

Research Methods in Political Science – 3324G  
Course Outline – Winter 2015

Course Instructor and Location:

Instructor: Rob Leone  
Office Hours: Thursday – 14h30 to 15h30 (please e-mail for an appointment)  
Office: SSC 4140  
Telephone: 519-661-2111 ext. 84929  
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Lectures: Thursday 12h30 to 14h20  
Classroom: UCC-56

Course Overview & Learning Objectives:

This course introduces students to quantitative and qualitative research methods used in the social sciences. It is designed to get students acquainted with these research methods that will help them in their current studies and prepare them for life after Western.

Conducting good research certainly is a goal of this course, and there is a method to the madness. However, we are not solely preoccupied with conducting good research for ourselves, but this course will also prepare students for analyzing whether research is good or bad in a critical fashion.

The approach taken in this course is one that understands that not everyone will become a graduate student. However, we will all embark on some level of analysis with future research. That analysis might be related to reading about a study in popular media, it may be about reading a study related to our work, and it may be related to a student's desire to conduct a research study on their own.

By the end of the course, students will meet the following learning objectives:

- Demonstrate knowledge of diverse theories and methodological approaches in political science
- Discuss the research and knowledge in Political Science is informed by research in other Social Sciences
- Apply their understanding of qualitative and quantitative methods in political science to critically evaluate current research
- Recognize the ethical dimensions of problem identification and methodology
- Explain how theoretical approaches inform and influence the choice of research methods
- Recognize the limits of their own political knowledge, in light of exposure to information, concepts, theories and experience
- Recognize the ambiguity and uncertainty of Political Science; and understand the ubiquitous and controversial nature of politics
- Be able to assess evidence critically
- Communicate in a variety of formats, including written and verbal (position papers, reports and research papers)

- Communicate in an analytic and clear fashion
- Communicate to a variety of relevant audiences
- Recognize the importance of listening
- Demonstrate well developed, independent information literacy and research skills (such as those articulated by the Political Science Research Competency Guidelines adopted by the Association of College and Research Libraries)
- Use organizational skills that contribute to scholarly and personal independence
- Work effectively with others, demonstrating the skills of giving feedback to peers , responding to feedback, and resolving conflict and use of active listening
- Be able to identify goals for their own professional development and further learning

### Course Format

- A. This course will be delivered in an “inverted classroom” format. This means that students will receive an electronic lecture from the professor a couple days before class. Class time will be devoted toward working through research problems and activities. It is therefore imperative that you attend class.

### Assessment of Learning

Group work:	30%
Peer and self evaluation:	20%
Final Exam:	50%

### Expectations:

Students are expected to attend lectures, read the required readings, and complete all of their assignments to the best of their ability, on time, and honestly. The principles of Western's policy on academic integrity will be strictly enforced. Students should be aware of what constitutes a breach of academic honesty, and they should also be aware of other aspects of appropriate student conduct. It is expected that students attend every seminar, preferably on time.

Students who cannot complete any of the course requirements due to medical illness or bereavement are expected to follow university policies as early as possible. Students should be aware of the rules for acceptable practices in this regard.

### Group work:

Class will be divided into small groups to work on a series of assignments together. Sometimes, the assignment will take the form of critically evaluating a news article or a journal article. Sometimes, the assignment will take the form of working through a research problem collectively as a group. Your group will be asked to submit work to be assessed, and the intention is for all group members to contribute to the assignment. Class time will be devoted to completing these assignments, which allows students to work through the problems together. This collaborative approach to learning is an important aspect of this course.

Your work will be graded on the quality of its product and how well it applied the core concepts. If you did not contribute to the assignment on any given week, then you will not receive your group's marks.

### Peer and Self Evaluation:

When group work is assigned, the expectation is that all members of the group are contributing to the work conducted. A peer and self evaluation will be administered privately so that you can evaluate how effective your own group contribution, that of your peers, and as well, you will be required to write a reflection piece on what you learned in the research methods course.

### Final Exam:

Final exam will be scheduled by the Registrar's Office for the university examination period. Students will be provided guidance on how to prepare for the final exam during the last day of class.

### Required Textbooks:

- o Bryman, Alan et. al. 2012. *Social Research Methods: Third Canadian Edition*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

### Schedule of Lectures:

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Title of Lecture</b>	<b>Assigned Reading</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	January 8	Introduction to the Course	None assigned
<b>Week 2</b>	January 15	Research Designs	Chapter 1 and 2
<b>Week 3</b>	January 22	Introducing Quantitative Research	Chapter 3
<b>Week 4</b>	January 29	Questions and Questionnaires	Chapter 4 and 5
<b>Week 5</b>	February 5	Data sources	Chapter 6 and 7
<b>Week 6</b>	February 13	Introducing Qualitative Research	Chapter 8
<b>Week 7</b>	February 26	Ethnography	Chapter 9
<b>Week 8</b>	March 5	Interviews	Chapter 10
<b>Week 9</b>	March 12	Sampling	Chapter 12
<b>Week 10</b>	March 19	Breaking down the research divide	Chapter 15
<b>Week 11</b>	March 26	Content Analysis	Chapter 16
<b>Week 12</b>	April 2	Conclusion and Exam review	None Assigned

## 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:

- o the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence,
- o 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/>*

## **PLAGARISM\***

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](mailto: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.