

S2.1 - Theory and Methodology

Autumn 2025

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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, as well as identify methodological approaches.

We will cover a wide variety of topics in this course including concepts related to the scientific method, 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 questions and hypotheses that are being explored.

Measure 1: Is able to formulate research questions and hypotheses.

Measure 1: Can identify and critique the different methodological approaches in political science.

Measure 3: Is able to select, based on the research question and hypothesis, the most appropriate methodology.

Additional Learning Objectives

- Ability to critically evaluate scholarly peer-reviewed research.
- 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

Study Evaluations = 1

At the end of each of the three substantive methodological weeks, there is a study evaluation assignment option. You are required to complete **ONLY ONE** of these three assignments, based on the week that most interests you. For the week you choose, you will be given two studies that use the method covered in that week's readings and lectures. Your task is to identify and analyze key components of each study and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of those components.

Important: Even though you are only completing one assignment, you are expected to read **all of the assigned studies** for each methodological week, as we will discuss them in class.

What components you must discuss?

- The observation about an interesting phenomena.
- The puzzle that exists unanswered.
- A research question that lends to empirical analysis.
- The dependent variable(s) of interest, including measurement.
- The independent variable(s) of interest, including measurement.
- The data used to answer the question.
- The method utilized to investigate the phenomena.
- The important findings of the study.
- The limitations of the study.

Participation

Participation is the central component of this course. Since each student completes only one written assignment, the primary expectation is consistent preparation through reading, note-taking, and thoughtful engagement with the assigned studies and methodological texts. **All assigned studies should be read closely and critically**, as they will form the basis of our discussions. **Textbook material can be skimmed for key concepts and reference**, but the studies themselves require careful attention. Class sessions will focus on discussion, and students should come ready to contribute insights, raise questions, and respond to others in a way that demonstrates engagement with the material. Active participation plays a significant role in your overall performance.

Class Schedule

Part I - Political Science Research, Subfields & Scientific Method

Week 1: Mon 01.09.25 14:00-16:00 PUB4

Syllabus

Student introductions

Topic: *Course Introduction; Political Science Research and Political Science Subfields*

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

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

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

Part II - Qualitative Research

Week 1: Wed 03.09.25 12:00-14:00 PUB209

Topic: *Analyzing Qualitative Research; Small-N Observational Research*

Read: Galvin and Galvin (2017), Ch. 7; Keman and Woldendorp (2016), Ch. 21; Barakso et al. (2014), Ch. 7; Przeworski and Teune (1970); Collier (2011)

Week 1: Thu 04.09.25 12:00-14:00 PUB209

Topic: *Interview Research & Content Analysis; Qualitative Research Examples & Guidelines*

Read: Cyr and Goodman (2025), Ch. 16-17; Fenno (1977); Johansson (2025); Hansen and Olsen (2024), Ch. 8

Study Evaluations 1 - 07.09.2025 at 22.00

Part III - Quantitative Research

Week 2: Mon 08.09.2025 12:00-14:00 PUB299

Topic: *Analyzing Quantitative Research & Examples*

Read: Galvin and Galvin (2017), Ch. 6; Keman and Woldendorp (2016), Ch. 19; Johnson et al. (2015), Ch. 11; Hansen (2025); Hansen and Leino (2024)

Week 2: Tue 09.09.2025 12:00-14:00 PUB309

Topic: *Types of Statistical Models & Examples*

Read: Keman and Woldendorp (2016), Ch. 20; Johnson et al. (2015), Ch. 12 & 14; Barakso et al. (2014), Ch. 6; Hansen and Navarro (2025); Hansen and Dolan (2023)

Study Evaluations 2 - 14.09.2025 at 22.00

Part IV - Experimental Research

Week 3: Mon 15.09.2025 12:00-14:00 PUB299

Topic: *Foundations of Experimental Research*

Read: Barakso et al. (2014), Ch. 5; Broockman (2013); Navarro and Hansen (2025)

Week 3: Tue 16.09.2025 12:00-14:00 PUB309

Topic: *Experimental Research Examples*

Read: Gerber et al. (2011); Shaw and Gimpel (2012); Broockman and Kalla (2025)

Study Evaluations 3 - 21.09.2025 at 22.00