

Scope and Methods in Political Science
PS 9501a
University of Western Ontario
Fall 2013
Class Information:
Thursday 9:30am-11:30pm
SSC 4255

Instructor Information:

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Office Hours: Wednesday 11:30am-1pm

Course Description:

The objective of this course is to provide MA students with an understanding of research methods used in the discipline. There are many ways of doing political science. Too often, practitioners who use one method fail to recognize the utility of others. By the end of the course students will be able to recognize the value of using different methodological approaches for different research questions. Students will also be able to critically evaluate the methodological approaches of others.

Note:

One's choice of approach, method and analysis can be a controversial decision. Many supporters of specific methods are unsympathetic to others. This course endeavours to present an encompassing overview of the various approaches and methodologies in political science, and thoughtful critiques of all methods will be encouraged. Students are expected to come into the course with an open mind and be prepared to learn, think, analyze, challenge, and come out with a much greater understanding of how research is conducted by political scientists.

Required Books:

Shively, W. Philip. 2013. *The Craft of Political Research*. Pearson. (9th edition)
All other course readings will be available online or in .pdf format on OWL.

Grade Distribution:

25% Participation
30% Article Comparison
45% Research Proposal 2

Discussion of Coursework:

a) Class Participation - As this is a graduate seminar course, there will be no lectures and students are expected to attend and to actively participate each week. The participation grade will be based on the quality of comment, evidence of preparation, willingness to challenge accepted ideas and concern for the views expressed by others. If unable to attend, please inform the instructor in advance. Students will be given a preliminary grade for participation in the seventh week of the course although this implies no guarantee of a final participation grade.

b) Article Comparison Paper – This assignment requires you to select two scholarly articles that address a similar substantive topic within political science (e.g. protest activities; state aggression; policy choices; etc.). However, the articles must approach the common topic using entirely different ontologies, theories and methods. Your task is to write a paper which compares and contrasts the underlying assumptions, theories, research design and methodologies drawn upon in the two articles you choose. The paper must address on the relative utility of each article’s approach. For the benefit of the reader, the assignment should commence with a brief introduction of the substantive topic as well as the main findings in each article. The assignment is due on **October 17th** and is worth 30% of your total grade. The paper should be 6-8 double-spaced pages using 12 point font.

c) Research Proposal Paper – In this assignment you are required to draft a research proposal. To work through the paper, I want you to draw on readings, themes and insights from the Scope and Methods course as a whole and apply them to a topic of your choosing. While you are not to carry out any original research to complete the assignment, the paper must include an identifiable topic and research question, a literature review, research design and expected methodological choices for reaching conclusions that bear upon your research question. This assignment is due on **December 10th** and is worth 45% of your final grade. The paper should be 12-15 double-spaced pages using 12 point font.

References for Reading Statistics:

Should you come across statistical analyses in the readings that are difficult for you to interpret, I suggest that you refer to one of the following sources for some clarification. You can also come to my office hours and request assistance.

- Daniel Rubinfeld, “Reference Guide on Multiple Regression.” (Available on WebCT)

- Alan Sykes, 1993, “An Introduction to Regression Analysis,” *Chicago Working Paper in Law and Economics*. (Available on WebCT)

- Ilsa L. Lottes, Alfred DeMaris and Marina A. Adler, 1996, “Using and Interpreting Logistic Regression,” *Teaching Sociology* 24(3): 284-98. (Available online)

- Cameron D. Anderson and Laura B. Stephenson, “Reading Political Behaviour Research: A Note on Methodology,” available at

http://www.politicalscience.uwo.ca/faculty/stephenson/reading_political_behaviour_research-a_note_on_methodology.pdf.

Topics and Readings:

1. September 12 - **Research, Knowledge and Knowing**

Marsh and Stoker, Introduction and Chapter 9

Terence Ball, 1976, "From Paradigms to Research Programs." *American Journal of Political Science* 20(1): 151-175.

Brian Fay and J. Donald Moon, 1977, "What Would an Adequate Philosophy of Social science Look Like?" *Philosophy of Social Science* 7: 209-227.

Egon G. Guba and Yvonne S. Lincoln, 2004, "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues," in *Approaches to Qualitative Research*, ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, (New York: Oxford University Press).

2. September 19 – **Critical Approaches to Political Science**

Marsh and Stoker, chs. 6 and 7

Susan J. Carroll and Linda G. Zerilli, 1993, "Feminist Challenges to Political Science," in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, ed. Ada W. Finifter (Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association).

Agger, B. 2013. *Critical Social Theories*. (3rd Edition) Paradigm Publishers.

3. September 26 - **Interpretivist Approaches to Political Science**

Marsh and Stoker, ch. 4

Joel D. Schwartz, 1984, "Participation and Multisubjective Understanding: An Interpretivist Approach to the Study of Political Participation," *The Journal of Politics* 46(4): 1117-1141.

Murray Edelman, 1985, "Political Language and Political Reality," *PS* 18(1): 10-19.

4. October 3 - **Positivism, or the "Science" in Political Science**

Marsh and Stoker, ch. 1

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, 1994, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), ch. 1.

Robert A. Dahl, 1961, "The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest," *American Political Science Review* 55(4): 763-772.

5. October 10 - **Rational Choice, Institutionalism and Path Dependence**

Marsh and Stoker, chs. 2 and 3

Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro, 1994, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*, New Haven: Yale University Press, ch. 2.

Paul Pierson, 2000, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 94(2): 251-67.

6. October 17 - **Research Design and Conceptualization**

Burnham, Peter. et al. 2008. *Research Methods in Politics* (2nd ed.). Palgrave: London. Chapter 2.

Mair, Peter. 2008. "Concepts and Concept Formation" in Della Porta and Keating (eds.) *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Shively, W. Philip. 2013. *The Craft of Political Research*. Pearson. (9th edition) Chapter 6

7. October 24 - **Measurement, Sampling and Issues of Validity**

Shively, W. Philip. 2013. *The Craft of Political Research*. Pearson. (9th edition) Chapters 4, 5 and 7

Yvonna Lincoln, 1995, "Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 1(3): 275-289.

Barbara Geddes, 1990, "How the cases you choose affect the answers you get," *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150.

8. November 7 - **Research using Existing Sources**

Ian S. Lustick, 1996, "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," *American Political Science Review* 90(3): 605-618.

Royce A. Singleton, Jr. and Bruce C. Straits, 2005, *Approaches to Social Research*, (New York: Oxford University Press), ch.11.

Miriam A. Golden, 2001, "Why Do Trade Unions Call Strikes That Seem Sure to Fail?" in *Political Science as Puzzle Solving*, ed. Bernard Grofman (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press).

9. November 14 - **Qualitative Research**

Marsh and Stoker, ch. 12

Clifford Geertz, 1973, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, ed. Michael Martin and Lee C. McIntyre (Cambridge: MIT Press), ch. 14.

Richard Fenno, Jr., 1986, "Observation, Context, and Sequence in the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80(1): 3-15.

John Gerring, 2004, "What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?" *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 341-54.

10. November 21 - Quantitative Research

Shively, W. Philip. 2013. *The Craft of Political Research*. Pearson. (9th edition) Chapters 8, 9, 10
Cameron Anderson and Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant. 2008. "Youth Turnout: Adolescent Attitudes toward Political Involvement in Ontario," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* vol. 41, 3, September.

11. November 28 – Research Ethics

Carolyn Ellis, 2007, "Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives," *Qualitative Inquiry* 13(1): 3-29.
Royce A. Singleton, Jr. and Bruce C. Straits, 2005, *Approaches to Social Research*, (New York: Oxford University Press), ch.16.
Laura R. Woliver, 2002, "Ethical Dilemmas in Personal Interviewing," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4): 677-678.

12. December 5 – Wrap up and Conclusions

No assigned readings

(Graduate) Statement of 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/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf