

International Courts and Global Power

RESEARCH ARTICLE WORKSHOP

Summer 2026

bgpopescu.net/teaching/research_workshop/research_ir_law.html

Details

Instructor: Bogdan Popescu

Program Duration: 15 Weeks (9 mentor meetings)

Structure: Nine one-on-one, remote weekly sessions for 1 hour

Course Description

This course is an intensive, hands-on introduction to writing a research article in the social sciences, with a focus on political science, international relations, or international law. By the end of the course, students will have developed and refined a complete research paper through a series of iterative assignments and structured feedback. The course integrates methodological training, substantive readings, and practical writing skills. Course content is divided into weekly units covering both technical skills and theoretical content. This course is demanding, but it's designed to give you the tools to write your first publishable article. I am here to guide you every step of the way.

This course introduces students to the politics of international courts through four thematic modules: law and power in world politics, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the legitimacy of international justice. Students begin by examining why states create and submit to international courts through Abbott et al., Alter, and Steinberg, then turn to the ICJ and the question of who litigates and who wins—engaging the quantitative evidence on judicial bias from Posner and de Figueiredo, the determinants of jurisdiction acceptance from Powell and Mitchell, and developing-country participation in international adjudication from Davis and Bermeo. The course then explores the ICC and the politics of prosecution, asking why the Court's docket has concentrated so heavily on Africa, through Bosco, Ba, and the most recent quantitative evidence on whether the ICC targets the powerful from Krmaric. It concludes with the study of legitimacy, bias, and backlash through Voeten's evidence on the impartiality of international judges, Hillebrecht's framework for understanding backlash against the international justice regime, and Zvobgo and Chaudoin's experimental evidence on how publics evaluate overlapping international and domestic courts. Throughout, students acquire foundational quantitative skills in R and apply them to data on international disputes, court cases, and state characteristics, culminating in an empirical research paper that connects theories of law and power to the actual distribution of international court cases.

Assessment will be based on the progressive development of a research project, including submission of a research question, proposal, outline, draft, and final paper, as well as in-class presentations. No

prior experience with coding or statistics is required, but students should be ready to engage with challenging material in a supportive, step-by-step environment.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Develop a research question and transform it into a publishable paper.
- Master essential academic tools including reference managers (e.g., JabRef), markdown-based word processing, and professional presentation software.
- Write each section of a paper: abstract, introduction, argument, methods, literature review, findings, discussion, and conclusion.
- Conduct basic quantitative analysis in R, including data merging, regression modeling, and visualization.
- Understand and apply core methods in social science research, including qualitative methods, difference-in-differences (DiD), and regression discontinuity design (RDD).
- Create a personal academic website using GitHub Pages to showcase their work.

Weekly Presentations

Students will deliver a 20-minute presentation on a topic assigned in advance. Presentations should include a clear introduction, main points, and conclusion. Use visual aids (e.g., slides) effectively, ensuring text is legible and visuals are relevant. Practice beforehand to stay within the time limit and maintain a confident, professional tone. Be prepared to answer 2-3 questions from peers or the instructor during and after the presentation. Remember to cite your sources and avoid reading verbatim from slides or notes.

In addition to summarizing the key arguments or findings, your presentation should include critical analysis of the material. Highlight what the author does not address, the limitations of their research, or potential problems in their analysis or methodology. Think about how the research could be improved, expanded, or connected to broader themes discussed in class, and incorporate these insights into your presentation.

Each week, you will give a short presentation on that week's readings. You can download the [template for the paper presentation at this link](#).

How weekly homework works: after each meeting, your homework has two components: (1) the slide decks listed under the current week, and (2) the readings listed under the *following* week. The readings must be completed before the next meeting — they are the basis of your weekly presentation and of our discussion.

Research Paper

The research paper should provide an extensive background on the topic and a clear contribution to the literature. The analysis should include some quantitative analysis to test hypotheses. The statistical part of the research project involves using data (collect and prepare the data to run quantitative analyses and produce graphs) and specialized software (R). For international courts topics, rich publicly available data include the ICJ's docket of contentious cases, the ICC's public records of situations and cases, Erik Voeten's United Nations General Assembly voting data, the Correlates of War project, World Bank development indicators, and V-Dem measures of political regimes.

The final paper should be approximately 15–20 pages double-spaced (somewhat shorter or longer is acceptable depending on the target journal’s requirements) and should engage critically with the literature, citing at least 5–10 papers in the field.

Research Paper Template

Use the following as a starting point for writing your own research paper:

- [Research Paper Template](#) | [Replication](#)

Research Paper Examples

This section provides two complete examples of finished research papers and presentations. These are not templates to copy, but illustrations of different research designs. Use them to see how arguments, methods, and findings can be structured and communicated in practice.

- **Quantitative Example**
 - [Research Paper \(Quantitative\)](#) | [Replication Files](#)
 - [Presentation \(Quantitative\)](#) | [Replication Files](#)
- **Qualitative Example**
 - [Research Paper \(Qualitative\)](#) | [Replication Files](#)
 - [Presentation \(Qualitative\)](#) | [Replication Files](#)

Recommended Optional Books

Writing Articles

Coppedge, M. 2012. *Democratization and Research Methods*. Cambridge University Press.

Halperin, S., & Heath, O. (2012). *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Punch, K. F. 2014. *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Van Evera, S. 1997. *Guide to methods for students of political science*. Cornell University Press.

Statistics

Cunningham, Scott. 2021. *Causal Inference: The Mixtape*. Yale University Press. <https://mixtape.scunning.com>.

Ismay, Chester, and Albert Y. Kim. 2019. *Statistical Inference via Data Science: A Modern Dive into R and the Tidyverse*. Chapman and Hall / CRC. <https://moderndive.com/>.

Huntington-Klein, Nick. 2021. *The Effect: An Introduction to Research Design and Causality*. Boca Raton, Florida: Chapman and Hall / CRC. <https://theeffectbook.net/>.

Laudet, Elena and Imai, Kosuke. 2023 *“Data Analysis for Social Science.”* Princeton: Oxford University Press.

Warne, Russel T. 2018. *“Statistics for the Social Sciences. A General Linear Model Approach.”* London: Cambridge University Press.

Causal Inference

Bauer, Paul C. and Dennis Cohen. 2023. *Applied Causal Analysis (with R)* <https://bookdown.org/paul/applied-causal-analysis/>.

Keyes, David, R for the Rest of Us: 2025. *A Statistics-Free Introduction* <https://book.rfortherestofus.com>. No Starch Press

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Lovelace, Robin, Nowosad, Jakub, and Jannes Muenchow. 2021. *Geocomputation with R*. <https://bookdown.org/robinlovelace/geocompr/>.

Mieno, Tara. 2023. *R as GIS for Economists*. <https://tmieno2.github.io/R-as-GIS-for-Economists/>.

Week 1

- Intro to the Course - 2026-06-06

Homework 1: Research Design and Presentation: Go over:

- [The Topic and Research Question Slides](#)
- [Quarto Presentations Slides](#)

Homework 2: Statistics and R Programming: Go over:

- [Operations and Objects in R Slides](#)
- [Intro to Statistics Slides](#)

Homework 3: Readings: Read the Week 2 readings (listed below) and prepare a short presentation on them for the Week 2 meeting.

Week 2

Why International Courts? Law and Power in World Politics - 2026-06-11

- Abbott, Kenneth W., Robert O. Keohane, Andrew Moravcsik, Anne-Marie Slaughter, and Duncan Snidal. 2000. "The Concept of Legalization." *International Organization* 54 (3): 401–419. [[PDF](#)]
- Alter, Karen J. 2014. *The New Terrain of International Law: Courts, Politics, Rights*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. C1 [[PDF](#)]
- Steinberg, Richard H. 2002. "In the Shadow of Law or Power? Consensus-Based Bargaining and Outcomes in the GATT/WTO." *International Organization* 56 (2): 339–374. [[PDF](#)]

Homework 1: Research Design and Presentation: Go over:

- [Essential Tools for Writing a Paper Slides](#)
- [The Abstract and the Argument Slides](#)

Homework 2: Statistics and R Programming: Go over:

- [Working with Data in R Slides](#)
- [Dplyr and Basic Visualization Slides](#)

Homework 3: Readings: Read the Week 3 readings (listed below) and prepare a short presentation on them for the Week 3 meeting.

Deadline: Syllabus - 2026-06-12

Deadline: Research Question - 2026-06-19

Week 3

The ICJ: Who Litigates and Who Wins? - 2026-06-20

- Posner, Eric A., and Miguel F. P. de Figueiredo. 2005. "Is the International Court of Justice Biased?" *Journal of Legal Studies* 34 (2): 599–630. [[PDF](#)]
- Powell, Emilia Justyna, and Sara McLaughlin Mitchell. 2007. "The International Court of Justice and the World's Three Legal Systems." *Journal of Politics* 69 (2): 397–415. [[PDF](#)]
- Davis, Christina L., and Sarah Blodgett Bermeo. 2009. "Who Files? Developing Country Participation in GATT/WTO Adjudication." *Journal of Politics* 71 (3): 1033–1049. [[PDF](#)]

Homework 1: Research Design and Presentation: Go over:

- [Literature Review Slides](#)
- [Writing the Research Proposal:](#) question, hypotheses literature, methods

Homework 2: Statistics and R Programming: Go over:

- [Visualizing Data Distributions in R Slides](#)
- [Modeling Relationships Between Variables Slides](#)

Homework 3: Readings: Read the Week 4 readings (listed below) and prepare a short presentation on them for the Week 4 meeting.

Deadline: Research Proposal - 2026-06-26

Week 4

The ICC and the Politics of Prosecution - 2026-06-27

- Bosco, David. 2014. *Rough Justice: The International Criminal Court in a World of Power Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. C1 [[PDF](#)]
- Ba, Oumar. 2020. *States of Justice: The Politics of the International Criminal Court*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. C1 [[PDF](#)]
- Krcmaric, Daniel. 2023. "Does the International Criminal Court Target the American Military?" *American Political Science Review* 117 (1): 325–331. [[PDF](#)]

Homework 1: Statistics and R Programming: Go over:

- [Interpreting Binary and Multivariate Regression Models Slides](#)
- [Differences-in-Differences Slides](#)
- [Data Visualization in R - 1 Slides](#)

Homework 2: Readings: Read the Week 5 readings (listed below) and prepare a short presentation on them for the Week 5 meeting.

Deadline: Research Paper Outline - 2026-07-03

Week 5

Legitimacy, Bias, and Backlash - 2026-07-04

- Voeten, Erik. 2008. "The Impartiality of International Judges: Evidence from the European Court of Human Rights." *American Political Science Review* 102 (4): 417–433. [[PDF](#)]
- Hillebrecht, Courtney. 2021. *Saving the International Justice Regime: Beyond Backlash against International Courts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. C1 [[PDF](#)]
- Zvobgo, Kelebogile, and Stephen Chaudoin. 2025. "Complementarity and Public Views on Overlapping International and Domestic Courts." *Journal of Politics* 87 (3): 1028–1044. [[PDF](#)]

Homework 1: Research Design and Presentation: Go over:

- [Methods Slides](#)
- Writing the Paper Outline

Homework 2: Statistics and R Programming: Go over:

- [Regression Discontinuity Design Slides](#)

- [Data Visualization in R - 2 Slides](#)
- [Data Visualization in R - 3 Slides](#)

Week 6

Replication: Difference-in-Differences - 2026-07-11

Homework 1: Research Design and Presentation: Go over:

- [Findings, Discussion, Intro, and Conclusion Slides](#)
- [Making a website on GitHub: `username.github.io`](#)

Deadline: Milestone - 2026-07-17

Week 7

Replication: Regression Discontinuity Design - 2026-07-18

Homework: Write:

- Work on Research Design, Data, Research Methodology

Week 8

Paper Development - 2026-07-25

Homework: Write:

- Work on Research Design, Data, Research Methodology
- Finish First Draft

Deadline: First Draft - 2026-07-31

Week 9

Paper Feedback - 2026-08-01

- Writing an academic CV and publishing on your personal website
- CV template:

– [tex file](#) (open the tex file in quarto and compile after updating it with personal details)

– [pdf file](#)

Homework: Write:

- Revise Paper: Methods
- Write academic CV and post on website

Week 10

Paper Development - 2026-08-08

Deadline: Revised Final Paper - 2026-08-21