute to discussions. Complete all required reading.

Literature Review Assignment

In this assignment, you should:

For this assignment, students will review, analyze, and synthesize relevant literature about their research topic. In the Introduction part of the paper, students will situate their inquiry/research problem in the broader global and local contexts, state their research question/s, highlight the purpose and significance of the study, and provide a roadmap for the reader to follow the flow of the paper. In the Literature Review/Conceptual Framework part of the paper, students will present a concise synthesis of the relevant literature, identify gaps in the literature, and highlight how their study will contribute to the knowledge lacuna.

Page limit: no longer than 4 pages (Font 12 double space).

Please make sure you follow the guidelines provided in the Research Methods Class and Literature Review Handout.

Interview Guide Assignment

Create an interview guide for a set of semi-structured, recorded interview in English. Your interview guide should include the following:

1. Go back to the topic and research question, as defined in your Literature Review Assignment; (Note: your RQ here should take into account the comments you received on your Literature Review assignment). In one paragraph clearly define your topic and your RQ.
2. Explain your choice of participants in your study/interviewees? How will this choice will help you best collect data regarding your RQ?
3. A list of topics you will cover in the interview (at least 5)
4. A list of Interview Questions you will use/follow (at least 6)
5. A potential participant in your study to interview?

Please, submit your assignment as a single Word document.

ISP/Internship Final Proposal

Submit your research/ internship proposal following the structure and guidelines as discussed throughout the course (detailed guidelines will be available in a handout).

Grading

Students are expected to attend all classes and actively participate in class discussions, individual and group fieldwork activities and to complete all assigned readings and written work. Active listening, engaged questioning, and full participation as well as demonstrated sensitivity to and respect for cultural practices of host communities are expected of all students. The grade percentages for all assignments is as follows:

Assignment	Final grade
Class Participation	10%
Literature Review Assignment	25%
Interview guide Assignment	25%
Final ISP/ Internship Proposal	40%

Grading Scale:

94-100%	A	Excellent
90-93%	A-	
87-89%	B+	
84-86%	B	Above Average
80-83%	B-	
77-79%	C+	
74-76%	C	Average
70-73%	C-	

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67-69%	D+	
64-66%	D	Below Average
below 64	F	Fail

Expectations and Policies

- Show up to the class prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level and quality of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, submitted via Canvas, and done in accordance with specific requirements.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers', local constituents engaged with during the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen different opinion and consider other perspectives with respect.
- In addition to readings, which will be assigned for each of the units, it is also your responsibility to keep up to date with current events. At a minimum, you are required to read the *Balkan Insight* news website (<http://www.balkaninsight.com>); it is also recommended that you read daily newspapers available on-line in English (list available on Canvas). Familiarity with current events and a working knowledge of day-to-day political issues will be needed in the Thematic Seminar and will also help you in the process of choosing your ISP topic.
- Specific additional readings will be recommended in line with your particular interests and independent study topics.

Please note that **late submissions** will affect the **final grade**.

All assignments must be completed on the due date by a specified time. Any assignments received after the specified time will be considered late. Late assignments will be docked 5% (of the total possible grade, i.e., a 95% becomes a 90%), for each day, or portion of a day, late.

Students should notify the course lecturer, at or before the time of collection that an assignment will be late, otherwise a grade of '0' may be given. All assignments must be satisfactorily completed in order to receive credit for the class.

Exceptions to this policy will only be made for serious and substantiated medical reasons brought to the attention of the course lecturer BEFORE the due date/time. This policy applies to ALL components of the academic program.

Please see the SIT Study Abroad student handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, academic warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.

Course Schedule and Readings

Module 1: Introduction to social sciences research methods

This module introduces students to the nature, elements and processes of social science research. The students will explore how ontological and epistemological issues affect the choice of research strategies and learn about the rationale of and similarities and differences between quantitative and qualitative research. The module will allow students to explore different research designs, focus in particular on case studies and comparative research.

Sessions may include:

- Course Introduction: Undergraduate academic research/internship
- What is empirical field-based research
- Ontological and epistemological issues in research
- Research strategies: qualitative vs. quantitative research
- Case study design and Comparative design

Required Readings:

- ✓ Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*, 4th edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapters 1-3.
- ✓ Guidelines for Internship Abroad: <https://forumea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Guidelines-for-Internships-Abroad-17-for-web.pdf>
- ✓ Flick, U. (2009). Qualitative research: Why and how to do it. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (pp. 12-17). London: Sage.

Recommended Readings:

- ✓ Hancké, Bob (2009). *Intelligent Research Design: a guide for beginning researchers in the social sciences*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapters 2 and 3.
- ✓ Gerring, John (2004). "What is a case study and what is it good for?" *American Political Science Review* 98 (2): 341-354.
- ✓ Lijphart, Arend (1971). 'Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method', *American Political Science Review* 65 (3): 682-693.
- ✓ King, Gary, Robert. Keohane & Sidney Verba (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry*, Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, Chapter 1.
- ✓ Landman, Todd (2008). *Issues and methods in comparative politics: an introduction*, 3rd ed, London: Routledge.

Module 2: Research question and literature review

NOTE: This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

This module will discuss the importance of concise/clear articulation of a research question when entering a research project. Students will discuss ethical challenges and the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness of limitations in asking certain questions. The module will provide guidance for students on how to develop their literature review. The students will discuss the importance and criteria of a strong literature review.

Sessions may include:

- Choosing and forming research questions
- Cultural sensitivity in the process of formulating research questions
- Literature review

Required Readings:

- ✓ Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*, 4th edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapters 2, 4 and 5.
- ✓ Flick, U. (2009). Chapters 5 and 9. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (pp. 98-104). London: Sage.

Module 3: Data collection

This module will explore qualitative methods for data collection. The students will discuss different forms of interviewing in qualitative research such as unstructured and semi-structured interviewing. They will further be introduced to focus groups as a method of data collection. The module will look at the differences between interviews and focus groups explaining the significance and rationale of each of these methods. The students will learn how to develop interviews and focus groups guidelines and choose their participants when conducting research in a post-conflict society. Finally, the students will learn about observation as a method of data collection.

Sessions may include:

- Interviewing as a method for data collection - Types of interviews
- Focus groups as a method of data collection: when and how focus groups should be conducted
- Developing interview and focus groups guidelines
- Observation as a method for data collection in a field-based empirical research

Required Readings:

- ✓ Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*, 4th edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapters 20 and 21.
- ✓ Fridman, O. (2016). Memories of the 1999 NATO Bombings in Belgrade, Serbia. *Südosteuropa. Journal for Policy and Society*, 64, 4, 438-459.
- ✓ What is an interview guide? <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/computer-science/interview-guide#:~:text=An%20interview%20guide%20is%20simply,not%20getting%20too%20low%20level.>

Recommended Readings:

- ✓ Flick, U. (2009). Chapter 13. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (pp. 150-173). London: Sage.
- ✓ Flick, U. (2009). Chapters 19-20. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Module 4: Data analysis

This module examines approaches to qualitative data analysis. The module will explore the differences between analytic induction and grounded theory focusing on coding as a key operation for data analysis in qualitative research. The students will learn about thematic and narrative analysis as the most common approaches to qualitative data analysis.

Sessions may include:

- Qualitative data analysis
- Coding
- Thematic and narrative analysis

Required Readings:

- ✓ Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*, 4th edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 24.
- ✓ Fridman, O. (2020). Peace Formation from Below: the 'Mirëdita, dobar dan!' Festival as an Alternative to Everyday Nationalism. *Nations and Nationalism*, 26, 2, 1-23.

Recommended readings:

- ✓ Flick, U. (2009). Chapter 17. *An introduction to qualitative research* (pp. 222-238). London: Sage.
- ✓ Mayring, Philipp (2000) 'Qualitative Content Analysis', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1:2.

Module 5: Entering ISP/internship: ethics in practice

This module considers ethical dilemmas and challenges in conducting research and/or internship in a post-conflict society. The students will discuss how their identities and positions (insider/outsider) may affect their experiences in the field. The module will cover the guidelines and requirements for the submission of an ISP and Internship proposals and prepare the students for emerging in the academic and experiential learning during their ISP/Internship month. While the ISP students emerge in the development of their research proposals, internship students will have a chance to prepare for their job interviews and develop their resume and cover letters.

Sessions may include:

- Outsider/Insider Position: Ethical Concerns in research and/or internship
- Reflexivity of the researcher: develop your standpoint (positionality)
- Submitting your final ISP /Internship Proposal: guidelines and requirements

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- Framing the Internship Experience: Develop Your Resume and Cover Letter

Required Readings:

- ✓ Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*, 4th edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 6.
- ✓ Greenberg, J. (2010). "There's Nothing Anyone Can Do about It": Participation, Apathy, and "Successful" Democratic Transition in Postsocialist Serbia. *Slavic Review*, 69(1), 41–64.
- ✓ Sweitzer, Frederick and King, Mary (2013) *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional and Civic development in Experiential Learning (4th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole (Chapters 6 and 7).

Recommended readings:

- ✓ Clark, J. N. (2012). Fieldwork and its Ethical Challenges: Reflections from Research in Bosnia. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 34, 3, 823-839.
- ✓ Fontan, V. (2012). *Decolonizing Peace*. Lake Oswego: Dignity Press. pp. 13-22.
- ✓ Zupančič, R. (2017). Challenges of Academic Fieldwork In Post-Conflict Societies. November 13. *Globalizing Southeast Europe Research Blog*. <https://eu-civcap.net/2017/07/01/challenges-of-academic-fieldwork-in-post-conflict-societies/>
- ✓ Marku, H. (2016). An Awkward Conversation about Foreigners in Kosovo. *Prishtina Insight*. August 16. <http://prishtinainsight.com/awkward-conversation-foreigners-kosovo/>
- ✓ Goldsworthy, V. (2002). "Invention and In(ter)vention: The Rhetoric of Balkanization." In Bjelić D., & O. Savić (Eds). *Balkan as Metaphor*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.