

Substantial Research Paper Syllabus for International Economic Relations Students

Winter 2018 Edition

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The Substantial Research Paper (SRP) is the integrative project for master's degree students. The purpose of the SRP is to further develop your expertise in an issue of concern to the field of international economic relations and to demonstrate your ability to conduct theoretically informed analytical research. The knowledge and skills that you use in the research and writing of your SRP are evidence of your substantial knowledge of the field in which you are earning your degree.

Faculty supervisors for the SRP must be faculty members who are primarily affiliated with the IER program at SIS. These are Prof. Daniel Bernhofen, Claire Brunel, Randall Henning, Miles Kahler, Jennifer Poole, Arturo Porzecanski, and Stephen Silvia. **Before choosing an advisor, please verify that the professor will be teaching that semester.** It is also possible to work with SIS faculty outside of IER in special circumstances. Such outside arrangements must be approved by Prof. Porzecanski.

I. SRP REQUIREMENTS

CONTENT: The SRP asks and answers an analytical research question based on a topic within the field of international economic relations. You should be able to connect the research you are undertaking to the themes and concerns of scholarship in the areas covered by the IER field, such as international trade, international finance, foreign direct investment, or international political economy.

The SRP must contain both a review of existing scholarly literature and original research critiquing or contributing to that literature. The research must be empirical (i.e., you must have evidence to support the claims you make), though it need not be statistical. Whatever your methodology is, it must be explicit and explained. Your work must be distinguishable from superficial description or policy

prescription by the explicit use of a standard social science model (testing a falsifiable hypothesis) or an alternative approach grounded in a non-positivist epistemology.

SIS regulations require a fifty-page paper (usually formatted double-spaced) plus a bibliography. The bibliography may include web-based resources, but you must pay careful attention to the quality and reliability of online material.

Your review of the literature must include many scholarly books and/or articles appearing either in print or as e-books or e-journals available through the American University library website. However, we urge you to actually go to the library to examine print materials, because not everything is available online (especially books).

The SRP must not be a polemic in which you simply argue a point of view you have already adopted, without careful attention to the historical, policy or empirical context and evidence. A good rule of thumb is that if you think that you already know the answer, what you are doing is not research. To encourage an open-minded attitude, your SRP research should begin with an empirical question or puzzle to which you do not know the answer.

QUALITY OF THE WRITING: Recipients of Master's degrees in international affairs are expected to be skilled writers. Consequently, students writing SRPs are held to a high standard for the quality of their prose. The SRP must be logically organized, grammatically correct, and stylistically pleasing.

The SRP must follow an appropriate academic format. Students should use *The Chicago Manual of Style*, and preferably the author-date, inline citation system common in social science, though some will be directed otherwise by their faculty supervisor. Regardless of format, full bibliographic information, including URLs to online documents and sites, must be provided at the end of the paper.

GRADING: SRP grades will be based on the quality of the research and the quality of the writing. Students must receive a grade of B or better for the SRP to satisfy graduation requirements. Students are strongly encouraged to agree from the start with their faculty supervisor at which point (preferably, at least three (3) weeks before the finalized version is due) a first or partial draft will be submitted, to elicit comments and suggestions.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering for an SRP, you acknowledge your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will

be taken should such violations occur. Please see your faculty supervisor if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to your approach or requirements for this course. More information on academic integrity can be found at <http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.cfm>

Students are strongly advised to keep copies not just of their finalized SRP, but also of all research notes and rough drafts. An unfortunate truth of the Information Age is that the ease of copying digitized materials makes plagiarism and other violations easier. The result has been increased faculty scrutiny of student's work to verify that academic integrity has been upheld. Therefore, keep copies of your research materials and drafts so that you will be able to document the work you have done, in case a question is raised about sources for or the originality of your research.

HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH: If any portion of your research involves human subjects as defined by AU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects, your research must receive prior approval by the IRB. To determine whether your research requires IRB approval or to begin the IRB review process, please speak with your faculty supervisor and consult <http://www.american.edu/irb/>

SUGGESTED READINGS FOR RESEARCH DESIGN

Jose L. Galvan and Melisa C. Galvan, *Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 7th Edition (Routledge, 2017).

Chris Hart, *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Research Imagination* (Sage, 2018).

David Freedman, Robert Pisani, and Roger Purves, *Statistics*, 4th Edition (W.W. Norton, 2007).

G. S. Maddala and Kajal Lahiri, *Introduction to Econometrics*, 4th Edition (Wiley, 2009).

M. Ling Pan, *Preparing Literature Reviews: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 5th Edition (Taylor & Francis, 2015).

James H.W. Stock and Mark W. Watson, *An Introduction to Econometrics*, 3rd Edition (Pearson, 2015).

Robert K. Yin, *Applications of Case Study Research*, 3rd Edition (Sage, 2011).

II. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Copies of final SRPs must be e-mailed to the IER Program Coordinator, Sarah Nerette, at ier@american.edu. We keep a record of completed SRPs and we use anonymous versions for our own assessment processes.

III. STEPS IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The substantial research project involves a series of steps:

1. INITIAL PRESENTATION OF TOPIC: At the beginning of the semester, meet with your faculty supervisor to discuss your topic. If your project involves human subjects, please read the information and requirements at <http://www.american.edu/irb/index.cfm>

2. PROPOSAL: You must prepare a proposal that is an extended outline (5-10) pages that lays out: your research question; a discussion of its importance; a discussion of the literature you intend to review; an explanation of your methodology; the evidence you are considering to answer your question; a preliminary bibliography; and a schedule of expected completion dates for the stages of the research project.

3. OUTLINE: Consult with your faculty supervisor about the degree of detail he or she wishes in the outline.

4. ROUGH DRAFT: Students will submit a rough draft to their faculty supervisor for feedback by the agreed deadline.

5. FINAL PAPER: Students must submit the final paper by the deadline specified by the faculty supervisor in order to be eligible to graduate that semester.

III. TIMELINE: We recommended that you plan your SRP topic **during the semester before your registration.**

To complete your SRP in the Fall Semester, please adhere to the following dates:

1. Initial Presentation: No later than the second week of September (the week of Labor Day).
2. Proposal and outline: No later than the third week of October.
3. Rough draft: By early- to mid-November (two weeks before Thanksgiving).
4. Final Version: Before last day of class.

To complete your SRP in the Spring Semester, please adhere to the following dates:

1. Initial Presentation: No later than the last week of January.
2. Proposal and outline: No later than the third week of February.
3. Rough draft: By mid- to late-March (No later than two weeks after Spring Break).
4. Final Version: Before last day of class.