

INTA 6003 Syllabus

Empirical Research Methods, Section A, 3 Credits

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Anjali Thomas

Email: athomas424@gatech.edu

General Course Information

Description

This course will introduce the application of scientific methods to the study of international affairs, broadly construed. In it, you will learn the purposes of social science, and what distinguishes a scientific approach to social phenomena from other approaches. We will cover the key elements of a good social science theory and understand how to formulate and measure important social science concepts. We will learn how to ensure that our samples are representative of the populations we wish to study and how to design high quality surveys. Finally, we will examine the approaches social scientists use address causal questions of interest in international affairs, covering both quantitative methods - with a specific focus on ordinary least squares – as well as qualitative methods. The primary aim of this course is to help you understand, interpret, critique, and communicate a wide range of empirical social science research relating to international affairs.

Pre- &/or Co-Requisites

While there are no formal course pre-requisites, you are expected to have basic statistics skills coming into the program. Specifically, you are expected to have a basic understanding of the following concepts:

- Basic Probability and Probability Distributions
- Basic Statistics: Mean, Median, Mode, Variance, Standard Deviation, Correlation
- Basic Algebra and Calculus: Linear Models, How to Take a Derivative

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- A. Apply research skills to address problems in the field of international affairs.

- B. Apply basic statistical skills to include quantitative and qualitative methodologies in academic and professional contexts within the field of international affairs, science and technology/international security/global development
- C. Demonstrate knowledge of principal contemporary global challenges in the field of international security
- D. Apply concepts relating to measurement and operationalization in the course of understanding and critiquing social science research
- E. Understand the logic behind the major methods used to answer social science research questions
- F. Read and interpret basic regression tables, and read and interpret qualitative research

Required Course Materials

Keohane, King, and Verba 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton Univ. Press).

Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research* 2nd Edition. (Cambridge Univ. Press).

We will also make use of electronic journal articles. To access electronic journal articles, go to the electronic Georgia Tech Library Catalog (<https://library.gatech.edu>) and search for the relevant article.

Grading Policy:

ASSIGNMENT	DESCRIPTION	% OF OVERALL MARK
Homework x 3	Completion of three homeworks to be distributed on Canvas.	30%
Group Project – Survey Design	A group assignment. The submission will involve answering questions regarding your survey design on the document provided on Canvas.	15%
Midterm – Research Design Assignment	An assignment that will walk students through the initial steps of developing a research design	20%
Final – Article Review Assignment and Presentation	A 4-5 page (double-spaced) article review to be completed in accordance with guidelines posted on Canvas and a presentation on your chosen article	20%

ASSIGNMENT	DESCRIPTION	% OF OVERALL MARK
	to be delivered in accordance with guidelines posted on Canvas.	
Class Participation	Oral participation during class sessions and performance on any in-class written exercises	15%

Description of Graded Components

A. Homeworks

There will be three homework assignments to be completed during the semester. Instructions for each assignment will be distributed on Canvas. While it is encouraged that students ask questions within their cohort, all submitted work should be completed individually. Homework assignments should be submitted on Canvas by the required due date. Email submissions will not be accepted.

B. Group Project – Survey Design

Students will work in small groups of 3 to 4 students in total to design a survey research protocol that addresses a research question in the field of international affairs. The main assignment --- submitted as a group --- involves answering questions about different aspects of the survey and its design. Students will also individually fill out a mandatory peer evaluation form as part of the assignment. Peer evaluations will be factored into the individual student's grade.

C. Mid-Term Assignment – Research Design

The midterm assignment will involve an exercise that will guide you through the steps involved in formulating your own research design. You will use the concepts and skills learned in the first part of the course to a) identify a research question 2) develop a theory 3) state hypotheses 4) discuss how you would operationalize the hypotheses, and 5) describe and defend a strategy for causal inference. The assignment will involve responding to the specific prompts provided.

D. Final Assignment – Article Review and Associated Seminar Presentation

The final assignment involves writing an article review as well as delivering an associated seminar presentation. Your article review and seminar presentation must closely follow the instructions provided on Canvas.

E. Class Participation and In-Class Exercises

The class participation mark will be based on a combination of your in-class oral participation, participation on online discussion boards on Canvas, as well as on the quality of your performance on written exercises that you will be required to complete in class. *Assessments of in-class oral participation will be based on your regular willingness to answer questions posed by the professor or by your peers.* Your answers are not expected to be correct, but they should reflect thoughtfulness and preparation in terms of having done the readings. Many of the in-class exercises will involve small group work and you are expected to be an active contributor to your group's discussions.

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

- A 90-100%
- B 80-89%
- C 70-79%
- D 60-69%
- F 0-59%

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

Since the success of the course depends heavily on student involvement and participation, you are expected to participate in every class session barring an excused absence (see definition below). Although it is recognized that occasionally it may be necessary for students to be absent from scheduled classes for reasons that do not fall under the conditions of an excused absence, students are responsible for all material covered in their absences, and they are responsible for the academic consequences of their absences. Students should discuss planned absences with their instructors as soon as possible after the beginning of an academic term. Work missed may be made up at the discretion of the instructors. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a lowering of the participation grade.

Excused Absences

Excused absences are those that are a result of a verified illness or emergency or “approved Institute activities”. In order to have an illness or emergency situation verified, you are responsible for contacting the Office of the Dean of Students as soon as possible to report the medical issue or emergency, providing dated documentation from a medical professional and requesting assistance in notifying their instructors. The medical documentation will be handled confidentially within the Office of the Dean of Students and will inform a decision as to whether communication with instructional faculty is appropriate. Once I receive this documentation, you should contact me to discuss a plan for making up missed participation, presentations, and other assignments. Absences due to participation in approved Institute activities will also be excused provided they are discussed with me at least a week in advance. At this time, we will discuss a plan for making up missed participation, presentations, and other assignments.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech’s Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Policies on the Use of Generative AI

Any generative AI tools used to produce any assignments should be clearly acknowledged as indicated by the instructor. This includes not only content directly produced by a generative AI tool but also when a generative AI tool is used in the process of composition (for example, for brainstorming, outlining, or translation purposes). The student should cite any content generated by an AI tool as s/he would when quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing ideas, text, images, or other content made by other people. See this [article](https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt) for how to cite AI properly (<https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>). Using generative AI tools in the course without adhering to these principles, or when it is specifically prohibited by the instructor, may be considered an infraction of the Georgia Tech Honor Code subject to investigation by the Office of Student Integrity.

Group Work and Collaboration and Use of Outside Resources

While you are allowed – and even encouraged to consult and collaborate with your classmates regarding your assignments, the work you turn in must be your own. Any use of outside resources must be acknowledged within the assignment and cited appropriately.

Assignment Turn-In

All assignments should be submitted online on Canvas in the designated area for the assignment by the specified due date. Please see below for the policy on late assignments.

Policy on Late Assignments

Late assignments are discouraged and will incur penalties except in the event of an illness or emergency (verification will be requested from the Office of Student Life as in the case of excused absences). Any major scheduling conflicts – including those that arise due to participation in “approved Institute activities” - should be discussed with me *at least one week before the assignment due date*. The penalty for a late assignment will be a deduction of 2% of the assignment mark for a paper handed in on the due date but after the time specified and an additional 2% of the assignment mark for each subsequent day that the paper is not turned in. An assignment turned in more than one week late will receive a mark of zero unless in the event of a documented illness or emergency. *A missed case study presentation or discussion co-lead session will also receive zero marks unless in the event of an illness or emergency verified by the Office of Student Life (see above policy on excused absences).*

Course Website and Communication

I will be conducting the course using Canvas. Please make sure that you set up necessary alerts so you are up to date on important course announcements posted on Canvas. You are expected to have read any Canvas announcements within 24 hours of posting them. Email is the best way to contact me outside of class. Unless specifically stated otherwise, I will **not** accept electronic copies of assignments via email. All assignments must be submitted in the designated place on Canvas.

Graduate Student Academic and Professional Success Resources:

A list of resources for graduate students is given on the [Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Education](#) website. Specific information for [current graduate students](#) includes

- [Academic Resources](#) such as the Communications Center, Language Institute, Library, Catalog, Registrar, resources for conducting research, Advocacy and Conflict Resolution resources, and how to manage unexpected situations that may impact your academic performance;
- [Student Resources](#) such as Campus Services, Child Care/Family programs, Health & Wellness, Career Services, and the Student Resource Guide; and
- [Professional Development](#) *such as the programming from the Career Center and other professional development resources and events"*

Student Well-Being:

At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A [comprehensive list](#) of wellness related resources has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being ([student-resource-guide \(gatech.edu\)](#))

