Research Methods in Critical Security Studies (JPM680)

Summer semester 2017, Tuesdays 8:00-9:20 (J4019)

Charles University in Prague, Institute of Political Studies

4 ECTS

Lectures

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Course Description

The course provides an introduction to the methodology of interpretive research and is specifically focused on its use in critical security studies. The first part of the course is focused on explaining the principles of interpretative research and abductive reasoning and discussing the methodological as well as practical specificities of critical security research. The second part shall then expose students to a variety of research methods, including discourse analysis, analysis of practices, interviewing, and ethnography, with which they will get familiar not only through readings, class discussions and examples, but also through practical exercises.

Aim of the course

Students shall learn the key principles of interpretative research, understand the specificities of designing and organizing this type of research and get familiar with several key methodological approaches used in critical social research. After completing the course, they shall be able to think about social science methodology in a complex way, design their own research projects and reflect on the methodological choices made in research.

Entry requirements

The course is primarily designed for students with some prior knowledge of critical security studies and/or critical social theory. Completion of the course Contemporary
approaches in critical security studies or Critical security studies is a recommended, yet not a necessary prerequisite.

Structure of the course

1. **Foundations of interpretative research, 21st February 2017**

The first seminar introduces specific nature of interpretative research and highlights its differences vis-à-vis causal/positivist research. The key principles of interpretive research will be explained and discussed on practical examples.

**Required reading:**


2. **Organizing interpretive research and interpretive research design, 7th March 2017**

The second seminar attends to the criteria of good interpretative research and crucial parts of interpretative research design. In particular, the class focuses on three aspects of interpretive research: empiricism, abductive reasoning, and reflexivity.

**Required readings:**


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1 It is recommended to always read the assigned literature in the suggested order.


*Recommended readings:*


3, Discourse and content analysis, 21st March 2017

Discourse analysis remains one of the most widely used methodologies in the field of critical security studies. This seminar introduces its main principles, types and practical challenges. It further discusses content analysis as another yet similar research tool, and outlines the differences between the two approaches.

*Required readings:*


Empirical applications: genealogy and securitization


Recommended readings:


4. Interviews, 4th April 2017

Interviews are one of the most used data collection methods in general, and are often utilized by methodologies discussed in previous classes. This meeting focuses solely on interview as a tool which can elicit information about the researched setting and problems. The class shows that interviews can be used in different ways depending on the context and aims of the research.

Required readings:


How to use the interviews to get beyond the elite discourses:


Recommended readings:


5. Ethnography and participant observation, 18th April 2017

In recent years, ethnographic methods have become increasingly popular among scholars adopting critical approach towards the study of security and international relations. The final class deals with long-term stay and immersion in the field, its advantages and potential risks. The class further discusses ethical concerns related to this type of research and participant observation which is usually its main component.

Required readings:


What can ethnography tell us about the concealment of everyday violence?


Recommended readings:


6. Practice analysis, 2nd May 2017

The aim of this seminar is to introduce social practices as objects of social scientific inquiry through which we may study society and politics from a new perspective and with a new form of reflexivity. Drawing on Bourdieu and the recent turn to practices in social sciences, the seminar will outline several ways of analysing practices and reconstructing the logic of broader social arrangements and nested power relations.

Required readings:


**How it works in practice:**


**Recommended readings:**


**Course requirements**

**Active participation (20%):** Students are supposed to read the required literature, prepare for the classes and be able to critically assess the literature and put it in a broader context. If you are unable to attend the seminar, please inform the lecturer in advance (students should not miss more than one seminar during the semester).

**Practical exercises (36%):** Students are required to fulfill three practical exercises in which they will demonstrate their ability to apply a variety of methods in critical security research. For each exercise, students shall prepare a design of a small research project, in which they use one method (e.g. interview or ethnographic observation), and/or apply a specific method in an illustrative research.

**Research design (44%):** Each participant is required to prepare a final research design, in which s/he will elaborate at least three possible methodological approaches to a given
research topic, outline their practical realization and reflect on the strengths and limits of each approach.

Late submissions of the papers will be subject to grade penalty (minus 2 percent points from the total score for each day after the deadline).

Evaluation

Excellent  88-100%
Very good  74-87%
Good       60-73%
Fail       0-59%