

The Diffusion of Democracy

an undergraduate research program
proposed for funding by the Hewlett Foundation

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The democratic theme in IR 71, American Foreign Policy

The central organizing theme of IR 71 is that foreign policy represents the expression of a nation's values, constrained by its capabilities to actualize them. Prominent among the values-rooted goals championed by recent American foreign policy is the promotion of democracy. Trade and aid policies have frequently been utilized as tools to reach that end, but the chief constraint to achieving it lies less in a lack of physical capability than in fundamental ignorance of how to bring it about. As is frequently the case, policy-making can be no better than the theory which underlies it -- and little is known about the process of democratization and the determinants of its success. It is not clear that trade and aid are empirically related at all to democracy, despite the strategies adopted by policy-makers, which assume a strong and exploitable link.

A proposed "sidebar seminar"

The proposed sidebar seminar would serve two functions. First, it would clarify the relationship between theoretical and empirical social science, on the one hand, and policy-making on the other. Reading the theory of democracy should deepen their understanding of this fundamental goal of American foreign policy and increase their appreciation of its complexity. Second, the seminar will allow students to view first-hand the difficulty of establishing the evidentiary base necessary to test the explanatory power of social science theory.

I propose to engage students in the process of building a research design organized around the idea that democratization is a diffusionary process. The first step is to create a mental model of diffusion and to flesh it out with the data which would establish an operational criterion for determining whether diffusion has taken place. Then the hunt is on for those instruments which can penetrate the permeable barriers between nations and become the agents for the diffusion of democracy.

Teams of students will participate in the range of activities necessary to complete this research program, beginning with a literature search commenced by moving backward and forward in time from a seminal article. Representative hypotheses which can be tested with the emerging data set will be extracted from the theoretical and policy literature. The data set will be built from three parts: a widely-used and publicly available compilation of democracy measures, an extraction of relevant data on trade and aid from public sources, and an original student coding (of physical distance between each pair of nations).

Institutional context

The Department of International Relations currently does not have a research methods course, in

part because social science students routinely resist techniques for which there is no immediate application (especially those involving math!) . This proposed program is a bold experiment to provide the motivation first: IR 71 will convince students that the reliability of a theoretical generalization should be established before it is applied in the policy realm. Then, the “sidebar seminar” will introduce students to the experience of doing systematic social science, complete with the infectious enthusiasm of an engaged principal investigator and the usual mix of terror, boredom, and exhilarating self-discovery common to research assistants. Only later will the question of technique be given center stage -- it is hoped that this program will recruit students into a proposed research methods course which will try to duplicate the best features of this experiment, organized around the theme of causes of conflict.

Required support

Ideally, this program would be headed by a graduate student and supported by three or four undergraduate team leaders. Because I know of no appropriate graduate student, I propose to handle most of this myself, with minimal support from a contracted student. I hope to recruit some students from the fall course IR 125, International Political Economy, to provide some knowledge of the economic issues involved, perhaps as team leaders. The literature survey will require a substantial amount of photocopying and sundry supplies. The data set construction, original coding and some analysis will require a computer with CD-ROM and the acquisition of data. Travel money will be needed for the PI to present the results at a national conference and, if a suitable outlet can be found, one or more students to present their research.

Tentative Budget

On short notice, all of these costs have been estimated rather than verified. The computer can be a standard Pentium with a large good-quality monitor (for group viewing), a CD-ROM, and Ethernet connection. The data is a United Nations data set called International Trade Statistics; a similar World Bank data set (Direction of Trade) costing \$1000 has already been acquired. Conference locations have not been determined.

Computer	\$4,000.00
Data	\$1,000.00
Supplies	\$ 250.00
Travel	\$1,500.00
Student stipend	\$1,000.00
Total	\$7,750.00

The Diffusion of Democracy

A research project designed to answer two general theoretical questions:

1. Does democracy “spread” from one country to another through diffusion?
2. Does international trade help to diffuse democracy?

And, in the process, shed light on three more specific questions

3. Can American foreign policy encourage democratization?

4. Can we determine if such a diffusionary process operates?

5. Can students learn to answer such questions “by doing”?

International Relations

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American Foreign Policy

Recent American foreign policy has championed the promotion of democracy as a key goal and trade as a useful tool to achieve it. Trade with China, for example, has been justified as a means to penetrate an otherwise closed society, bringing the diffusion of democratic ideas. Just as often, however, trade with non-democratic countries has been restricted out of fear that trade would help achieve prosperity that would allow dictators to resist political change. Cuba and Iraq are prominent recent examples.

In truth, American policy-makers do not know when or if trade promotes democracy.

Internat'l Relations 125

Internat'l Political Economy

A fundamental premise of political economy is that economic processes like trade and political structures like democracy are causally inter-related.

Our project uses statistical methods to test alternative theories about this

linkage.

Social Science Methods

Policy, Theory and Evidence

Policy cannot be effective in achieving goals unless the theory on which it rests is accurate. Social scientists have developed statistical techniques to test theoretical questions such as, “Does trade promote democracy?” However, evaluating such hypotheses requires skills and training which are rare among students (or policy makers!).

Students resist learning any technique without immediate application, especially methods which are difficult and boring to learn, demand long programs of study to master, and require considerable experience to apply appropriately. Social science research methods combine the worst features of learning a foreign language and doing mathematics.

In sports, one first learns basic techniques through *doing*. Our project is a bold experiment to introduce students to the experience of systematic social science before mastering its principles.

The Sidebar Seminar

Hewlett Foundation Grant for Undergraduate Research

American universities are charged with three important missions -- teaching, research, and service. While ideally these missions reinforce one another, they are often pursued in isolation. Undergraduates rarely hear of the research activities of their professors, in part because advanced research techniques involve a language they do not speak. Lehigh University has been awarded a Hewlett Foundation grant to incorporate research experience directly into the undergraduate curriculum.

The primary device is to be the “sidebar seminar”, which provides a research apprenticeship for students in lower division courses. By participating on a research team directed by a faculty member, students will experience first-hand the application of research methods before they are required to learn to perform the techniques themselves.

International Relations 96 The Diffusion of Democracy

a 1 credit "sidebar seminar"
on Democracy, Trade, and American Foreign Policy

Lehigh University
Dept. of International Relations
Prof. Bruce E. Moon

Fall, 1997 "lab" for
IR 74 American Foreign Policy
IR 125 Intern'l Political Economy

This fall, several Lehigh courses will experiment with ways to bring faculty research interests into the undergraduate classroom. One of those experiments is open to students in IR 74 and IR 125 who wish to learn about social scientific methods of research. They are invited to enroll in a 1-unit "side-bar seminar" which will examine whether trade can play a role in furthering the process of democratization.

For several decades now, American policy has operated under the assumption that democracy was diffused from one nation to another and that the diffusionary process could be accelerated by encouraging economic contacts, especially trade. As is frequently the case, policy-making can be no better than the theory which underlies it -- and little is known about the process of democratization and the determinants of its success. It is not at all clear that trade is empirically related to democracy, despite the strategies adopted by policy-makers, which assume a strong and exploitable link. Various currents of theory in the field of political economy also point to a relationship between trade and democracy, but they disagree both as to whether these two phenomena reinforce or erode one another and which of the two is causally prior.

The "side-bar seminar", the Diffusion of Democracy, is a team-oriented research project designed to examine one facet of the trade - democracy linkage. We will attempt to derive an empirical model of the relationship between trade and democracy by reading the relevant theoretical literature, placing it within a framework that views democratization as a process influenced by external factors through diffusion, building a data set capable of testing whether the hypotheses implied by the theory are supported by statistical evidence, and analyzing the results.

Under faculty supervision, students will participate directly in the research project, giving them a first-hand view of what quantitative social science research is all about. First, we must survey the literature on democratization in general and the literature on trade - democracy effects in particular. Second, we must build a research design organized around the idea that democratization is a diffusionary process. That requires us to create a mental model of diffusion and to flesh it out with the data which would establish an operational criterion for determining whether diffusion has taken place. Then the hunt is on for those instruments which can penetrate the permeable barriers between nations and become the agents for the diffusion of democracy.

Appendix One: Project Origins

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS 127

Research in International Relations

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Lehigh University
Fall term 1999

Course description (from catalogue)

Research skills in international relations. The role of theory, models and evidence in the explanation of international phenomena. Literature review; problem formulation; theory construction; research design, methods and measures; collection, analysis and interpretation of data; principles of hypothesis testing. Professional writing, either through individual research projects under faculty supervision or an apprenticeship in ongoing faculty research projects. Prerequisite: Consent of the instructor. Moon (SS)

Beware! This is an experimental course being offered for the first time. The catalogue description is more valuable as an identification of the instructor's aspirations than as a guide to the actual content of the course.

Instructor notes (from IR Web site announcement)

Intended for: International relations majors, but open to any student meeting the prerequisites. Students should feel comfortable with personal computers and mathematical formulations, but no higher mathematical skills or background is required.

Prerequisites: At a minimum, students must have completed International Relations 10 and the distribution requirement in mathematics. Students with additional course work in International Relations theory will find the course most valuable.

Instructional Methods: Lecture, discussion, computer interactions, research group meetings. Students should be prepared to perform independent and team research.

Grading Methods: Not yet determined.

Contraindications: This is not a course for passive students or those requiring a tightly structured and neatly packaged learning environment.

The ideal student for this course is one who seeks exposure to the methods of scholarly research found in the professional journals of international relations. Most likely to benefit are those who plan to attend graduate school, prepare a major research-oriented thesis, or engage in a research career.

The uncertainty of the size and composition of course enrollment makes it impossible to detail the research activities that are the heart of the instructor's vision of this course.

The philosophy of the course

American universities are charged with three important missions -- teaching, research, and service. While ideally these missions reinforce one another, they are often pursued in isolation. This course will try to bring them together. In international relations, service often involves providing advice to policy-makers and guidance to the public on issues of policy relevance. But policy cannot be effective in achieving goals unless the theory on which it rests is accurate. The central task of much international relations research is to formulate and evaluate the relevant theory.

Social scientists have developed statistical techniques to test theoretical questions, but they

require skills and training which are rare among students (or policymakers!). Undergraduates rarely hear of the research activities of their professors, in part because advanced research techniques involve a language they do not speak. This course will attempt to incorporate theoretically-informed and policy-relevant research experience directly into the undergraduate curriculum through a kind of research apprenticeship.

Students resist learning any technique without immediate application, especially methods which are difficult and boring to learn, demand long programs of study to master, and require considerable experience to apply appropriately. Social science research methods combine the worst features of learning a foreign language and doing mathematics. Meanwhile, in sports and other skill-intensive activities, one first learns basic techniques through *doing*. This course is a bold experiment to introduce students to the experience of systematic social science *while* mastering its principles. By participating on a research team directed by a faculty member, students will experience first-hand the application of research methods before they are required to learn to perform the techniques themselves.

Purpose of the course

This course is designed to give students an insight into the methods of scholarly research in international relations. It will do so by examining in detail one of the epistemic communities found in this field, namely that usually referred to as the quantitative or scientific school, which is described more fully below. Most of the lessons learned will be more broadly applicable to other theoretical traditions, because we will emphasize principles that are universal: the role of theory, the nature of argument and evidence, the interaction between the body of literature in a field and the individual researcher.

At the conclusion of the course (actually somewhere near halfway), the student will be able to:

1. read and interpret the journal literature in international relations that uses quantitative research methods to formulate and test theories of international relations.
2. identify interesting research questions and choose a topic for his or her own research.
3. formulate a research design to answer research questions.
4. write a paper that reports the results of independent research in a form that meets the standard of the relevant epistemic community.

Preliminary plans

The first part of the course will introduce research methods, broadly defined, particularly those associated with the quantitative school. To demonstrate what a well-specified theory looks like and how it can be used, we will examine one vision of that ideal - the International Futures simulation (IFs) constructed by Barry Hughes. As we do so, we will define the basic building blocks of scientific theory. Students will use IFs to investigate some aspect of international relations that interests them.

This is an experimental course. It will NOT work out as expected. At this stage, plans can be only preliminary, not least because the interests (indeed, the number and identity) of team members is unknown.

The second part of the course will involve a team research project in which the skills of research will be acquired and practiced under the guidance of the instructor as the principal investigator and coach. The goal is to investigate the literature on a particular research question and, as a team, write a paper with the potential to become publishable. With luck, members of the team will find research on the topic interesting enough to spawn a research project of their own that will benefit from and perhaps contribute to the team

The instructor will encourage students who are so inclined to develop their own research project, but that is not required.

effort.

Team research topic

A final decision on a topic for the team research has not yet been made. I welcome the suggestions of students, but the project is most likely to be a success if the topic is one on which I am well versed. I am especially attracted to the following question, and I have organized preliminary plans around it:

"Can democracy be spread as a diffusionary process from one country to another through trade?"

This is an interesting problem for the policy/theory interface. Prominent among the values-rooted goals championed by recent American foreign policy are the promotion of democracy and the expansion of trade. Trade and aid policies have frequently been utilized as tools to encourage democratization. Trade with China, for example, has been justified as a means to penetrate an otherwise closed society, bringing the diffusion of democratic ideas. Just as often, however, trade with non-democratic countries has been restricted out of fear that trade would help achieve prosperity that would allow dictators to resist political change. Cuba and Iraq are prominent recent examples.

In truth, American policy-makers do not know when or if trade promotes democracy. Our project is designed to use statistical methods to test alternative theories about this linkage. This could well morph into examining other possible diffusionary mechanisms such as travel, education, communication, and aid or a more general probing of what accounts for different national propensities toward democracy.

Other possible organizing questions include:

"What countries have achieved the greatest success in providing basic human needs and why?"

"Are cross-national differences in gender inequality a consequence of a nation's level of development, distinctive culture, power relations, or what?"

"Do balance of trade deficits hinder future growth? Does it matter what means are used to finance them? Do they differentially affect inequality, basic needs attainment, the evolution of the political system or foreign affairs?"

"Is international conflict affected by levels of trade? Does trade diminish conflict like Kant says or increase it as the mercantilists say? Does it matter what kinds of nations or what patterns of trade are involved?"

"Why do nations trade with one country rather than others?"

Assumptions/parameters

The team research will be oriented toward the epistemic community surrounding the scientific school of international relations scholarship. Epistemic communities consist of those who share various conventions in theory, method, and style. Any given researcher ordinarily belongs to a single epistemic community because relatively few studies can attain universal acceptance. Adoption of one epistemic community's standards does not imply rejection of others, but one usually addresses only one directly.

The scientific school is neither the only nor the preferred mode of research in international relations. It *IS* the one most familiar to the instructor and therefore the one in which he can provide the most expert guidance. Students are not expected to adopt this style in their own research, but they will be required to understand it.

The epistemic community to which I want to address this research project is distinguished by *inter alia*:

The use of theory as the primary response to the problem of inference, transforming the (unknowable) policy question we wish to answer to a (knowable) empirical question which, if properly answered, would bear upon it. (e.g., to answer the question, "Will continuing trade with China make it more or less likely that democracy will emerge?", we ask, e.g. "In general over the last thirty years, have the nations which trade a lot moved toward democracy with greater frequency than those which trade less?". [Note that this is far from the only approach to the problem of inference, but it is the one adopted by this project.]

The use of statistical data representing empirical facts as the primary source of evidence for assertions, which take the form of empirical hypotheses, related to theoretical formulations.

Reliance upon a broad literature to determine the appropriate questions, the accepted means of answering them, and the established body of conclusions.

The quantitative journal article as the conventional form of research output and the goal of a research project. This may imply some separation between the research mission (to find out the truth about some problem or question which concerns you), and the marketing mission (to write up the results of that research so that other researchers will read it and be convinced).

Preliminary course outline

These sections are likely to be overlapping rather than sequential, but like all else in this course, subject to revision.

Part One. The International Futures simulation (IFs). The interaction of theory and policy. Some interesting research questions. First glance at statistical relationships between variables in equation and scatter plot form.

Aug. 31 General introduction to course. Introduction of class members. First feed-back on plans. Recruitment.

Sept. 2-7 Action in the face of uncertainty. The use of theory. Global change. Course plans. Read *IF* Chapters 1&2.

Sept. 9 The use of computer simulation and other formal representations of theory. Use of IFs to investigate change. Read *IF*, chapter 3. Install IFs, do a preliminary base run to learn the system. Help.

Sept. 14 Interesting problems. Isomorphisms. Do a base run showing relevant features of interesting problems. Presentation of results. What if the theory is wrong?

Sept.16 Causal understandings and scenarios. Interesting research questions. Read *IF*, chapter 4. Make a change, save the world. What if the theory is wrong? How could the theory be wrong?

Sept. 21 Assorted theoretical questions suggested by IFs. Skim *IF*, chapters 5-12.

Part Two. The scientific school in international relations research.

Sept. 23 Epistemic communities. Scientific research as a social process. The role of the literature. Schools of thought. Social Science Citation Index. Read Van Evera, Memo 3.

Sept. 28 (foreshadowing Part Three) Components of a journal article. How to read a scientific study. Read Harvey Starr, "Democratic Dominoes: Diffusion Approaches to the Spread of Democracy in the International System," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35, 2 (June 1991): 356-381; Harvey Starr, "D2: The Diffusion of Democracy Revisited," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, February, 1995, Chicago; Bruce E. Moon and William J. Dixon, "Liberal Democracy and Trade Openness," Paper prepared for the joint conference of the International Studies Association and the Japan Association of International Relations, Makuhari, Japan, 20-22 September 1996, first post-conference draft (2/19/97).

Sept. 30 The language of social science: variables, concepts, operationalization, measurement (reliability and validity), tautologies, hypotheses. Read Van Evera, Memo 1 and Arthur Stinchcombe, "The Logic of Scientific Inference" in *Constructing Social Theories* New York: Harcourt, 1968.

Oct. 5 Descriptive statistics. Measures of central tendency and dispersion. "Accounting for" variance.

Oct. 7-14 Displays and measures of association. Scatter plots. Regression. Correlation coefficients. Probability and significance. Betas, t's, standard errors. Errors of inference (type I and II). Spurious correlation in the multi variate case.

Part Three. The Research Enterprise. Stages of research. Components of a journal article. How to read a scientific study. The importance of the literature. How to build a bibliography. On the road to publication. Characteristics of a good theory. Characteristics of a good article. The (II)-logic of Discovery: inspiration from data, theory, and literature. The logic of justification. 5 conditions of causality (correlation, time-order, consistent, logical & plausible, rule out rivals). Read Van Evera, Memos 4-7.

Part Four. The Diffusion of Democracy. Main themes of the literature. Finding weaknesses, identifying contributions. Inspiration. General theories of democratization. Specific hypotheses of democratization causes. Specific hypotheses of trade-democracy relationship. Techniques for detecting diffusion.

Part Five. Moving on to other research projects. Case studies. Read Van Evera, Memo 2. Possible extensions: human rights, gender empowerment, democratic and liberal peace.