

**Research Design
PS 9501A
University of Western Ontario
Fall 2022**

Class Information:

Thursday 9:30am-11:20am SSC 7200

Instructor Information:

Dr. Cameron Anderson

Office: SSC 7312

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 the fundamental principles of research design in political science. 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 and will be able to critically evaluate the theories, methodological choices, causal claims and validity of other research.

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 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 develop a critical understanding of the issues and decision points in political science research design; will be able to communicate about political science research in a variety of verbal and written formats.

Required Books:

Gerring, John. 2012. *Social Science Methodology*. 2nd edition Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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

Grade Distribution:

25% Participation

25% Approaches Paper

50% Article Comparison paper

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. Should class participation be uneven and/or underwhelming, the instructor reserves the right to add a short weekly assignment of preparing and submitting three questions for discussion of that week's readings. An announcement and further directions on this change will be made by **October 6th**.

b) Approaches Paper – In this paper, you are expected to choose an approach from among those discussed during the **September 22/29** weeks of the course and develop an argument for why you believe this is the preferred approach relative to others for addressing your research interests. You must defend your chosen approach against at least **two** other approaches discussed from these weeks. The intent of this assignment is for you to reflect on your preferred theoretical approach and consider the strengths and weaknesses of it for considering your research interests. Please provide a clear indication of your research interests. There is no need to do additional research beyond the readings on the course outline. The assignment should be 7-8 (double-spaced) pages and is due on **October 6th at 9:30am**.

c) 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; democratization; policy choices; etc.). The assignment has two central parts and in both you should draw upon topics, discussions and reading material from the course. The first is to compare and contrast the underlying assumptions, theories, research design choices and methodologies used in the two articles you choose. In the second part of the paper, you are to assess how the methodological choices of each article contributed to similarities and differences in findings. For the benefit of the reader, the assignment should commence with a brief introduction of the substantive topic as well as the main findings from each article. The assignment is due on **December 13th at 4pm** and is worth 50% of your total grade. The paper should be 14-16 double-spaced pages long.

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 instructor.

Topics and Readings:

September 8 – Introduction

September 15 – Is Social (Political) Science a science?

- King, G., R. Keohane and S. Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Ch. 1
- Gerring Ch. 1
- Grant, Ruth. 2002. “Political Theory, Political Science and Politics.” *Political Theory* 30 (4): 577-95.
- Shapiro, Ian. 2002. “What’s wrong with Political Science.” *Political Theory* 30 (4):595-619

September 22/September 29 – Approaches in Social Science

- Della Porta, Donatella and Michael Keating (eds.). 2008. *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 (available online through UWO libraries)
- Marsh, David 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).
- Maguire, Diarmuid. 2010. “Marxism.” In Marsh and Stoker (eds.) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. 3rd edition Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- 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.

October 6 – Research Questions and Theories

- Gerring Ch. 2-4
- Gustafsson, K. and Hagström, L., 2018. What is the point? teaching graduate students how to construct political science research puzzles. *European Political Science*, 17(4), pp.634-648.

October 13 – Description and Conceptualization

- Gerring Ch. 5, 6
- Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Altman, D., Bernhard, M., Fish, S., Hicken, A., Kroenig, M., Lindberg, S.I., McMann, K., Paxton, P. and Semetko, H.A., 2011. Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: A new approach. *Perspectives on Politics*, 9(2), pp.247-267.

October 20 – Measurement

- Gerring Ch. 7
- King, G., R. Keohane and S. Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Ch. 5
- Bittner, A. and Goodyear-Grant, E., 2017. Sex isn’t gender: Reforming concepts and measurements in the study of public opinion. *Political Behavior*, 39(4), pp.1019-1041.

October 27 - Causality

- Gerring Ch. 8, 9
- Ruffa, C. and Evangelista, M., 2021. Searching for a middle ground? A spectrum of views of causality in qualitative research. *Italian Political Science Review/Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, pp.1-18.
- Holtug, N., 2017. Identity, causality and social cohesion. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43(7), pp.1084-1100.

November 3 – No Class – Fall Reading Week

November 10 – Comparative Method and Experiments

- Gerring Ch. 10
- Lijphart, A., 1975. II. The comparable-cases strategy in comparative research. *Comparative political studies*, 8(2), pp.158-177.
- Ragin, Charles. 1987. *The Comparative Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press Ch. 6 (Available online through JSTOR)
- McDermott, R., 2002. Experimental methods in political science. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 5(1), pp.31-61.
- Enos, R., & Fowler, A. (2018). Aggregate Effects of Large-Scale Campaigns on Voter Turnout. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 6(4), 733-751. doi:10.1017/psrm.2016.21

November 17 - Process Tracing and Studying Cases

- Gerring, J. (2004). "What is a Case Study and What is it Good for?" *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 341-354.
- Seawright, J. and J. Gerring. (2008). "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2): 294-308.
- Collier, D. (2011). "Understanding Process Tracing," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44(4): 823-30.
- Brady, H. E. (2010). "Data-Set Observations versus Causal-Process Observations: The 2000 U.S. Presidential Election." In *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, 2nd ed., ed. Henry E. Brady and David Collier (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

November 24 - Qualitative Observational Data

- Banack, C. (2021). Ethnography and Political Opinion: Identity, Alienation and Anti-establishmentarianism in Rural Alberta. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 54(1), 1-22. doi:10.1017/S0008423920000694
- Wood, E. (2007). "Field Research," in *The Handbook of Comparative Politics*, ed. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (New York: Oxford University Press), ch. 5 (pp. 123-146).
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). Continuing the design: making the research credible. In *Qualitative interviewing (2nd ed.): The art of hearing data*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Various authors, 2002, "Symposium: Interview Methods in Political Science," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4):663-688.

December 1 - Quantitative Observational Data

- Frankfort-Nachmias, C. and D. Nachmias. (2008). *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (Worth Publishers), ch. 8.
- Schaeffer, N. and S. Presser (2003). "The Science of Asking Questions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29: 65-88.
- Johnston, R. (2008). "Survey Methodology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady and David Collier (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Brady, H. (2000). "Contributions of Survey Research to Political Science," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33(1): 47-57.

December 8 - Ethics

- Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, Ch. 1 (Ethics Framework). <https://ethics.gc.ca> (click on English then "Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018)")
- Porter, T. (2008). "Research Ethics Governance and Political Science in Canada," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 4(3): 495-499.
- Aschwanden, C. and Koerth-Baker, M. (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/>
- Lupia, A. and Elman, C. (2014). "Openness in Political Science: Data Access and Research Transparency." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47(1): 19-42.