POL 210, Winter 2016

Political Science Research Methods

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Course Hours: Tue/Thu 2.35pm-3.55pm in Stewart Biology S1/4
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Summary: This course as an introduction to political science research methods. It is intended to introduce students to the logic of research in political science and to the variety of methods used in our discipline. Students will learn how to interpret published findings based on these various methods. The objective is to enable students to be more informed and critical readers of the literature that they will encounter in their upper-level courses.

Course Description
This course introduces students to a variety of methods and approaches that are used in political science research. We will learn how to take a scientific approach to questions about political phenomena instead of using an advocacy approach taken by politicians, interest groups, or lobbyists. In short, we will learn how to ask empirical questions about the political world; how to answer them scientifically using the appropriate types of evidence; and how to clearly convey our arguments, evidence, and conclusions to others. The course topics will include the logic of the scientific method; the measurement of political concepts; research design and variety of ways of data collection; qualitative, graphical and statistical techniques for describing data; and the principles of statistical inference. Methods and designs include case studies, comparative methods, surveys, experiments, interviews, content analysis, and interpretative methods.

You will also learn SPSS, a user-friendly statistical software program. At the end of the course, we hope that you will be comfortable reading and critiquing arguments about real world political problems. The skills you learn will be useful in your future upper division political science courses. They might also benefit you in your careers in the policy, government, journalistic, business, or legal professions, as well as in every-day life as a citizen.

The course will utilize several in-class and online teaching tools. Note that students who enrolled in Poli311 in 2014/15/16 are not eligible to take this course; however, Poli210 will serve as a prerequisite to take Poli311 in the future.
Requirements:

Lectures: Your attendance of lectures is required. Even though some lecture key-points are available online after the course, specific materials presented in the lectures will not be posted and cannot be accessed in any other way. Should you have to miss a number of lectures for reasons of illness or other type of emergency, you must notify the Teaching Assistant or Professor.

Readings/Online materials: You are expected to do the readings or watch videos for the course on time, which means before the lectures and conferences, and there are several incentives to do so. First, lectures will be easier to follow if you have completed the readings. Second, the amount of reading or online material is reasonable, but not negligible, so that it will not be easy to catch up if you fall behind. Third, you will be asked to fill in quizzes about the readings and materials in advance of the lecture at times. Moreover, we will discuss readings in the lectures, ask clicker questions about the readings (see below) and at times discuss readings in the conferences; and your participation grade in conferences and for clicker usage will influence your final grade for this course. Finally, on the two midterm exams, questions will include issues discussed in the reading materials. As a rule of thumb, you should plan to spend about three hours on each of the lecture preparations (which includes 2 hours of reading and video watching) and an hour going over your notes from the readings, filling in the quiz online (if applicable), and preparing for class each time after you have completed the readings. The course readings are listed below for each lecture day.

Online reading quizzes: Our myCourses website contains multiple choice questions about the readings. In some weeks you will be asked to answer the questions on these sites in advance of the lectures in which the readings will be used/discussed (up until 1pm before each lecture). Thus, the deadline for answering these questions about the readings is on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1pm (unless announced otherwise). You will be graded for number of correct answers. Altogether the reading quizzes make up 9% of your course grade.

Online Learning Tools: There are two main sources for online learning tools that I encourage you to utilize for this course. First, the textbook provides resources for students which contain summaries of the textbook chapters, some sample questions and other online sites. See more below. The second type of source is embedded in our MyCourses website as external learning tools that are listed under the headline “General” for each lecture. These links might contain additional articles, self-tests or videos that will help you understand the material for a given lecture. I strongly advise you to use these tools actively before each lecture.

Purchases: There is one textbook for this course, which comes with student online resources. Other readings for the course are accessible through myCourses or the url’s provided in this syllabus.

The textbook is by Loleen Berdahl and Keith Archer. Explorations: Conducting Empirical Research in Canadian Political Science, Third Edition. ISBN 13: 9780199008988. It will be available in the bookstore. You can also order a copy with amazon:
http://www.amazon.ca/Explorations-Conducting-Empirical-Research-Political/dp/0199008981
Learning Resources for the Textbook: You can access those resources through this website: www.oupcanada.com/Berdahl3e, and the username is: exploration_student and the password: zEma2

Class participation: This is an interactive lecture course. Indeed, at times we will solve problems in smaller groups during lecture time, or have discussions. It is thus important that you are prepared and actively participate early on in the course. Volunteered and thoughtful contributions to class discussion can only help, not hurt your grade. Participation is enhanced through polling software and conference participation.

PollEverywhere Software: PollEverywhere is a response system that allows you to answer questions posed by the instructor from your mobile device (phone, laptop, or tablet). I will be using PollEverywhere to collect your feedback during lectures. This response software (similar to clickers without the actual clicker) actively enhances student participation during lecture time. It enables us to ask questions in class and to receive immediate feedback based on the answers. We will start using it immediately. A percentage of your grade is based on using this response software. You are allowed three absences from lectures without any punishment.

Registering Polleverywhere: You must first create an account using your McGill email address. Please enter your name as listed in the classlist on myCourses. Use this link to register in the class Poli210: https://www.polleverywhere.com/register?p=49u2t-iqf3&u=YEypKiLL.

There are three ways to use this software in class for recording your responses:

1) Phone
   Option A: Download and use the PollEv App
   • Apple: https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/poll-everywhere/id893375312?mt=8
   In the app, select I’m participating. Then, enter poli210 in the username field (PollEv.com/poli210) and click Join.
   Option B: Connect via a web browser
   Alternatively, you can join by accessing https://pollev.com/poli210 through your phone’s internet browser.

2) Computer
   You can join by accessing https://pollev.com/poli210 through a browser on your computer.

3) Responding via text message
   For some question types, you will be able to respond via text message. When the instructor begins to display a poll, you will see a code (e.g., poli210) and a number (e.g., 37607) to text it to. First, text poli210 to 37607. Once you join, text your response to the same number.

If you have any questions, please visit the Poll Everywhere User Guide (http://www.polleverywhere.com/user-guide). If you do not have a phone or computer, come talk to me after class.

Conferences: Unless announced differently, conferences start in the third week of the semester. Each student will sign up for one of the conference groups on Minerva and attend the same group throughout
the term. The attendance of conferences is mandatory. The conferences in this course are lab sessions in which you will learn to utilize and practice the statistics program SPSS. You will also have a chance to discuss issues raised in the lecture or readings. Conference discussions are guided, structured and designed by the TA, who can assign additional tasks to you to fulfill the conference requirement. Conferences stand and fall with the students’ participation and preparation, so you should take these seriously. More than one unexcused absence or "unprepared" will jeopardize your class participation grade.

myCourses Website: This course has its own website on myCourses, which is updated daily. You are required to check this site regularly (several times per week). On the website, a lot more information is made available to you than we have time to cover in detail in class. The site also contains tools that enhance your learning experience in this class. It's also a good way for you to communicate with me, with the TA and with each other. Here is what you’ll find on our course site:

- any class announcements, as necessary;
- this syllabus;
- study questions and conference themes;
- links to other politics-related internet sites;
- readings and selected lecture notes
- news articles and other information relevant to our class;
- our reading quizzes;
- email and Q+A and blogs; chat room for students of our class

Assignments: There are two types of assignment, all of which are or will be posted on MyCourses. The first type is graded minimally using a simple 3 point grading scale. 2 points indicate that the assignment was completely satisfactory. 1 point indicates that there was a problem with your assignment and zero points means that the assignment was either not turned in or in major ways deficient. There are about 6-8 assignments of this type, altogether worth 10% of your final grade. The second type of assignment is graded out of 100, and explicit instructions are given as to how they are graded in the description of the assignments. There are three of these types of assignments, each worth 5% of your course grade.

Exams: Everyone takes the two Midterm exams during the class period. The first is scheduled on February 23 and another one on April 14 (the last day of classes). The room for these exams is our classroom.

Grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm I</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm II</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in Conferences</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clicker Use in Class</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graded Assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pass/Fail Assignments</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online reading and lecture quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Course and University Policies:

Exam Policy: You cannot miss a scheduled exam without a university-approved excuse. In cases of illness, a doctor’s note is required that is signed and on the doctor’s letterhead, explaining why you are too sick to take the exam. In cases of death or severe illness of a family member written proof is required (e.g., obituary). In such cases, it is important that you contact your Teaching Assistant or Professor as soon as possible. This policy will be strongly enforced: missing an exam without an approved excuse will result in zero points for this component of the evaluation.

Late Policy for Assignments: There is no accommodation policy for reading quizzes. Late reading quizzes will not be accepted. The last reading quiz can be submitted by 1pm sharp. Late assignments will also not be accepted unless the assignment tap will close at the indicated time (sharp). However, in cases of illness, a doctor’s note is required that is signed and on the doctor’s letterhead, explaining why you are too sick to write the assignment. In cases of death or severe illness of a family member written proof is required (e.g., obituary). In such cases, it is important that you contact your Teaching Assistant or Professor as soon as possible. This policy will be strongly enforced: missing an assignment without an approved excuse will result in zero points for this component of the evaluation.

Poll Participation Grade: The monitoring of your poll participation starts in the second course week (Jan 18). You are allowed two absences without any excuse. No excuses for other absences will be granted, except for the above mentioned cases with the above mentioned documentation.

Class-Room etiquette: Please turn off any beepers, smart phones, and MP3 or other devices at the beginning of lectures and conferences.

Special needs: Please let your TA or me know, if you have special requirements due to a diagnosed learning or physical disability. We can accommodate your needs better if they are made explicit from the outset.

Integrity: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Clicker: Since clicker records may be used to compute a portion of course grades, the use of a clicker other than your own is considered an academic offense. During class, possession of more than one clicker, or that of another student, will be interpreted as intent to commit an academic offense. Please refer to McGill’s policy on Academic Integrity and Code of Conduct.

http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity
http://www.mcgill.ca/cio/e-policies
Part I: Foundations of Political Science Research

Week 1:
Jan 12 Lecture 1: Intro Lecture, no readings

Jan 14 Lecture 2: The foundations of political science analysis
- Differentiating Natural Science and Social Science
- Goals of empirical political analysis in Political Science
- Epistemological and Methodological Variety
- Trustworthy Research
- Reading I: Explorations, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2
- Reading II: Gary Gutting. 2012, „How reliable are the social sciences“ NYT
- Reading III: Dean, Cornelia. 2006. “When Questions of Science Come to a Courtroom, Truth Has Many Faces.” NYT.
- Take short reading quiz
- Additional Resources: Check textbook resources and take this survey:
  - [http://goo.gl/KUSnwf](http://goo.gl/KUSnwf)

Week 2:
Jan 19 Lecture 3: Theory Building and Causality
- Theory Oriented Research
- Finding Good Research Questions
- From Hypothesis Testing to Theory Building
- Does Causality Matter? Why?
- Issues in Establishing Causality
- Reading I: Explorations, Chapter 3
- Short reading quiz on chapter 3

Jan 21 Lecture 4: Research Design and Making Causal Inferences
- Internal and External Validity
- Types of Research Designs and how they establish causality
- E.g. Experimental, Quasi-Experimental, Types of Observational Studies
- Research Design Language
- Reading I: Shivley Chapter 6
- Reading II: Eitan D. Hersh. 2014. “Long-term effect of September 11 on the political behavior of victims’ families and neighbors,” PNAS, 110 (52): pp. 20959–20963
- Assignment #1: Fill in the Survey in Qualtrics until January 22, 8pm
- Assignment #2: Op-Ed Piece Analysis, see MyCourses
Week 3: conferences start
Conference #1: watch SPSS video 1
Jan 26 Lecture 5: Research Design and Selection of Observations
  • Examples of Research Design
  • Randomization versus Random Sample
  • Varieties of Sampling
  • Reading I: Shivley Chapter 7 (only 96-105)

  Reading I: “Causality and Causal Inference,” King, Keohane, Verba: In Scientific Inquiry, chapter 3, p. 75-114 (TBC)

Week 4:
Conference #2: watch SPSS video 2
Feb 2 Lecture 7: Measurements of our Concepts
  • Reading I: Explorations, chapter 5
  • Assignment #3: Research Question and Hypothesis

Part II: Understanding Methods in Political Science
Module: Qualitative and Comparative Methods
Feb 4 Lecture 8: Archival research and Interviews as Data collection tools, Prof. Scholtz
  • Reading I: Explorations, chapter 9
  • Reading II: Scott A. Frisch and Sean Q. Kelly. 2012. "Political Science and Archival Research" in Doing Archival Research in Political Science by Scott A. Frisch, Douglas B. Harris, Sean Q. Kelly, and David C.W. Parker
  • Short reading quiz

Week 5:
Conference #3: Watch SPSS Video 3
Feb 9  Lecture 9: **Case Studies and Comparative Research**, Prof. Kuhonta
- The Logic of Qualitative Research
- Studying single cases or small number of cases
- The Comparative Method
- How to select cases

Feb 11 Lecture 10: **Comparative Analysis and Comparative-Historical Research**
- **Reading I:** Explorations, chapter 7
- **Short reading quiz**

Week 6:
Conference 4: Watch SPSS video 4

Feb 16 Lecture 11: **Ethnography**, Prof. Oxhorn
- **Reading I:** Chapter 9 in Social Research Methods (Bryman et al)
- **Reading II:** Auyero, Javier, 2011. “Patients of the State: An Ethnographic Account of Poor People’s Waiting,” *Latin American Research Review*, 46:1, pp. 5-29 ([http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/latin_american_research_review/v046/46.1.auyero.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/latin_american_research_review/v046/46.1.auyero.html)).

Feb 18 Lecture 12: **Process Tracing and Causal Mechanisms**, Prof. Pouliot
- Neopositivism, Realism, Analyticism
- How to process trace

Week 7:
Conference : no conference this week

**Feb 23 In Class-Midterm**

**Module: Quantitative Methods**

Feb 25 Lecture 13: **Survey Research**, Prof. Gidengil
- **Reading I:** Explorations, Chapter 10
- **Short reading quiz**
Week 8:
Feb 29-March 4, Reading Week

Week 9:
Conference #5: Watch
March 8 Lecture 15: **Making Sense of Data: Measuring and Describing Variables**
- Data Matrix
- Descriptive Statistics
- Graphical Presentation of Data
- **Reading I**: Explorations, chapter 14
- **Reading II**: Pollock III: chapter 2

March 10 Lecture 16: **Basics of Statistical Inference**
- Significance tests
- Confidence Intervals and Confidence Levels
- Relationship between two variables, measures of associations, crosstabs
- **Reading**: Explorations, chapter 15;
- **Recommended Reading**: TBD: Johnson et al chapter 13; Pollock III ch 6
- **Reading quiz**
- Assignment #7

Week 10:
Conference #6
March 15 Lecture 17: **Assumptions of Linear Regression**, Prof. Proksch
- Correlations
- Bivariate and multivariate regression
- Cautions about regression: lurking variables and outliers
- **Reading**: Explorations chapter 17

March 17 Lecture 18: **Comparison of Means and Strengths of Relationships**
- Direction and Strengths of Relationships
- Comparing means between groups
- **Reading**: Explorations chapter 16;
- **Reading quiz**
- Assignment #8

Week 11:
Conference #7
March 22 Lecture 19: **Reading Regression Results**
- Interpretation of the linear regression model
- Visualization of regression results
- Discussion of substantive versus statistical significance
- **Reading I**: Johnson et al Chapter 14
- **Reading Quiz**
March 24: No Lecture, finish the graded assignment
  • Assignment #9

Module: Text Analysis

Week 12:
Conference #8
March 29: Lecture 20: Textual Interpretation and Analysis, Prof. Abizadeh
  • Reading I: Explorations, chapter 12
  • Reading II: TBA

March 31: Lecture 21: Content Analysis I: Dictionary-based methods, Prof. Gidengil
  • Reading quiz
  • Assignment #10

Week 13:
Conference #9
April 5 Lecture 22: Content Analysis II: Estimating Ideology from Political Texts, Prof. Proksch
  • Classifying and scaling documents

Module: Experimental Analysis

April 7 Lecture 23: The Logic of Experiments in Political Science
  • Reading I: Explorations, Chapter 11
  • Reading quiz
  • Assignment #12
Week 14:

No conference

**April 12: Lecture 24: Natural Experiments, Field Experiments and Lab Experiments**


**April 14: Midterm II**