

POLSCI 200 - Research Methods/Sources
Online
Fall 2021

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Course Overview

This course will help you become familiar with the general approaches to research methods in political science. This course is a research methods survey course where you will learn to identify the general approaches that are utilized in political science, as well as identify the core concepts related to these methods. The goal will be achieved if, by the end of the course, you are able to read, analyze, understand, and critique the research that is done in political science.

We will cover a wide variety of topics in this course including concepts related to the scientific method, the qualitative, quantitative, and experimental research approaches. You will be assessed on your understanding of the stages of the scientific methods. In addition, you will be assessed on your knowledge of the concepts related to the major methodological approaches utilized in political science.

Course Objectives

Broadly speaking, the major task of this course is the ability to critically evaluate research conducted in the field of political science, as well as having a broad knowledge about different methodological approaches used in political science studies. Therefore, it is expected that at the end of the semester that you will be able to evaluate the appropriateness of a researcher's particular methodological choice based on the research question that is being explored.

Program Level Outcome for Political Science #3: "We seek to help our students to become independent researchers, capable of identifying and articulating hypotheses, seeking information and inputs relevant to the topic, evaluating the credibility of sources and information, applying the appropriate methods and tools for testing or exploring a hypothesis, and drawing proper conclusions based on their findings."

Measure 1: Is able to formulate research questions and place them within the context of appropriate literature.

Table 1: Measure 1: Evaluations

Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations
Is able to utilize & apply the three basic forms of inference (deduction, induction, abduction)	Is able to apply two forms of inference (deduction & induction)	Cannot apply basic forms of inference
Can critically evaluate literature appropriate to a research question	Can identify research related to a research question	Cannot identify appropriate literature for research question
Identifies appropriate research question gaps within subfields of inquiry in political science	Identifies appropriate research question within subfields of inquiry in political science	Cannot identify appropriate research question within subfields in political science

Measure 2: Can identify and critique the different methodological approaches in political science for exploring a hypothesis.

Table 2: Measure 2: Evaluations

Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations
Is able to identify the stages of the scientific method and core components within each stage	Is able to identify the stages of the scientific method	Is not able to identify the stages of the scientific method
Is able to identify and critique the different qualitative research designs	Is able to identify the different qualitative research designs	Is not able to identify the different qualitative research designs
Is able to identify the quantitative approach and critically evaluate quantitative research	Is able to identify the quantitative approach interpret the research	Is not able to identify the quantitative approach or interpret the research
Is able to identify the experimental research approach & critically evaluate research	Is able to identify the experimental research approach & interpret the research	Is not able to identify the experimental research approach or interpret research

Additional Learning Objectives

- Identify and critique scholarly peer-reviewed research.
- Create an annotated bibliography.
- Explain the distinctions between conceptualization and operationalization.
- Identify the dependent and independent variables in research studies.
- Identify the unique traits of the different methodological approaches.

Course Requirements

Online Instruction

Since the class is conducted online, attendance/participation is a difficult aspect of the course to assess. Further, several people are taking this class online because their schedules do not allow for regular, constant class attendance. Therefore, there is a great deal of leeway built into the completion of required coursework. However, it is up to you to pay attention to due dates and requirements. Finally, **you must have stable internet access for this class.** I will not at any point in the semester hear complaints regarding late assignments due to not having internet access. The level of technological knowledge for participating in this class is minimal.

In order to access content on Canvas, **you must complete a quiz dealing with the content of this syllabus.** You cannot access any material until you finish the quiz. The quiz can be attempted an unlimited number of times, cannot hurt your grade, and must be completed with a 100%. The point of the quiz is to ensure that you understand the guidelines and requirements for the class so that there is no possibility for complaints later. In addition, your completion of the syllabus quiz is a contract that both of us agree to the guidelines set forth in this class.

I expect that class reading will be done **prior to accessing the lectures**, and that students will ask questions if they are not understanding something. The lectures can be accessed immediately after you finish the previous topic.

A note about conduct: It is understandable that the class is not face-to-face, thus there is a certain level of anonymity. On rare occasions, this anonymity is accompanied by a lack of formality or professional conduct. Please take note to not be disrespectful to other students. Further, I expect that emails to me will be accompanied by a professional header, consist of a professional tone, and include formal writing (as though it were a business email). If the emails are not drafted in this manner, I will simply not respond to them. If they are written in a professional manner, you can expect a response in two business days or less.

If you need technical support, you can contact Canvas support through the help tab on Canvas. Additional help or inquiries regarding success in the class should be directed at the Student Support Services center.

Active Learning: Interaction and Feedback

The exams and assignments are intended to provide the ability for students to engage with recent political science studies. This interaction will allow for “student - instructor” interactions, whereby I will clarify misunderstandings in understanding. As your Instructor, I will take an active role in clarifying confusion and providing additional information that serves to advance student understanding in a given content area.

Active Learning: Student Engagement

The lectures will use contemporary examples of political phenomena to illustrate course concepts. These concepts, often contentious, are designed to challenge student understandings of given issues and explore new ways of analyzing institutional performance, political arguments, and political history. Therefore, students are expected to keep up with contemporary news in order to familiarize themselves with the presented issues. Present in the lectures are discussion questions that provide the opportunity to examine and assess their own understandings of new material. Although students are not expected to submit written responses to these discussion questions, this self-directed learning enables students to more fully interact with other members of class during review sessions, and clarifies points of confusion on which to seek further clarification. Again, these exercises are intended to guide students to increasing levels of responsibility for their own learning.

I have provided you with three different modes of engaging with the lecture material. First, I have posted for each topic comprehensive lecture slides. These lecture slides have more material on them when compared to a normal in-person lecture. Second, I provide you with a lecture video in which I lecture in a similar manner as I would in an in-person course. For example, I clarify difficult topics/concepts and I give additional examples beyond the lecture slides. Finally, if you are a student that is not in favor of sitting down and watching lecture videos. I have provided Podcast audio files that you can download and listen to on your computer or phone. Alternatively, you could simply play that audio files through the Canvas app that is supported on most smart phones. Being able to engage with the material while driving or walking to other classes might make it easier to stay actively engaged in the course material.

Sequential Tasks of the Online Course

The course is designed so that tasks must be completed sequentially. What sequentially means is that you must complete the preceding task before Canvas will allow you to access the following task. In particular, you must access the previous topic's lecture before moving onto the next topic. You must access all lecture in a section of the course before attempting the exam.

Annotated Bibliography = 3%

You are required to turn in an annotated bibliography on November 28th at 10pm. The annotated bibliography should contain at least 10 peer-reviewed sources relevant to one overarching topic. The annotated bibliography is to be handed in on Canvas in .pdf format. There is an example of the annotated bibliography format on Canvas. You are graded based on the quality of the sources, their relevance to the overarching topic, and your evaluation and understanding of the articles. *Note: Failure to cite the relevant articles correctly will result in an automatic zero for the assignment (see, APSA Style Guide).*

Literature Review = 5%

The final assignment for the semester is a literature review to be handed in on December 15th at 5:00pm. Obviously, you cannot perform a literature review unless you have a research question. Therefore, the first aspect of the assignment is to have a clear research question. The literature review should contain at least 10 peer-reviewed sources relevant to one overarching topic. The literature review is to be handed in on Canvas in .pdf format. You are graded based on the quality of the sources, their relevance to the overarching topic and research question, your evaluation and understanding of the articles, and most importantly, your ability to synthesize and organize the material based on the appropriate themes related to your research question. You are not to go author-by-author as an organizational strategy *Note: Failure to cite correctly will result in an automatic zero for the assignment (see, APSA Style Guide).*

Discussion Questions = 8 X 1.5% = 12%

There are 8 substantive weeks where there are lectures on research methods (excluding the first substantive week and the three weeks of research study examples). These 8 weeks include weeks 3-4, 5-7, 9-10, and 13. For each of these 8 weeks, there is a discussion question posted on Canvas that you must answer in the discussion section by Friday of that week at 10pm. Each answer must contain more than four direct citations to the reading(s) (page number) and the lecture (slide). In addition, you must cite both the reading(s) (each reading if there is more than one assigned for the week) and the lecture for that week. The discussion question response must be at least one typed page in a word processor. The responses are graded pass/fail and you must adhere to the citation and length requirements to receive any points. The response must be posted on Canvas as a discussion post and not an attachment. If you do not complete the discussion questions post, you will not be able to proceed in the course - as proceeding material will not unlock.

Exams (4 X 20% = 80%)

There will be four examinations throughout the semester based on the four substantive topical sections of the course. The four examinations are worth 20% each. You have half an hour to complete the exam, as you should be prepared ahead of time and the exams are only 30 questions. The exams will consist of multiple choice questions contained in two separate sections:

Section 1 - Conceptual Understanding: The first section will consist of 15 multiple choice questions worth 4 points each for a total of 60 points. The content of the questions in Section 1 focus on the important concepts and definitional aspects of the topics we have covered. For example, Exam 1 will contain questions related to the stages of the scientific method.

Section 2 - Practical Application: The second section will consist of 10 multiple choice questions for 4 points each for a total of 40 points. The second section will provide you with

empirical studies related to the topic that you must read and analyze. Then, you must answer 10 multiple choice questions related to that study that. For example, Exam 3 will contain a quantitative study that you must read and analyze. Or, the section will provide you with examples of research in order to have you evaluate their validity in terms of source quality.

Late Work

Late work is not accepted. All of the assignment due dates, criteria for completion, and full explanation are provided well ahead of time. In addition, all of the assignments are turned in electronically on Canvas without physically being in class. Therefore, there is no excuse for late work. Makeup exams will not be allowed except for extreme circumstances.

Grading Scale

Grade	Percentage
A	= 92% - 100%
A-	= 90% - 91%
B+	= 88% - 89%
B	= 82% - 87%
B-	= 80% - 81%
C+	= 78% - 79%
C	= 72% - 77%
C-	= 70% - 71%
D+	= 68% - 69%
D	= 62% - 67%
D-	= 60% - 61%
F	= below 60%

NOTE: In cases in which a student is on the borderline between grades (e.g., 91.5), I will always round up to the higher grade, provided that you have attended class regularly and engaged in regular and active participation in class.

If you have any questions about grading policy in general, or any questions about any particular grade you received, please come see me in my office. I will be more than happy to discuss your grade with you and find ways in which your work can be improved and your grade raised.

Academic Dishonesty

I take plagiarism extremely seriously. Let it be noted for the record that cheating in any form will not be tolerated. Anyone caught cheating on an examination will be punished

according to University guidelines. In addition, if a paper is handed in without any citations, improper citations, or plagiarized material the paper will receive a zero, and you will be referred to the university for disciplinary action. I will assume that you either copied the material or did not complete the assignment as was required. Please consult the section on student academic dishonesty in the Student Guidebook for a listing of the practices that may be considered cheating.

It is the University's policy to provide, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services for a letter of verification to provide to their instructors. Disability Services is located in WYLL D175 and can be reached at 262-595-2372 or dss@uwp.edu

Required Textbooks

Barakso, Maryann, Daniel M. Sabet, and Brian F. Schaffner. *Understanding Political Science Research Methods: The Challenge of Inference*. Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group.

Galvan, Jose L. and Melisa C. Galvan. 2017. *Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Seventh Edition. Routledge Publishing.

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, H.T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. 2015. *Political Science Research Methods*. Sage Publishing

Keman, Hans and Jaap J. Woldendorp. 2016. *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Mosley, Layna. 2013. *Interview Research In Political Science*. Cornell University Press.

Note: Additional readings (i.e. journal articles) will be provided to the student on Canvas.

Class Schedule

NOTE: Reading for a particular day should be done before attending class on that particular day. I have been known to randomly call on students and ask them questions from the reading. Therefore, it is in your interest to be prepared in order to receive attendance points. In addition, the schedule is subject to change based on the flow of class discussion.

Week 1: Sep. 8

Syllabus

Student introductions

Topic: *Course Introduction*

Part I - Political Science Research, Subfields & Scientific Method

Week 2: Sep. 13 - Sep. 15

Topic: *Political Science Research and Political Science Subfields*

Read: Keman and Woldendorp (2016), Ch. 1 & 2

Week 3: Sep. 20 - Sep. 22

Topic: *The Scientific Method - Empirical Approach & Stages*

Read: Barakso et al. (2014), Intro - Ch. 1-3; Johnson et al. (2015), Ch. 1-4

Week 4: Sep. 27 - Sep. 29

Topic: *Finding Relevant Research, Annotated Bibliography & Literature Review*

Read: Galvin and Galvin (2017), Ch. 1-4

Exam 1: Oct. 3 at 10pm

Part II - Qualitative Research

Week 5: Oct. 4 - Oct. 6

Topic: *Analyzing Qualitative Research*

Read: Galvin and Galvin (2017), Ch. 7; Keman and Woldendorp (2016), Ch. 21

Week 6: Oct. 11 - Oct. 13

Topic: *Small-N Observational Research*

Read: Barakso et al. (2014), Ch. 7, Przeworski and Teune (1970)

Week 7: Oct. 18 - Oct. 20

Topic: *Interview Research and Content Analysis*

Read: Johnson et al. (2015), Ch. 10; Mosley (2013), Intro - Ch. 4

Week 8: Oct. 25 - Oct. 27

Topic: *Qualitative Research Examples and Guidelines*

Read: Haesebrouck (2017); Fenno (1977); Folke et al. (2015)

Exam 2: Oct. 31st at 10pm

Part III - Quantitative Research

Week 9: Nov. 1 - Nov. 3

Topic: *Analyzing Quantitative Research*

Read: Galvin and Galvin (2017), Ch. 6; Keman and Woldendorp (2016), Ch. 19; Johnson et al. (2015), Ch. 11

Week 10: Nov. 8 - Nov. 10

Topic: *Types of Statistical Models*

Read: Keman and Woldendorp (2016), Ch. 20; Johnson et al. (2015), Ch. 12 & 14; Barakso et al. (2014), Ch. 6

Week 11: Nov. 15 - Nov. 17

Topic: *Quantitative Research Examples*

Read: Dolan and Hansen (2018); Hansen and Dolan (2020); Hansen et al. (2021)

Exam 3: Nov. 21st at 10pm

Week 12: Nov. 22

Topic: *Independent Work on Annotated Bibliography*

No Class - Happy Thanksgiving

Annotated Bibliography Due: Nov. 28 at 10pm

Part IV - Experimental Research

Week 13: Nov. 29 - Dec. 1

Topic: *Foundations of Experimental Research*

Read: Barakso et al. (2014), Ch. 5

Week 14: Dec. 6 - Dec. 8

Topic: *Experimental Research Examples*

Read: Gerber and Green (2000); Gerber et al. (2011); Shaw and Gimpel (2012)

Exam 4: Dec. 12th at 10pm

Research Question & Literature Review Due - Dec. 15th at 5:00pm