

DS495: Research Methods in Strategic Studies
G2 (0755-0905), WH5300

As of: 2 AUG 2020

Course Overview

This is a research methods course designed to support the interdisciplinary nature of the research-based courses in the Defense & Strategic Studies Program, DS496: Strategic Studies Thesis and DS497: Strategic Studies Capstone. In this course, students will learn different research methodologies for the strategic studies field and develop effective writing skills in a seminar format.

Early in the course, thesis students will choose a research topic related to the Defense & Strategic Studies field; capstone students will be assigned a client-based project for their capstone research (taking individual preferences into consideration). Thesis students must also select faculty members from across the institution to serve as their thesis advisors as part of the thesis program. Assignments and evaluations are geared toward preparing students to design and execute their own rigorous research projects; students will be able to build on the work they do in this class for their thesis and capstone projects in the following semester.



Contact Information

Course Director Information:

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Additional Instruction (AI):

We encourage all students to make use of AI and to contact us frequently by email with any questions or concerns. These are valuable ways to clarify confusing concepts, ask questions about readings, or receive feedback on your performance. It is often easiest to reply to longer or complex questions in person or by video chat. You may drop by the Course Director's office, but a great way to check availability and sign up for AI is to use [this link](#), which he checks regularly. To meet with another instructor, please coordinate directly with them.

Course Objectives and Requirements

Course Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, each cadet will:

1. Demonstrate the ability to find and evaluate relevant literature related to Defense and Strategic Studies.
2. Understand how to use qualitative and quantitative methods for different research projects.
3. Expand his/her knowledge of scholarship relevant to Defense and Strategic Studies, including a deeper knowledge of research methods and another substantive topic of interest.
4. Formulate an effective research methodology for evaluating a selected topic.
5. Further develop effective research, writing, and communication skills.

Grading Standards and Requirements:

You must complete all graded requirements to receive credit for this course. If you anticipate that you will not be able to meet requirements well or on time, or that you will be unable to attend class, you must make arrangements with the course director as early as possible and NLT two working days before the deadline. If the requirement pertains only to your small group, you must make arrangements with your capstone/thesis advisor NLT two working days in advance of the requirement. You are responsible for all materials covered in class, so obtain notes from a classmate when absent or see me or your capstone/thesis advisor, as appropriate.

Consistent with standards throughout the Department of Military Instruction, your grade in this course will reflect your ability to demonstrate your achievement of the above course objectives through various course events and requirements. I use the standard DMI grading scale, with the following qualitative equivalents. If you have questions about how you are meeting these qualitative standards, please feel free to talk to me.

Grade	Percentage	Qualitative Interpretation
A+	97.0-100	Mastery:
A	93.0-96.9	No major problems in either style or substance
A-	90.0-92.9	Applies concepts in innovative ways
B+	87.0-89.9	Proficient:
B	83.0-86.9	Solid understanding of concepts; few errors
B-	80.0-82.9	Generally clear and effective communication
C+	77.0-79.9	Acceptable:
C	73.0-76.9	Basic understanding of concepts; some significant errors Some problems with communication or organization
C-	70.0-72.9	Below Standard:
D	67.0-69.9	Questionable understanding of concepts Lack of clarity in communicating ideas
F	< 67.0	Unacceptable/Failing: No clear understanding of basic concepts Little or no effort to meet assignment parameters

Graded Events:

Please note the deadlines for assignments on the course schedule, below. Closely read the “DS495 Thesis and Capstone Assignment Sheet” for detailed event expectations. You should also review the expectations for DS496/7 when planning the associated assignments.

Research Approval Forms/Client Memo	50 points
CITI Training	50 points
Concept Paper	200 points
Methodology Exercise	150 points
Methodology Board	100 points
Final Thesis/Capstone Prospectus	350 points
<u>Participation</u>	<u>100 points</u>
TOTAL	1,000 points

A Note on Participation:

Research methods are best learned through practice. Therefore, your active participation is critical to success in this course. We expect students to come to class having already read and critically engaged with the assigned readings, and ready to express reasoned thoughts and questions. Student are evaluated on the quality (not necessarily quantity) of their participation. Quality participation includes—but is not limited to—answering tough questions, responding thoughtfully to classmates’ comments, asking relevant questions, and making a good faith effort during in-class activities. I do not expect you to come to class having mastered the concepts from the lesson’s readings; I do expect you to be able to show you tried to.

To prepare for class, be sure to take notes while you read. I have provided lesson objectives for each class topic. The readings provide guidance for answering these questions so you should read with these in mind and come to class ready to reference ideas from the readings. I have tried to select readings that are a mix of “how-to” guides and interesting (note: not necessarily good) examples of specific research design concepts. Think about how the examples in the readings illustrate the core methodological concepts, or about what you would have done differently if you were the researcher. Remember: you are only getting an introduction to methodologies here: I encourage you to ask questions or challenge the authors we read. If you have any questions or concerns about how to do participate or read effectively, please come and talk to me—the sooner, the better.

In addition, we may require you to attend and provide brief responses to 1–2 Modern War Institute events as part of your participation grade. We will give you as much notice as possible when these events arise. Similarly, you should let us know early if you cannot attend.

Late Submissions:

The standard DMI penalty of a 15% grade reduction per 24-hour period after the deadline applies for all assignments if you have not made advance arrangements for an extension. Additionally, DMI requires that I submit a Cadet Observation Report for every late assignment.

Required Texts:

We will frequently use the following texts. The first two are available through West Point, or you can find them on Amazon. All other readings (except *one* in Lesson 24) are available on the course Blackboard page. If there are any changes or additions to required readings throughout the semester, I will email you these at least 24-hours before the relevant class. You must bring readings with class during their assigned lessons.

1. Soeters, Joseph, Patricia M. Shields, and Sebastiaan Rietjens, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Military Studies*. London: Routledge, 2014.
2. Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 8th ed. Edited by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Additional Policies

Academic Integrity and Citation Style:

All sources used in your written work must be documented using the most recent version of the Chicago Manual of Style's "notes and bibliography" guide, which can be found in the Turabian text or online, here: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch14/ch14_toc.html. This citation style requires the use of footnotes throughout the paper, as well as a "Works Cited" list or "Bibliography" at the end. You should also consult the relevant sections of all relevant USMA policies, including DAW, for further guidance on documentation. Failure to cite and format properly according to the Chicago notes-bibliography style may result in a reduced grade, *regardless of whether such failure constitutes an honor violation*. If you have questions about how to properly cite, please feel free to contact the Course Director.

Remember that any idea that is not yours and not common knowledge (not just direct quotes) must be cited. This is good scholarly practice and an important component of learning research methodology. Scholarship and research are about having a conversation. Citations allow readers to know what ideas you are engaging with and where they should look if they want more information about something.

Common knowledge, for the purpose of this course, includes in-class discussion and lectures, or conversations/information provided by the instructors—unless the instructor is citing a source used in class. In other words, analysis and discussion during class or with the instructors do not need to be cited. However, summaries of ideas from readings do need to be cited, and much of what we discuss in class can probably be traced back to a reading. When in doubt, ask the instructor.

Multiple Submission of Academic Work:

You may not submit your own work—whether in part or in whole—that has been submitted for credit in this course or any other course. Any submission of prior work—even your own—may be considered plagiarism. However, I welcome efforts to build on ideas you have

developed in other classes, and I strongly encourage you to meet with your thesis/capstone advisors and the DS495 instructors to discuss how to successfully submit new work that builds on prior work. You may, of course, reuse elements from your research proposal and concept paper for your final prospectus.

Regrade Policy:

You have the right to request a regrade on any assignment worth at least 20% of your overall grade. To request a regrade, you must 1) Review instructor feedback and your notes to develop specific questions or points of disagreement; 2) After waiting at least 24-hours and no more than 1-week after receiving your grade, meet with your instructor to discuss the basis of your disagreement; 3) If you still believe a regrade is warranted, submit a brief memo explaining the basis of your disagreement within 48-hours of the meeting. The instructor will then ask two disinterested, qualified faculty members to regrade the assignment. The final grade will be an average of all three grades. In other words, your grade may go up or down. Note that penalties for late submission are not subject to revision through this process.

Technology:

Research consistently shows that the use of technology—including typed notes—is detrimental to learning. However, because readings are often online, you may use your laptop or a tablet in class to reference the readings and take notes, with instructor approval. The instructors maintain the right to change this policy either temporarily or for the duration of the semester.

Keys to Success

1. Seize the initiative. This course is highly self-directed/group-directed. Your success and enjoyment will correlate with how quickly you get out in front of your project.
2. Think critically. A real research project requires you to build on others' work and contribute something new. This is difficult, but crucial. See above and don't be shy about asking for help.
3. Pick something you will enjoy. You are going to spend a lot of time with this project, and research design can seem dry. You will learn more if you are engaged with a topic that really piques your interest.

Course Syllabus and Schedule

Block I—Choosing a Topic

LSN 1 (18 AUG): Introduction to Research Methods

Lesson Objectives: Familiarize yourself with the purpose and structure of the academic research process, as well as the course requirements.

Required Readings (~30 pages):

- a. DS495 Syllabus
- b. DSS Thesis Program & DSS Capstone Program (skim the one you are less interested in)
- c. Turabian, Ch. 1, "What Research Is and How Researchers Think About It," 5-9.
- d. Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton University Press, 1994), 7-13.

LSN 2 (20 AUG): Stakeholder Analysis and Research Questions

Lesson Objectives: Understand clients and their needs. Learn how to formulate and pick a good research question.

Required Readings (42 pages)

- a. Turabian, Ch. 2, "Moving from a Topic to a Question to a Working Hypothesis," 10–18.
- b. Katherine Hibbs Pherson and Rudolph H. Pherson, *Critical Thinking for Strategic Intelligence* (Los Angeles: CQ Press, 2013), Ch. 1, "Who are the Customers," and Ch. 2, "What are the Key Questions," 3–18.
- c. Michael Horowitz, "What is Policy Relevance," *War on the Rocks*, June 17, 2015.
- d. Shields and Whetsell in Soeters et al., Ch. 27, "Doing Practical Research and Publishing in Military Studies," 312–318.

LSN 3 (24 AUG): Literature Reviews

Lesson Objectives: Understand the purpose of a literature review. Learn how to identify relevant, reliable sources and develop the skills to write a literature review.

Required Readings (36 pages)

- a. Jeffrey Knopf, "Doing a Literature Review," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39: 1 (2006): 127–131.
- b. Turabian, Chapter 3, "Finding Useful Sources" and Ch. 4, "Engaging Sources," 25–42.
- c. Jeffrey Dastin, "Amazon scraps secret AI recruiting tool that showed bias against women," *Reuters*, October 9, 2018.
- d. Danielle Lupton, *Reputation for Resolve* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), 1–6 and 14–16.

LSN 4 (28 AUG): NO CLASS— MEET WITH YOUR ADVISORS/GROUPS

Lesson Objectives: Identify a thesis advisor OR determine client problems. Develop initial guidance and project topics.

No Required Reading**LSN 5 (1 SEPT): Concepts**

Lesson Objectives: Learn how concepts fit into the research process. Identify best practices for making choices about concept formation at the basic, secondary, and indicator levels.

Required Readings (26 pages)

- a. Gary Goertz, *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide* (Princeton University Press, 2006), 3–11, 30–39, and 62–65.
- b. Jason Lyall, *Divided Armies* (Princeton University Press, 2020), 8–14.

LSN 6 (3 SEPT): Hypothesis Formation and Analytical Approaches

*****Research Topics and Advisor Approval Forms Due*****

Lesson Objectives: Learn how to generate testable hypotheses from a broader research question. Identify the differences between different types of arguments. Explain how to craft a theoretical argument.

Required Readings (40 pages)

- a. Turabian, Ch. 2, “Moving from a Topic to a Question to a Working Hypothesis,” and Ch. 5, “Planning Your Argument,” 18–24 and 51–65.
- b. Craig Parsons, *How to Map Arguments in Political Science* (Oxford University Press, 2007), “Introduction,” 3–20.

LSN 7 (9 SEPT): Hypothesis Formation and Developing Arguments

Lesson Objectives: Practice developing arguments and test out possible hypotheses. Understand what makes a good hypothesis.

Required Readings (~20 pages)

- a. John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 60–73.
- b. Ben-Ari in Soeters et al., Ch. 26, “Theory building in research on the military,” 304–310.

LSN 8 (11 SEPT): NO CLASS—MEET WITH YOUR ADVISORS/GROUPS

Lesson Objectives: Meet with advisors and begin organization of sources and receive literature review guidance.

No Required Reading**LSN 9 (16 SEPT): Writing Your Draft/Report**

Lesson Objectives: Identify the basic structure of a research prospectus and report.

Required Readings (20 pages)

- a. Turabian, Ch. 6, “Planning a First Draft,” and Ch. 7, “Drafting Your Report,” 62–83.

Block II—Research Design

LSN 10 (18 Sept): Research Ethics (Guest Speaker: Karen Peck, Human Protection Administrator)

*****CITI Training Due*****

Lesson Objectives: Familiarize yourself with the ethical challenges of different types of research in strategic studies. Understand the purpose of human subjects protection and mechanisms for supervising and conducting ethical research. Learn how bias and ethical problems can creep into research of even well-meaning scholars.

Required Readings (~20 pages)

- a. Maria Konnikova, "The Real Lesson of the Stanford Prison Experiment," *The New Yorker*, June 12, 2015.
- b. Jelena Subotic, "Ethics of archival research on political violence," *Journal of Peace Research* (2020).
- c. Ben-Ari in Soeters et al., Ch. 4, "Reflexivity," 32–35.

LSN 11 (22 SEPT): Methodologies, Causal Inference, and Errors

Lesson Objectives: Identify the advantages and disadvantages of different methodologies/approaches to research. Understand the key challenge of making causal inference and recognize the common errors or threats to inference, including selection effects, reverse causality, and omitted variable bias.

Required Readings (~18 pages)

- a. Jessica D. Blankshain and Andrew L. Stigler, "Applying Method to Madness: A User's Guide to Causal Inference in Policy Analysis," *Texas National Security Review* 3:3 (2020).

LSN 12 (24 SEPT): Case Studies and Selection

Lesson Objectives: Identify the advantages and disadvantages of different strategies of case selection and comparison. Understand the difference between a single case study and case comparisons, and familiarize yourself with approaches to these approaches.

Required Readings (24 pages)

- a. John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), Ch. 3, "Overview of Case Selection," 39-52.
- b. Carrie Lee, *The Politics of Military Operations*, PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 2015, selections

LSN 13 (28 SEPT): Dominant Indicators and Military Analysis

Lesson Objectives: Understand the utility and limitations of the dominant indicator approach that Gartner describes.

Required Readings (30 pages)

- a. Scott Gartner, *Strategic Assessments in War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 1–10 and 41–49.
- b. Gregory A. Daddis, *No Sure Victory* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), Ch. 10, "Conclusion."

LSN 14 (2 OCT): NO CLASS—MEET WITH YOUR ADVISORS/GROUPS

Lesson Objectives: Meet with your advisor to work on your project. Confirm expectations for your concept paper. Consider what methodological approaches you should use.

No Required Readings

LSN 15 (8 OCT): Historical Analysis and Archival Research

*****Concept Paper Due*****

Lesson Objectives: Learn how to effectively use archives, memoirs, oral histories, and other historical documents to do strategic studies research.

Required Readings (33 pages)

- a. Baudet and Sibul in Soeters et al., Ch. 7, "Historical Research in the Military Domain," 67–76.
- b. Kleinreesink in Soeters et al., Ch. 14, "Research 'The Most Dangerous of All Sources,'" 153–163.
- c. Brooks in Soeters et al., Ch. 15, "Scrutinizing the Internet in Search of 'Homegrown' Terrorism," 165–175.
- d. Melissa Wilde, "Just Your Average Full Service Secret Archive," *Trajectories* 19:2 (2008), 4–6.

LSN 16 (13 OCT): Process-Tracing

Lesson Objectives: Understand the difference between process-tracing and other types of qualitative analysis. Familiarize yourself with the basic techniques of process-tracing, including the four types of tests described by Bennett.

Required Readings (20 pages)

- a. Vennesson and Wiesner in Soeters et al., Ch. 9, "Process tracing in case studies," 92–101.
- b. Andrew Bennett, "Process Tracing and Causal Inference," in *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, eds. Henry. E. Brady and D. Collier, 207–219 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).

LSN 17 (15 OCT): NO CLASS—MEET WITH YOUR ADVISORS/GROUPS

Lesson Objectives: Discuss your concept paper and understand what steps you need to focus on to move forward with your project.

No Required Readings

LSN 18 (19 OCT): Interview Research

Lesson Objectives: Identify the value of structured and unstructured interviews in collecting and interpreting data, and their utility to strategic studies research. Understand how to minimize bias and other threats to inference when using interviews as a research method.

Required Readings (32 pages)

- a. Moore in Soeters et al., Ch. 11, "In-depth Interviewing," 116–127.

- b. Erik Bleich and Robert Pekkanen, "How to Report Interview Data," in *Interview Research in Political Science*, ed. Layna Mosley, 84–105 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

LSN 19 (23 OCT): Ethnography

Lesson Objectives: Understand the advantages, disadvantages, and challenges of ethnographic research. Consider how to ethically wear dual hats as soldiers and scholars.

Required Readings (42 pages)

- a. Moelker in Soeters et al., Ch. 10, "Being one of the guys or the fly on the wall?" 104–114.
- b. Carol Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals," *Signs* 12:4 (1987), 687–718.

LSN 20 (27 OCT): Surveys and Experiments

Lesson Objectives: Identify the threats to causal inference to be wary of when using surveys and experiments. Understand how to design effective surveys and experiments for use in strategic studies research.

Required Readings (23 pages)

- a. Griffith in Soeters et al., Ch. 16, "Survey research in military settings," 179–192.
- b. Rose McDermott, "Experimental Methods in Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science* 5 (2002), 31 – 41.

LSN 21 (29 OCT): Statistical Research I: Data Collection

Lesson Objectives: Learn the basics of data collection and coding for statistical analysis. Familiarize yourself with what a quantitative dataset looks like.

Required Readings (21 pages)

- a. Muller-Wille in Soeters et al, Ch. 5, "Doing Military Research in Conflict Environments," 40–51.
- b. Reiter et al., "A Revised Look at Interstate Wars, 1816–2007," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60:5 (2016), 956–963 and 966–973.

LSN 22 (3 NOV): Statistical Research II: Using Inferential Statistics

Lesson Objectives: Understand how to select variables and use simple statistical methods to test different hypotheses. Understand the difference between substantive and statistical significance.

Required Readings (32 pages)

- a. Philip H. Pollock III, *The Essentials of Political Analysis* (Los Angeles, CA: CQ Press, 2016), 156–163 and 183–194.
- b. William M. Bannon, Jr., *The 7 Steps of Data Analysis* (New York, NY: StatsWhisperer Press, 2013), 37–38, and 46–56.

LSN 23 (5 NOV): Statistical Research III: Basics of Applied Regression

Lesson Objectives: Familiarize yourself with how to read a regression table. Understand how to critique statistical evidence.

Required Readings (~25 pages)

- a. Steven V. Miller, "What Do We Know About British Attitudes Toward Immigration," March 23, 2020. Available at <http://svmiller.com/blog/2020/03/what-explains-british-attitudes-toward-immigration-a-pedagogical-example/>. **(read pages 10–15, skim the rest)**
- b. Philip H. Pollock III, *The Essentials of Political Analysis* (Los Angeles, CA: CQ Press, 2016), 201–203.
- c. James Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97:3 (2003), 75–90. **(skim)**

Block III—Putting it All Together

LSN 24 (10 NOV): Presenting/Displaying Data

*****Methodology Exercise Due*****

Lesson Objectives: Learn best and worst practices for clearly presenting your research through tables, charts, figures, and presentations.

Required Readings (~17 pages)

- a. Turabian, Ch. 8, "Presenting Evidence in Tables and Figures," 84–97.\
- b. Echo Rivera, "Effective Slides for Your Job Talk and Beyond," *The Professor is In*, Nov. 10, 2017. Available at <http://theprofessorisin.com/2017/11/10/effective-slides-for-job-talk-and-beyond/>.

LSN 25 (13 NOV): Peer Review

Lesson Objectives: Understand the role of peer review in the research process. Demonstrate the ability to provide constructive feedback to peers.

Required Readings (~30)

- a. Turabian, Ch. 12, "Learning from Comments on Your Paper," and Ch. 13, "Presenting Research in Alternative Forums," 124–133.
- b. Miller et al, "How to Be a Peer Reviewer," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 46:1 (2013), 120–123.
- c. Two of your classmates' concept papers! (to be provided by the instructors)

No Required Readings

LSN 26 (17 NOV): NO CLASS—MEET WITH YOUR ADVISORS/GROUP

Lesson Objectives: Understand your advisor's expectations for your prospectus and prepare for your Methodology Board.

LSN 27 (24 NOV): NO CLASS—METHODOLOGY BOARDS

Lesson Objectives: Present your prospectus draft and understand how to integrate feedback from faculty and peers into your final product.

No Required Readings

LSN 28 (30 NOV): NO CLASS—METHODOLOGY BOARDS

Lesson Objectives: Present your prospectus draft and understand how to integrate feedback from faculty and peers into your final product.

No Required Readings

LSN 29 (4 DEC): NO CLASS—MEET WITH YOUR ADVISORS/GROUP

Lesson Objectives: Summarize and understand the feedback you received at your Methodology Board. Prioritize issues to be addressed in the prospectus and issues to be addressed next semester. Develop a plan to address those issues and continue your research and writing.

No Required Readings

LSN 30 (8 DEC): Transitioning to the Next Stage and FAQs

Lesson Objectives: Set the conditions for a successful and smooth transition to DS496/DS497. Provide feedback to instructors about this course and additional skills you would like to learn.

No Required Readings