

**Political Science 3324G – Research Methods in Political Science
Course Outline, Winter 2013**

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Lectures: Thursday 12:30-2:30, SSC 2028.

Contact Information: Professor will do his best to reply to e-mails within 48 hours (**excluding weekends**). Note that university policy precludes the Professors and T.A.s from responding to email messages that were not sent from a Western email account.

Prerequisites:

Enrollment in Honors Political Science, Honors Specialization in Political Science, or Major in Political Science.

Anti-Requisites:

Health Sciences 2801A/B, Psychology 2800E, Psychology 2820E, and Sociology 2206A/B.

Important Notice Re: Prerequisites/Antirequisites:

Please Note: You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites, and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as a basis for an appeal. If you are found to be ineligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. This decision cannot be appealed. If you find that you do not have the course prerequisites, it is in your best interest to drop the course well before the end of the add/drop period. Your prompt attention to this matter will not only help protect your academic record, but will ensure that spaces become available for students who require the course in question for graduation.

Office of the Dean, Faculty of Social Science

Course Description:

The objective of this course is to provide political science students with an understanding of empirical research methods used in the discipline. In essence, this course is an overview of how empirical political science research is done. In addition to principles of theory development and research design, students will learn about different sources of data and will be introduced to qualitative and quantitative analysis. Topics covered include designing a research project, identifying causal relationships, ethical considerations in research and various data gathering methods (such as interviews, focus groups, experiments, surveys, etc.). At the end of the course, students

will understand the principles of empirical research, appreciate the differences and similarities between qualitative and quantitative methods, be able to critically evaluate how other people have conducted research, and be better prepared to conduct their own investigations.

Required Texts (available in UWO bookstore):

Keith Archer and Loleen Berdahl. 2011. *Explorations: Conducting Empirical Research in Canadian Political Science*, 2nd edition. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

In the rest of this syllabus this textbook will be referred to as Archer and Berdahl.

Students may be required to read a number of additional materials which will be made available through the UWO library or through the OWL course page.

Evaluation:

– ***Assignment 1: Operationalization and Measurement (15%).***

The purpose of this assignment is for students to take a concept from idea to measurement, and to gain experience looking for sources of data.

For this assignment, the student must choose a concept from the list below. The student will then write a report on how he/she would define, operationalize and measure the concept in a research setting.

The assignment should have three components. In the first section, the student must provide a nominal definition of the concept, i.e., what the concept means to them. In the second section, the student must detail how they move from a nominal definition to an operational definition, so that the concept can be measured. This entails thinking of a specific way of measuring the concept that stays true to the nominal definition. Any challenges of operationalizing the specific concept (taking it from a general concept to something that can be measured) must be outlined, as well as any decisions/assumptions made by the student in order to proceed. In the final section, the student must present two (2) realistic and viable data sources for the operationalized concept. This can be done either by providing details of existing sources (bibliographic and actual variable details must be provided, such as the name of the survey, where it can be accessed and the variable number/name) or detailing how the data could be gathered reliably (again, details must be provided). Pay particular attention to whether a concept is at the aggregate (country or group) or the individual level. This makes a difference for what would be considered appropriate data to measure the operationalized concept.

For example:

If the concept is “political participation” and the nominal definition is the aggregate level of participation in the voting process, the operational definition might be turnout in elections. For two data sources, one might be Elections

Canada statistics (with specific website reference) and the other might be Elections Ontario for provincial statistics (again, with specific references).

The assignment should be 3-5 pages in length (**double spaced, with standard margins**). Papers shorter than 3 pages or longer than 5 pages are subject to a grade penalty.

Concepts:

1. Democracy
2. Partisanship
3. Happiness
4. Ethnic conflict
5. Democratic failure
6. Political sophistication

– ***Assignment 2: Poll Analysis (15%).***

The purpose of this assignment is to give students a chance to see how sampling and question wording, among other methodological choices, can influence data.

For this assignment, students must choose two (2) poll questions from two (2) different sources on the same topic (from IPSOS, Pollara, Leger, etc.). Polls must be of the same population (country, group, etc.) within a 5 year period. For example, if the student is interested in attitudes about the environment he/she can find two poll questions (one from 2000, one from 2002) that ask individuals for their opinion about the state of the environment in Canada. ODESI (<http://search1.odesi.ca/home/index.html>) is a good source for polls. You can search by keywords. If you need assistance with the website, please make an appointment to meet with the professor.

There are two parts to the written assignment. In the first section, students must discuss the polls individually (methodology (e.g., sampling and question wording, among other things) and present the results (including the margin of error). In the second section, the students must compare the results (whether they provide similar or different information about the population) and discuss whether the methodology used (for example, timing, location, question wording, format) could explain the similarities/differences. The analysis should be 4-5 pages in length. Papers shorter than 4 pages or longer than 5 pages are subject to a grade penalty.

– ***Critical Analysis (25%)***

The purpose of this assignment is to give students an opportunity to apply what they have learned in class to the analysis of a scholarly article.

Students must choose an article from a scholarly journal to analyze for this assignment. If there is any doubt, please ask if a journal is appropriate. The student is expected to analyze the article in two parts: a critical summary and an

evaluation of the research design. The assignment should be 5-7 pages in length (**double spaced, with standard margins**). Papers shorter than 5 pages or longer than 7 pages are subject to a grade penalty.

Part A: Critical Summary

Students must identify the research question, identify the hypotheses, summarize the procedure that the researcher used, and outline the findings. Enough detail should be provided to give a clear idea of what the researcher was studying, how data was gathered for the analysis, what the findings were, and what the researcher concluded about the research question and hypotheses.

Part B: Evaluation of Research Design

Students are expected to critically analyze the conclusions that the author reaches in light of the particular research design and methodology used. Students must evaluate the appropriateness of the research design for the topic under study, the contributions that researching the topic that way make to the overall study of the topic, and whether a different research angle might have been more appropriate.

– **Midterm (15%)**

Midterm will be composed of a number of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. Guidance on how to prepare for the midterm will be provided in class.

– **Final Exam (30%).**

Final exam will be composed of a number of multiple choice, short-answer and essay questions. Guidance on how to prepare for the final exam will be provided during the last week of classes.

Important Policies:

Late penalties: Assignments are due during class on the date indicated (hard copies must be provided). Submissions after class are considered a day late. The late penalty for assignments is 5% per day, including weekends. Papers more than 5 days late **WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR GRADING**. If you expect to submit your assignment late please let the professor know so that he can provide information about how/where to submit.

Extensions: Extensions will not be granted. However, when there are genuine and unavoidable circumstances, you may request an extension in writing. All relevant documentation must be provided to Academic Counselling. Requests must be made **at least one week** in advance of the assignment's due date (unless there are exceptional circumstances).

Academic Accommodation: If a situation should arise such that you require accommodation because of a medical or personal issue, Academic Counselling (in the Social Science Centre) is available to help you. You can talk to a counsellor, who can

then pass along to me any recommendations for accommodation. This procedure means that you do not have to provide me with any details of your situation, but ensures that the proper documentation has been provided. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SPEAK WITH A COUNSELLOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER AN ISSUE ARISES. Academic accommodation will ONLY be provided if you speak with an Academic Counsellor and provide them with documentation of your issue, and if the issue is brought to their attention in a timely fashion

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:

January 9th – Week 1: Introduction to the Course

Readings: None.

January 16th – Week 2: Social Science Research/Theory – Research and Causation

Readings:

- Archer and Berdahl, chapters 1 and 2.

January 23rd – Week 3: Designing a Research Project – Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement

Readings:

- Archer and Berdahl, chapters 3 and 4.

January 30th – Week 4: The Comparative Method and Experiments

****OPERATIONALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT ASSIGNMENT DUE****

Readings:

- Archer and Berdahl, chapters 6, 7, and 11.
- Vuk Radmilovic (2010). "A Strategic Approach to Judicial Legitimacy: Supreme Court of Canada and the *Marshall Case*," *Review of Constitutional Studies*, Volume 15, Issue 1, pp. 77-115.

February 6th – Week 5: Sampling and Survey Research

Readings:

- Archer and Berdahl, chapters 8 and 9.
- Steve Ladurantaye, *Globe & Mail*, "When polls differ, pollsters worry", April 27, 2011.

February 13th – Week 6: Content Analysis **POLL ASSIGNMENT DUE**

Readings:

- Archer and Berdahl, chapters 12.

February 20th – Week 7: Reading Week. **NO CLASSES**

February 27th – Week 8: **MIDTERM**

Readings: NONE.

March 6th – Week 9: Interviews, Observation and Focus Groups

Readings:

- Archer and Berdahl, chapters 13 and 14.

March 13th – Week 10: Qualitative Analysis and Interpretation

Readings:

- Archer and Berdahl, chapter 19.

March 20th – Week 11: Quantitative Analysis (1)

Readings:

- Archer and Berdahl, chapters 15 and 16.

March 27th – Week 12: Quantitative Analysis (2)

Readings:

- Archer and Berdahl, chapters 17 and 18.

April 3rd – Week 13: Ethics + Review and Exam Preparation

Readings:

- Archer and Berdahl, chapter 5.

**APPENDIX TO UNDERGRADUATE COURSE OUTLINES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

Prerequisite checking - the student's responsibility

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

Essay course requirements

With the exception of 1000-level courses, most courses in the Department of Political Science are essay courses. Total written assignments (excluding examinations) will be at least 3,000 words in Politics 1020E, at least 5,000 words in a full course numbered 2000 or above, and at least 2,500 words in a half course numbered 2000 or above.

Use of Personal Response Systems ("Clickers")

"Personal Response Systems ("clickers") may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning.

Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence,
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence."

Security and Confidentiality of Student Work (refer to current *Western Academic Calendar* (<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/>))

"**Submitting or Returning Student Assignments, Tests and Exams** - All student assignments, tests and exams will be handled in a secure and confidential manner. Particularly in this respect, leaving student work unattended in public areas for pickup is not permitted."

Duplication of work

Undergraduate students who submit similar assignments on closely related topics in two different courses must obtain the consent of both instructors prior to the submission of the assignment. If prior approval is not obtained, each instructor reserves the right not to accept the assignment.

Grade adjustments

In order to ensure that comparable standards are applied in political science courses, the Department may require instructors to adjust final marks to conform to Departmental guidelines.

Academic Offences

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>."

Submission of Course Requirements

ESSAYS, ASSIGNMENTS, TAKE-HOME EXAMS **MUST** BE SUBMITTED ACCORDING TO PROCEDURES SPECIFIED BY YOUR INSTRUCTOR (I.E., IN CLASS, DURING OFFICE HOURS, TA'S OFFICE HOURS) OR UNDER THE INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE DOOR.

THE MAIN OFFICE DOES NOT DATE-STAMP OR ACCEPT ANY OF THE ABOVE.

Note: Information excerpted and quoted above are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/>

Students registered in Social Science should refer to <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/> <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/havingproblems.asp> for information on Medical Policy, Term Tests, Final Examinations, Late Assignments, Short Absences, Extended Absences, Documentation and other Academic Concerns. Non-Social Science students should refer to their home faculty's academic counselling office.

Plagiarism

"Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence." (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking: "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."

Multiple-choice tests/exams: "Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating."

Note: Information excerpted and quoted above are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/>

PLAGIARISM*

In writing scholarly papers, you must keep firmly in mind the need to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged borrowing of another writer's words or ideas. Different forms of writing require different types of acknowledgement. The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of publication, and page number.

Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writers' ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source, these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases in their suspension from the University.

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Adopted by the council of the Faculty of Social Science, October, 1970; approved by the Dept. of History August 13, 1991

Accessibility at Western: Please contact poliscie@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.