

Advanced Research Design
PS 9502a
University of Western Ontario
Fall 2020

Class Information:

Tuesday 9:30am-11:30am
Online (link will be posted on OWL)

Instructor Information:

Dr. Laura Stephenson
Office: SSC 4228
Office Hours: Thursday 1-3pm or by appointment

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Course Description:

The objective of this course is to provide PhD students with an understanding of the fundamental principles that underlie research in political science. By the end of the course students will be able to recognize the value of different approaches, and will be able to critically evaluate the theories, empirical strategies, causal claims and validity of other research. They will also have an appreciation for the wide variety of political science research that exists and the many ways to approach a research question. By the end of the course each student will be a better reader of research and will also have a better understanding of how to conduct an original research project for their dissertation.

Learning Objectives:

- This course will help you to understand how the scientific method can be applied to political science and also why many political scientists object to that characterization.
- By the end of this course, you should be able to identify and assess the positive and negative qualities of major approaches to the study of political problems.
- Through the topics covered, you will gain an appreciation of major issues related to research design.
- You will be able to navigate major issues of research design with your own research questions.

Course Materials:

Required Books *[both are available through the library electronically]*

- John Gerring, 2012, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*, (New York: Cambridge University Press). [referred to as Gerring below] ISBN: 9780521132770
- Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, 1994, *Designing Social Inquiry*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press). [referred to as KKV below] ISBN: 9780691034713

Note: Readings not included in these books will be available electronically, either on the course OWL site or through one of the library's database. A search for the journal title on the main library site will usually turn up the electronic site.

Assignments:

Participation – 10%
Class Preparation – 15%

Methodology Comment Papers – 15%

Book Review – 20%

1/ Overview – 10%

2/ Critique of Methodology – 10%

Research Proposal – 40%

1/ Outline – 5%

2/ Peer Critique – 5%

3/ Proposal – 30%

Participation (10%)

All students are expected to be active participants in the class. This means being prepared by finishing the assigned readings, **preparing two discussion questions for the week (to be posted online by 9am before class)**, and engaging in discussion.

Class Preparation (15%)

This course has been designed to engage students directly in the material that will be covered. In several of the weeks a student will be responsible for choosing readings (to be provided one week in advance on OWL and different from those included in the PS9501a syllabus) and leading the class discussion. The readings chosen should complement the ones already assigned and introduce additional angles of discussion. This might include contradictory views to the recommendations from Gerring or KKV, or examples of literature that include that element of research. Students will be evaluated on their selection of readings (including diversity and sources) as well as how they conduct the class discussion (including how they incorporate the reading materials). Students are also required to write a two-page reflection that evaluates their choice of articles, how the articles did or did not engage their fellow students, and the positive and negative aspects of their experience. The article reflections are meant to be written soon after class concludes and are due by Friday of that week at noon.

Methodology Comment Papers (15% - 5% each)

Due Dates: September 29, October 13 and 20

For specific methodology topics that we cover (September 22, 29, October 6, 13), students are required to hand in a comment paper that addresses how the issues raised in the readings apply to their own research project *the following week* (September 29 and October 6 are considered one topic). These comment papers will help students to work through aspects of methodology as they relate to their own projects and will form the basis of their research design paper. Papers should be minimum 3 – maximum 5 pages in length, double-spaced.

Book Review:

Students will choose a book from the list below (or one agreed upon by the instructor) and prepare a book review in two parts. The first part, due **September 22**, should provide an overview of the book in which the author's approach, research design, methodology and major findings/conclusions are identified. It should be at least 3 and no more than 5 pages (double-spaced) in length. The second part is due **October 27** and will be a critique of the author's methodology. Students should consider the appropriateness of the methodology for the research question, how the methodology and evidence used did or did not influence the conclusions reached, and whether an alternative approach may be used with reason. This part of the assignment should also be at least 3 and no more than 5 pages (double-spaced). **EACH STUDENT MUST CHOOSE A UNIQUE BOOK**, so that these book reviews can be shared with other members of the class to help build a personal "library" of information about different research projects.

- Marshall Sahlins, *How "Natives" Think*, University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions*, Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- André Blais, *To Vote or Not To Vote*, Pittsburgh University Press, 2000.
- Neil Nevitte, *The Decline of Deference*, Broadview Press, 1996.
- Michael Lewis-Beck, *Economics and Elections*, University of Michigan Press, 1988.
- Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Peter Hall, *Governing the Economy*, Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Ronald Rogowski, *Commerce and Coalitions*, Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Gosta Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Princeton University Press, 1990.
- Miriam Golden, *Heroic Defeats*, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, Yale University Press, 1985.
- Jared M. Diamond, *Collapse*, Viking Press, 2005.
- Thomas Scheffer, *Adversarial Case-Making: An Ethnography of English Crown Court Procedure*, Brill, 2010.

Research Design Paper (40%)

Outline – 5% - Due November 10

Draft Paper – Due December 1

Peer critique – 5% - Due December 8

Final submission – 30% - Due December 15

This is the major assignment of the course. Students are expected to prepare a research proposal applying the knowledge they gained throughout the course to a research topic (hopefully, a tentative dissertation idea). The proposal should identify the topic, provide a review of existing literature on the topic, state the hypotheses to be examined, develop the concepts, and outline the procedure (operationalization, measurement, data) to be used. Explicit details about specific data gathering techniques (i.e., archival work, experiments, interviews or surveys) are not expected, but a clear discussion of the type of data that is required to address the research question should be provided. Students are expected to reference readings from class to justify their choices. Papers should be at least 15 and no more than 17 pages, double-spaced, with 12-pt font and one-inch margins, use Chicago style for referencing (<https://www.lib.uwo.ca/files/styleguides/ChicagoStyleAuthorDate.pdf>), footnotes instead of endnotes, and include a reference list.

An outline of the research design is due on **November 10** (to be submitted through OWL). This will be an opportunity for feedback and a check against any major issues that would make the proposal less successful. The first draft of this research design is due on **December 1**. Drafts will be distributed to designated discussants (other students) so that peer critiques can be prepared for the Proposal Workshop on **December 8**. The peer critiques should be submitted to the instructor through OWL for grading as well as provided to the author at the Proposal Workshop. At the Proposal Workshop, each student will present his/her research proposal (8-10 minutes). Discussants will then present their critiques (5 minutes). Time will also be set aside for general discussion and comments from the MA and MRPE students. Students will have the opportunity to revise their papers in light of the comments and discussion at the Proposal Workshop. The final paper is due to the instructor on **December 15** (to be submitted through OWL).

Topics and Readings

September 8

Is Political Science a science?

Choose a reading that demonstrates an appealing research approach for your own research by **Friday, September 11**. These will be added to the list for everyone to read next week.

- A. F. Chalmers, 1999, *What is this thing called science?* 3rd edition, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company) Only chapters 1, 5-9 are required.
[https://fenix.ciencias.ulisboa.pt/downloadFile/563087392374786/\[Alan_Chalmers\]_What_Is_This_Thing_Called_Science.pdf](https://fenix.ciencias.ulisboa.pt/downloadFile/563087392374786/[Alan_Chalmers]_What_Is_This_Thing_Called_Science.pdf)
- William H. Riker, 1982, "The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 76(4): 753-766.
- Mark Blyth, 2006, "Great Punctuations: Prediction, Randomness, and the Evolution of Comparative Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 100(4): 493-498.

September 15

Approaches

- David Marsh and Paul Furlong, 2002, "A Skin not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science," in *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 2nd edition, ed. David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Gerring, ch. 1
- TBD

September 22

Research Questions and Theories

Book Review Part 1 Due

- Gerring, chs. 2-4
- KKV, ch. 1.
- Gary King, 2020, "So You're a Grad Student Now? Maybe You Should Do This." In *Sage Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science and International Relations*, ed. Luigi Curini and Robert J. Franzese, Jr. (Sage Publications).
- Jeffrey W. Knopf, 2006, "Doing a Literature Review," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(1): 127-132.

September 29

Description, Conceptualization and Measurement (I)

Methodology Comment Paper #1 Due

- Gerring, chs. 5-7
- KKV, ch. 2
- Kevin Munger, 2020, "In Favour of Quantitative Description,"
<https://kevinmunger.substack.com/p/in-favor-of-quantitative-description>

October 6

Description, Conceptualization and Measurement (II)

- Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, 2012, "Concepts and measurement: Ontology and epistemology," *Social Science Information* 51(2): 205-216.
- David Collier and Steven Levitsky, 1997, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," 49(3): 430-451.
- Siddhartha Baviskar and Mary Frane T. Malone, 2004, "What Democracy Means to Citizens – and Why It Matters," *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 76: 3-23.
- Amanda Bittner and Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant. 2017. "Sex Isn't Gender: Reforming Concepts and Measurements in the Study of Public Opinion." *Political Behavior* 39(4): 1019–41.
- Alexander Wuttke, Christian Schimpf and Harald Schoen, 2020, "When the Whole Is Greater than the Sum of Its Parts," *American Political Science Review* 114(2): 356-374.
- Vasja Vehovar, Pavle Sicherl, Tobias Hüsing and Vesna Dolnicar, 2006,

“Methodological Challenges of Digital Divide Measurements,” *The Information Society* 22(5): 279-290.

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| <p>October 13 Causality <i>Methodology Comment</i> <i>Paper #2 Due</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerring, ch. 8 • KKV, ch. 3 • TBD |
| <p>October 20 Comparative Method and Experiments <i>Methodology Comment</i> <i>Paper #3 Due</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerring, ch. 9 • TBD |
| <p>October 27 Case Studies and Process Tracing <i>Book Review Part 2 Due</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerring, ch. 10 • TBD |
| <p>November 3</p> | <p>Fall Break – No class</p> |
| <p>November 10 Fieldwork, Focus Groups and Interviews <i>Research Design Outline</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerring, ch. 12 • KKV, ch. 6 |
| <p>November 17 Sampling, Surveys and Questionnaires</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gerring, ch. 11 |
| <p>November 24 Mixing Methods</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KKV, chs. 4-5 |
| <p>December 1 Ethics <i>Research Design Draft</i> <i>Due for Peer Comment</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, ch. 1 (Ethics Framework). http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/ • Review NMREB process at Western: http://www.uwo.ca/research/services/ethics/nonmedical_reb/submission.html • Tony Porter, 2008, “Research Ethics Governance and Political Science in Canada,” <i>PS: Political Science & Politics</i> 4(3): 495-499. • Christie Aschwanden and Maggie Koerth-Baker, 2016, “How Two Grad Students Uncovered An Apparent Fraud - And A Way To Change Opinions On Transgender Rights.” https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-two-grad-students-uncovered-michael-lacour-fraud-and-a-way-to-change-opinions-on-transgender-rights/ • Arthur Lupia and Colin Elman, 2014, “Openness in Political Science: Data Access and Research Transparency.” <i>PS: Political Science & Politics</i> 47(1): 19-42. • Laura R. Woliver, 2002, “Ethical Dilemmas in Personal Interviewing,” <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i> 35(4): 677-678. |
| <p>December 8 Proposal Workshop <i>Research Design Critique</i> <i>Due</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PhD students will present their research proposals and receive prepared feedback from their discussant. MA students will be the audience. Time for open discussion will be set aside for each paper. RESEARCH DESIGN PAPERS ARE DUE DECEMBER 15 |