Supervised Undergraduate Research Experience (ROCCA Lab)

PSCI 3895-02 Topics in International Relations: Collaborative Research  
Vanderbilt University  
Fall 2019  
  
Mondays 2:10 – 3:25PM  
Stephenson 1 (MATH) 120

Syllabus Updated: August 26, 2019

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| Professor & Faculty Lab Director:  Dr. Emily Hencken Ritter (she, her, hers) [emily.h.ritter@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:emily.h.ritter@vanderbilt.edu) Office Location: Commons Center 338 Office Hours: Wednesdays 3pm – 4:30 pm or by appointment  Teaching Assistant: Dylan Irons (he, him, his) [dylan.irons@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:dylan.irons@vanderbilt.edu)  Office Location: Commons Center 348 Office Hours: Thursdays 11am – 1pm  Graduate Student Lab Director: Seung Ho (Daniel) Jung (he, him, his) ROCCA Lab email: [VanderbiltROCCALab@gmail.com](mailto:VanderbiltROCCALab@gmail.com)  or [seung.ho.jung@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:seung.ho.jung@vanderbilt.edu) |

# Course Description

By enrolling in the course, students earn credit for participating in collaborative research projects with other students under the supervision of an international relations (IR) Faculty Research Mentor as part of the Vanderbilt Undergraduate Research on Conflict and Collective Action (ROCCA) Lab. In order to facilitate student development and enhance the benefits of the research experience, students are expected to attend course lectures on research skills training and complete associated assignments. Student progress will be supported and monitored, not only by their Faculty Research Mentor, but also by Prof. Ritter, the Director of the ROCCA Lab.

# Prerequisites

Only students who have been selected to serve as undergraduate researchers in the ROCCA Lab may enroll in the course, but there is no course or major prerequisite. The research project undertaken for this course must be different from any honors thesis research, but students may use the substantive knowledge and skills from this course in developing a distinct honors project.

# Learning Objectives

In this course, students will:

* gain a greater understanding of international politics and the fundamentals of social science research, through direct experience with the process of research;
* develop skills that will make them more effective researchers and more marketable job candidates after graduation from Vanderbilt; and
* be able to articulate both short- and long-term personal and professional goals and have concrete plans for achieving them.

# Texts and Resources

All students are required to purchase a copy of Leanne Powner’s Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student’s Practical Guide.

All other course readings will be posted on Brightspace. Individual Faculty Research Mentors will also assign students background reading for their project—please discuss with your FRM. All research tasks for your respective teams and messaging/communication will be done through [Basecamp](https://basecamp.com/). All assignments, readings, and grades for the course will be kept and updated on Brightspace.

# Evaluation

Your grade in this course will be based on the following breakdown of assignments:

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| CRP Faculty Mentor Evaluation | 20% |
| CRP End of Term Reflection Paper | 20% |
| Lecture & Team Meeting Attendance | 10% |
| Weekly Reports | 10% |
| Progress Meetings | 10% |
| Skills Assignments | 20% |
| Dr. Ritter’s End-of-Term Evaluation | 10% |
| TOTAL | 100% |

**Collaborative Research Projects:** The main component of the course is working with an IR Faculty Research Mentor (FRM) on one of their projects. Students taking the course for 3 credit hours are expected to work on their team projects 10 hours per week (minor exceptions may be approved by the Faculty Mentor). Each student will have a primary team and a secondary team to work on various research tasks and substantive areas. Particular details of the work to be done by the student will be determined by the Mentor of each team. The assignments undertaken as part of the research skills course must be in addition to the expected 10 hours per week on the team projects. For this element of the course, students are graded on 4 elements: (1) consistent attendance, effort, and task completion for both research teams, (2) an exit interview with Dr. Ritter, (3) an end-of-term reflection paper, and (4) the primary faculty mentor’s evaluation of the student’s work throughout the semester.

* Consistent attendance, effort, and task completion for both research teams will be assessed from the weekly reports discussed below
* Primary faculty mentor’s evaluation of the student’s work throughout the semester. The rubric they use will be posted on Brightspace.
* End of Term Reflection paper (see below)
* Dr. Ritter’s evaluation of the student’s work effort and growth throughout the semester, as informed by the end-of-term reflection paper, exit interview, and observation throughout the semester. I use the same rubric as the faculty mentors.

**Lecture & Team Meeting Attendance:**  This course meets only one day per week, on Mondays during the 2:10-3:25pm time slot. Attendance is required at all scheduled course meetings, and your active participation is strongly encouraged. The purpose of these sessions is to help students learn and develop their research skills. Students in the course are expected to actively participate in all training sessions, completing any pre-session readings and associated assignments.

Students are also expected to attend all regular team meetings for their research team (assessed separately). If you are unable to find a mutually acceptable time for all team members, reach out to Dr Ritter to switch to a different team.

One absence per semester will be considered excused, and any additional absences will result in a reduction of the attendance grade.

**Weekly Reports:** Research can frequently occur in spurts, making it easy to lose sight of the greater whole. This disconnectedness can also lead to procrastination or dissatisfaction. To keep students on track with their research activities and keep the focus on progress, however small, each student will be asked to produce a very brief weekly report, describing what they did during the past week and what they are committing to do for the following week.

Each week by Sunday at 11:59pm, you will submit your weekly report on the previous week’s research tasks. The google form for this semester is here: <https://forms.gle/FEqkj5JvPebCAqBV9>

The form will prompt you to answer the following: 1) what tasks you worked on this week, 2) what successes you had, 3) what struggles you had. The purpose of the report is so that we can keep up on progress, celebrate successes, and help when we struggle by providing support and constructive suggestions. Please answer all questions clearly and completely, thinking about your strengths and weaknesses throughout the week. A rubric as to how this will be graded will be posted on Brightspace.

I will drop the one report with the lowest grade (or missing submission) at the end of the semester.

**Progress Meetings:** As the purpose of this course is to support students in their development as researchers and encourage their personal career aspirations, faculty must be kept up to date as these matters evolve. To this end, all students will be required to meet with Prof. Ritter, both at the mid-point and end of the term, as well as have an official progress meeting with their Faculty Research Mentor at the end of the term. In order to facilitate these meetings, students will be required to prepare a self-reflection and may be asked to fill out pre- and post-meeting surveys. All Progress Meetings will be summarized using a common form and forms will be filed to track students who participate in the collaborative research experience for longer than a semester.

**Skills Assignments:** Dr. Ritter will assign a few skill-building assignments throughout the semester in connection with various topics covered in the course lecture. The idea is to apply research skills to a topic of your own interest. These will be described as they are assigned.

**End-of-Term Reflection Paper:** During finals week, students will be expected to turn in a paper reflecting on their progress during the term. This paper will include a discussion of the student’s research activities during the semester, how they relate to their academic and personal goals, and an assessment of one’s own progress. Details of this assignment will be distributed in class.

# Course Policies

#### Attendance

Attendance is required at all course meetings and scheduled training sessions, with one missed course session allowed. Unexcused absences beyond one will result in a reduction of the attendance grade.

Attendance is also required at all meetings with the student’s Faculty Mentor and research team. Correspondence about the absence should be emailed to both the Faculty Mentor and the ROCCA lab email. The student should work with their team to make up any missed information and discussion.

Missed meetings in cases of illness or personal emergency can be accommodated only with proper documentation. Class meetings missed due to a university sponsored event or religious holiday may also be accommodated, provided that the student informs me of the conflict at least two weeks in advance.

#### Extra Credit

No extra credit will be granted in this course, either by the Lab Director or Faculty Mentors.

#### Academic Honor Code

Students are assumed to have read and agreed with the Vanderbilt University Academic Honesty policy, found at URL: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/the-honor-system/>

I’m encouraging a lot of sharing and collaboration in this course, but your work on your assignments should be your own. Please be careful not to plagiarize. The [Undergraduate Honor Council](https://studentorg.vanderbilt.edu/honorcouncil/2015/11/16/university-honor-council/) has a very helpful guide to understanding plagiarism, and the Writing Studio has a great set of resources on [working with sources in academic writing](http://vanderbilt.edu/writing/resources/handouts/). We’ll spend some class time exploring plagiarism and academic integrity more generally.

In particular, academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, altering graded examinations for additional credit, having another person take an examination for you, falsification of results, or facilitating academic dishonesty or as further specified in the university policy found at the website above. These and other forms of cheating are all potentially grounds for penalties including failure of the assignment or the course, as well as program- or university-level disciplinary action.

**Note that I expect to see citations of all writing or note-taking that references someone else’s work, whether it is directly quoted or paraphrased, on every assignment, even if it is a rough draft or something short of an essay.**

If your life is falling apart and you are tempted to plagiarize to save time or get a good grade, please see me instead. I would rather grant you an extension than send you before the Honor Council for plagiarism—but I will send you to the Honor Council if it comes to that.

#### Accommodations for Learning or Access Disabilities

This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions. If appropriate, also contact the Vanderbilt Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services Department (EAD) to get more information about specific accommodations; please visit <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/student-access/disability/> as soon as possible to become registered and thereby ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances.

#### If you Need Help

There are many things that you might be dealing with that can hinder your ability to succeed in this course, your college career, and your life. You might be struggling with illness, socioeconomic issues, or personal issues that make it hard to concentrate, to work, or to attend class. If any of these or other things begin to hinder your ability to do your best, you can reach out to the office of Student Care Coordination for programs, training, accommodations, and assistance (find more information or make an appointment here: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/carecoordination/>). The Student Care Coordination can help guide you to whatever assistance you might need, whether it be short term or long term. If you specifically need help or accommodation in this course due to your difficulties, please come meet with me so we can find a solution that allows you to succeed while being fair to others.

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can call the Project Safe 24-hour crisis/support hotline at 615-322-7233 and you can find a list of resources at [Project Safe](http://www.Vanderbilt.edu/projectsafe). You may also contact the University’s [Title IX](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/title-ix/)Coordinator (615-322-4705) and you can find the appropriate contacts for resources and confidence here: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/title-ix/>

Importantly, note that I am sympathetic and want to help you as much as I can, especially as it pertains to your success in my course. However, I must note that I am a representative of an institution that we want to make safer for all people, therefore I am a mandatory reporter. University faculty, many staff members, and some student leaders are required to report incidents of sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and child abuse, as well as any suspected discrimination (about age, race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, sex/gender, sexual orientation, disability, genetic information, military status, familial status or other protected categories under local, state or federal law) to the University’s [Title IX](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/title-ix/)Coordinator (615-322-4705), as required by University policy and state and federal law. If you disclose an experience of interpersonal violence and/or child abuse to me or to classmates with mandatory reporting, whether in class discussion, through a course assignment, or in private communication with me, your disclosure will be kept as private as possible but may not be able to be kept confidential.

Please consult with me with any questions before sharing a personal experience of intimate partner violence or that of another Vanderbilt-affiliated person. If you disclose thoughts of harm to self or others, that information will also be disclosed to relevant parties charged with ensuring the health and safety of our campus community.

#### Statement on Diversity

Diversity is defined as that incredible and beautiful variety of personal identities, experiences, values and world views that result from differences of origin, culture and circumstance. We define and appreciate diversity in all of its forms including age, ability or disability, ethnicity, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and family and marital status. I support an inclusive learning environment where diversity and individual differences are understood, respected, appreciated, and recognized as a source of strength. I expect that students and faculty will respect differences and demonstrate diligence in understanding how other peoples’ perspectives, behaviors, and worldviews may be different from their own.

#### Gender-Inclusive Language and Preferred Names/Pronouns

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Just as sexist language excludes women’s experiences, non-gender-inclusive language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non- binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Teachers and students should use gender-inclusive words and language whenever possible in the classroom and in writing. Students, faculty, and staff may share their preferred pronouns and names, either to the class or privately to the professor, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

#### Syllabus as Contract

This syllabus is a contract to which the student agrees in taking this course. As the instructor, I reserve the right to alter this syllabus according to my discretion, though I will make every attempt to alert students of any changes made. For my part, I will strive to be fair and transparent in all matters regarding this course.

#### Office Hours & Email Concerns

Students are encouraged to meet with the professor or the graduate student lab director during office hours to discuss any questions or concerns they may have, including readings, paper topics, research process, data questions, etc. If you cannot meet during office hours, we are still very happy to meet with you. Please email either [Dylan.irons@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:Dylan.irons@vanderbilt.edu) or [emily.h.ritter@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:emily.h.ritter@vanderbilt.edu) to set up an appointment. Dylan or I will certainly be there for our appointment; please respect our time and either cancel an appointment you cannot make with reasonable notice or be there on time.

I will respond to email concerns in a timely manner, but be reasonable in your expectations of response time---I only check email during business hours on weekdays.

# Class Schedule & Assignments

Students are expected to complete the readings prior to the course meeting on the listed date. Readings from journals can be found through the Library's search or Google Scholar (hint: connect to the library VPN if not on campus).

The most up-to-date syllabus will always be found on the Brightspace site.

REMINDER: **The course meets in person only on Mondays**. Other meetings are coordinated by Faculty Mentors or Team Leaders.

Week 1 (August 21): **No Meeting**

Week 2 (August 26): Initial meeting to orient the course and establish goals and expectations.

* Reading: The Syllabus. Read it closely. Know the policies and grade distributions. Be ready to ask questions
* Meet with your Faculty Mentor to establish goals and expectations.

Week 3 (September 2): Labor Day. **No course meeting.**

Week 4 (September 9): Pre-Research and Literature Reviews

* Reading: Powner Ch. 1 Research Topic to RQ
* **Assignment: Bring three potential research questions related to conflict or collective action to class—typed and printed**
* Reading: Short articles on pre-research and literature reviews:
  + Vanderbilt Research Guide to Literature Reviews (work through the slide show!): <https://researchguides.library.vanderbilt.edu/peabody/litreviews>
  + “How to undertake a literature review” by Raul Pacheco-Vega, 2017: <http://www.raulpacheco.org/2017/04/how-to-undertake-a-literature-review/>
  + Six Steps to Writing a Literature Review, by Tanya Golash-Boza, 2010: <http://getalifephd.blogspot.com/2010/10/six-steps-to-writing-literature-review.html>
  + On strategic reading: <http://www.raulpacheco.org/2017/01/different-reading-strategies-ii-engaging-at-the-meso-level/>
  + “Organizing your literature: Spreadsheet style” by Kathleen Clarke, Octobter 24, 2017. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/gradhacker/organizing-your-literature-spreadsheet-style>

*SKILLS WORKSHOP (September 11): Introduction to R for data analysis, with Dr. Larson. Meet in Stephenson (Math) 120 and bring your laptops. Not required for the course, but may be required for your team projects.*

Week 5 (September 16): Annotated Bibliographies and Citation Management

* Reading: Powner Ch. 3 Doing Pre-Research
* Training Session on Citation Management: Frank Lester, political science librarian
* Recommended reading for when you’re actually doing a lit review:
  + Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper, University of Southern California Research Guides: <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/literaturereview>

Week 6 (September 23): Theory

* Reading: Powner Ch. 2 RQ to Theory to Hypothesis

Week 6 (September 30): Research Design

* Reading: Powner Ch. 4 Choosing a Design that Fits Your Question
* **Assignment: Measurement. Due in class, typed, hard copy--October 14th.**

Week 7 (October 7 - 11): General Lab Meetings. **No regular course meeting**.

* Required: Meet one-on-one with the Faculty Mentor of your primary team to discuss your mid-semester progress
  + Students should ask their faculty mentor to complete their portion of the Mid-Semester Progress Report before the meeting.
  + Students should complete their own portion of the Mid-Semester Progress Report before the meeting.
  + **Mid-semester progress reports due in hard copy during the class meeting of October 14**

Week 8 (October 14): Data Collection and Management

* Reading: Powner Ch. 7 Quantitative Data Collection and Management
* **Assignment: Data Visualization. Due in class, typed, hard copy—November 4.**

Week 9 (October 21): Visualizing Data

* Reading: Excerpt from The Visual Display of Quantitative Information by Edward R. Tufte

Week 10 (October 28): Writing it up

* Reading: Powner Ch. 9 Writing Up Your Research
* **Assignment: Write an opinion article based on your research topic. Due to Brightspace by December 2nd.**

Week 11 (November 4): Writing Op-Eds

* Reading: “How to Write an Op-Ed” (http://newsoffice.duke.edu/duke\_resources/oped)
  + “How to Write Op-Ed Columns” http://www.earth.columbia.edu/sitefiles/file/pressroom/media\_outreach/OpEdGuide.doc
* Come to class with 3 ideas for your Op-Ed topic. The topics should be related to your work as a research assistant.

Week 11 (November 11): Professionalization Roundtable

* Optional: Bring a CV to have the lab directors look at it and make suggestions

Week 13 (November 18): Writing Op-Eds

* Bring 3 copies of your Op-Ed draft to exchange with peers for review
* **Last in-person course meeting.**

NO CLASS NOVEMBER 25th: Thanksgiving Week.

Dead week (December 2): **Individual progress meetings with Dr. Ritter**. No course meeting.

* **Required for all lab members, course and paid: Meet one-on-one with your Faculty Mentor to discuss your semester progress by 5pm December 6th. Complete progress forms to give to mentor.**
* **Required for all lab members, course and paid: Meet one-on-one with Dr. Ritter to discuss your semester progress by noon on December 13th.**
* **End-of-course reflection paper due on Brightspace by 5pm December 9th.**