

Scope and Methods in Political Science
PS 9501a
University of Western Ontario
Fall 2015

Class Information:

Thursday 9:30am-11:20am SSC 4255

Instructor Information:

Dr. Cameron Anderson

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Office Hours: Thursday 12pm-1:30pm

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Course Description:

The objective of this course is to provide MA students with an understanding of research methods used in the discipline. There are many ways of doing political science. Too often, practitioners who use one method fail to recognize the utility of others. By the end of the course students will be able to recognize the value of using different methodological approaches for different research questions. Students will also be able to critically evaluate the methodological approaches of others.

Note:

One's choice of approach, method and analysis can be a controversial decision. Many supporters of specific methods are unsympathetic to others. This course endeavours to present an encompassing overview of the various approaches and methodologies in political science, and thoughtful critiques of all methods will be encouraged. Students are expected to come into the course with an open mind and be prepared to learn, think, analyze, challenge, and come out with a much greater understanding of how research is conducted by political scientists.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completing this course, students will be able to critically identify different ontological and epistemological approaches in the study of politics; will develop a critical understanding of different methodologies in the study of political science; will be able to communicate about political science research in a variety of verbal and written formats.

Required Books:

Marsh, Michael and Gerry Stoker (eds.). XXXX. *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. Palgrave (3rd edition)

Shively, W. Philip. 2013. *The Craft of Political Research*. Pearson. (9th edition)

All other course readings will be available online or in .pdf format on OWL.

Grade Distribution:

20% Participation

30% Article Comparison

50% Research Proposal

Discussion of Coursework:

a) Class Participation - As this is a graduate seminar course, there will be no formal lectures and students are expected to attend and to actively participate each week. The participation grade will be based on the quality of comment, evidence of preparation, willingness to challenge accepted ideas and concern for the views expressed by others. If unable to attend, please inform the instructor in advance. Students will be given a preliminary grade for participation in the seventh week of the course although this implies no guarantee of a final participation grade.

b) Article Comparison Paper – This assignment requires you to select two scholarly articles that address a similar substantive topic within political science (e.g. protest activities; state aggression; policy choices; etc.). However, the articles must approach the common topic using entirely different ontologies, theories and methods. Your task is to write a paper that compares and contrasts the underlying assumptions, theories, research design and methodologies drawn upon in the two articles you choose. The paper must address the relative utility of each article's approach. For the benefit of the reader, the assignment should commence with a brief introduction of the substantive topic as well as the main findings in each article. The assignment is due on **October 22nd** and is worth 30% of your total grade. The paper should be 7-8 double-spaced pages using 12-point font.

c) Research Proposal Paper – In this assignment you are required to draft a research proposal. To work through the paper, I want you to draw on readings, themes and insights from the Scope and Methods course as a whole and apply them to a topic of your choosing. While you are not to carry out any original research to complete the assignment, the paper must include an identifiable topic and research question, a literature review, research design and expected methodological choices for reaching conclusions that bear upon your research question. This assignment is due on **December 10th** at 3pm and is worth 50% of your final grade. The paper should be 14-16 double-spaced pages using 12-point font.

Course Policies:**PENALTIES FOR LATE ASSIGNMENTS:**

Assignments handed in after the due date and time (beginning of class) will be subject to a 5% penalty off the final grade out of 100%. The penalty for each day after the due date will be 2.5%. Exceptions will only be granted for valid and documented health reasons, at the discretion of the Professor.

Topics and Readings:

1. September 10 – Introduction

2. September 17 - Research, Knowledge and Knowing

- Marsh and Stoker, Chapter 9
- Ball, Terence. 1976. "From Paradigms to Research Programs." *American Journal of Political Science* 20(1): 151-175.
- Fay, Brian and J. Donald Moon, 1977, "What Would an Adequate Philosophy of Social science Look Like?" *Philosophy of Social Science* 7: 209-227.
- Guba, Egon and Yvonne S. Lincoln, 2004, "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues," in *Approaches to Qualitative Research*, ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, (New York: Oxford University Press).

3. September 24 – Positivism, or the "Science" in Political Science

- Marsh and Stoker, ch. 1
- King, Gary and Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, 1994, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), ch. 1.
- Plumper, Thomas and Eric Neumayer. 2006. "The Unequal Burden of War: The Effect of Armed Conflict on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy." *International Organization*, 60, 3, Summer: 723-54.

4. October 1 - Rational Choice, Institutionalism and Path Dependence

- Marsh and Stoker, chs. 2 and 3
- Peters, Guy. 2005. *Institutional Theory in Political Science*. Continuum Press: London, UK. Ch.1.
- Pierson, Paul. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 94(2): 251-67.
- Bunce, Valerie. 1999. *Subversive Institutions*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. Chapters 1 and 2

5. October 8 - Critical Approaches to Political Science

- Marsh and Stoker, chs. 6 and 7
- Carroll, Susan J. and Linda G. Zerilli. 1993. "Feminist Challenges to Political Science," in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, ed. Ada W. Finifter (Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association).
- McGarry, John and Brendan O'Leary. 1995. *Explaining Northern Ireland*. Blackwell Publishers: Oxford, UK.

6. October 15 - Interpretivist Approaches to Political Science

- Marsh and Stoker, ch. 4

- Schwartz, Joel. D. 1984. "Participation and Multisubjective Understanding: An Interpretivist Approach to the Study of Political Participation," *The Journal of Politics* 46(4): 1117-1141.
- Edelman, Murray. 1985. "Political Language and Political Reality," *PS* 18(1): 10-19.

7. **October 22 - Research Design and Conceptualization**

- Mair, Peter. 2008. "Concepts and Concept Formation" in Della Porta and Keating (eds.) *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Shively, W. Philip. 2013. *The Craft of Political Research*. Pearson. (9th edition) Chapters 4-6
- Marsh and Stoker, ch. 11

8. **November 5 – Measurement, Sampling and Issues of Validity**

- Shively, W. Philip. 2013. *The Craft of Political Research*. Pearson. (9th edition) Chapter 7
- Lincoln, Yvonna. 1995. "Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 1(3): 275-289.
- Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the cases you choose affect the answers you get," *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150.

9. **November 12 - Research Using Existing Resources**

- Lustick, Ian. S. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," *American Political Science Review* 90(3): 605-618.
- Singleton, Jr., Royce and Bruce C. Straits. 2005. *Approaches to Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press. ch.11.
- Golden, Miriam. 2001, "Why Do Trade Unions Call Strikes That Seem Sure to Fail?" in *Political Science as Puzzle Solving*, ed. Bernard Grofman. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

10. **November 19 - Qualitative Research**

- Marsh and Stoker, ch. 12
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, ed. Michael Martin and Lee C. McIntyre. Cambridge: MIT Press. ch. 14.
- Fenno, Jr., Richard. 1986. "Observation, Context, and Sequence in the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80(1): 3-15.
- Gerring, John. 2004, "What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?" *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 341-54.

11. November 26 - Quantitative Research

- Shively, W. Philip. 2013. *The Craft of Political Research*. Pearson. (9th edition) Chapters 8, 9, 10
- Anderson, Cameron and Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant. 2008. "Youth Turnout: Adolescent Attitudes toward Political Involvement in Ontario," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* vol. 41, 3, September.
- Marsh and Stoker, ch. 15

12. December 3 – Research Ethics

- Ellis, Carolyn. 2007. "Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives," *Qualitative Inquiry* 13(1): 3-29.
- Singleton, Jr., Royce and Bruce C. Straits. 2005. *Approaches to Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press. ch.16.
- Woliver, Laura. 2002. "Ethical Dilemmas in Personal Interviewing," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4): 677-678.