

# POLISCI 3324F 650: Research Methods in Political Science

Professor Tyler Girard

Summer, 2019

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## Course Description

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, which will help them in their current studies and prepare them for life after Western.

Conducting good research certainly is a goal of this course, however, we are not solely preoccupied with conducting good research for ourselves; this course will also prepare students for analyzing whether all the research they may encounter in their lives, from newspaper reports of research to peer reviewed publications, can be scrutinized as being good or bad from a methodological perspective. Upon completing this course, students will be able to critically analyze such research.

The approach taken in this course is one that understands the fact that some students will go on to graduate school and others will not. We will all embark on different levels of analyses to help prepare students for whichever career path they choose. Thus, whether you are reading about a study in popular media, a reading assigned during your current undergraduate work, or a student's desire to conduct a research study on their own, this course seeks to provide you with the skills necessary to better understand research at all levels.

## Course Objectives

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

- Demonstrate knowledge of diverse theories and methodological approaches in political science
- Understand how 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
- 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

This course will be delivered in an online format. This means that students will receive an electronic lecture each week. Students will have to coordinate their schedules to complete online group assignments. It is therefore imperative that you keep up with your work. The professor will communicate with individual students and the class as whole primarily through email and OWL forums.

## Assessment of Learning

| Assignment                | Value | Due Date |
|---------------------------|-------|----------|
| Research Team Assignments | 40%   | Weekly   |
| Peer/Self Evaluation      | 10%   | July 21  |
| Final Exam                | 50%   | TBD      |

## **Student Expectations**

Students are expected to follow 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 an academic offence, and they should also be aware of other aspects of appropriate student conduct.

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

## **Group Expectations**

Class will be divided into small groups to work on a series of assignments together. Group assignment due dates are outlined below and will be posted on OWL. Group assignment instructions will be posted to OWL weekly. Students should review the course OWL site regularly. Each group will be asked to submit work to be assessed, and the intention is for all group members to contribute to the assignment. Students will need to set time aside to complete these assignments, which affords the ability for students to work through the problems together, with the professor available to help students succeed. 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 learned through the week's readings and lecture. 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 is, 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. Additional information on the Peer and Self Evaluation will be posted on OWL.

**Please be aware that your peers are counting on your participation weekly on group assignments. I accept that students will each be busy doing various things this summer, including employment, sports, etc. This is not an excuse to fail to participate. Your failure to participate will severely affect your mark. If you do not participate in the weekly assignments with your group, you will not be able to receive marks that week.**

## Final Exam

The final exam will be scheduled by the Registrar's Office for the university examination period. The exam period is from July 27 to August 1. Students will be provided guidance on how to prepare for the final exam during the last week of class.

## Required Materials

- All lecture videos and slides are available on OWL, under "Resources."
- The required text is: Bryman, Alan and Edward Bell. 2016. *Social Research Methods: Fourth Canadian Edition*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

## Communication and Evaluation Expectations

As an online course, we will be communicating primarily through email and through OWL. Please note that I check my email (tgirard2@uwo.ca) regularly and will do my best to respond to all emails within one business day, excluding weekends.

Group assignments are due on each Sunday by 11:55 PM EDT. Unless otherwise communicated, grades will be returned through OWL by the following Friday.

If you (or your group) have questions about assignments, class material, readings, etc., I strongly encourage you to reach out through the appropriate OWL forums. There is a good chance that someone else will have a similar question!

## Important Dates

### Administrative Dates

The last day to drop a summer course without penalty is **May 31**.

Please refer to: [https://www.uwo.ca/arts/counselling/registration/important\\_dates.html](https://www.uwo.ca/arts/counselling/registration/important_dates.html)

### Course Schedule

| Week    | Date    | Lecture Title                     | Assigned Reading |
|---------|---------|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Week 1  | May 6   | Course Introduction               | No Reading       |
| Week 2  | May 13  | Research Design                   | Chapter 1 & 2    |
| Week 3  | May 20  | Introducing Quantitative Research | Chapter 4        |
| Week 4  | May 27  | Questions and Questionnaires      | Chapter 5 & 6    |
| Week 5  | June 3  | Data Sources                      | Chapter 7 & 8    |
| Week 6  | June 10 | Introducing Qualitative Research  | Chapter 9        |
| Week 7  | June 17 | Ethnography                       | Chapter 10       |
| Week 8  | June 24 | Interviews                        | Chapter 11       |
| Week 9  | July 1  | Sampling                          | Chapter 12       |
| Week 10 | July 8  | Content Analysis                  | Chapter 16       |
| Week 11 | July 15 | Ethics                            | Chapter 3        |
| Week 12 | July 24 | Conclusion: Bridging the Divide   | Chapter 15       |

### Assignment Schedule

| Assignment                | Due Date              |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Week 2: Group Assignment  | May 19, 11:55 PM EDT  |
| Week 3: Group Assignment  | May 26, 11:55 PM EDT  |
| Week 4: Group Assignment  | June 2, 11:55 PM EDT  |
| Week 5: Group Assignment  | June 9, 11:55 PM EDT  |
| Week 6: NO ASSIGNMENT     | NA                    |
| Week 7: Group Assignment  | June 23, 11:55 PM EDT |
| Week 8: Group Assignment  | June 30, 11:55 PM EDT |
| Week 9: Group Assignment  | July 7, 11:55 PM EDT  |
| Week 10: Group Assignment | July 14, 11:55 PM EDT |
| Peer & Self Evaluation    | July 21, 11:55 PM EDT |
| Exam                      | TBD (July 27 - Aug 1) |

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## APPENDIX TO UNDERGRADUATE COURSE OUTLINES DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE<sup>1</sup>

### 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.

### Prerequisites

"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.

### 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.

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<sup>1</sup>Note: Information excerpted and quoted are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/>

## 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, and exams must be submitted according to procedures specified by your instructor. The main office does not date-stamp or accept any assignments.

## Academic Accommodation

Students registered in Social Science should refer to <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/> and <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

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.

**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.

**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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**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**

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**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/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.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.**

## **Attendance Regulations for Examinations**

EXAMINATIONS/ATTENDANCE (Sen. Min. Feb.4/49, May 23/58, S.94, S.3538, S.3632, S.04-097) A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations: 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year. 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

## **Medical Policy, Late Assignments, etc.**

Students registered in Social Science should refer to

[http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/having\\_problems/index.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/having_problems/index.html) 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.

## **University Policy on Cheating and Academic Misconduct**

**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."

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**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.

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## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

The Registrar's office can be accessed for Student Support Services at <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services (including the services provided by the USC listed here) can be reached at:  
<http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Services can be reached at: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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.