

Scope and Methods in Political Science

PS 9501a

University of Western Ontario

Fall 2014

Class Information:

Thursday 9:30am-11:20am
SSC 4255

Instructor Information:

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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:

20% Participation
30% Article Comparison
50% Research Proposal

Discussion of Coursework:

a) Class Participation - As this is a graduate seminar course, there will be no formal 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 that compares and contrasts the underlying assumptions, theories, research design and methodologies drawn upon in the two articles you choose. The paper must address 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 16th** 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 9th** at 3pm and is worth 50% of your final grade. The paper should be 12-15 double-spaced pages using 12-point font.

Course Policies:

PENALTIES FOR LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignments handed in after the due date and time (beginning of class) will be subject to a 5% penalty off the final grade out of 100%. The penalty for each day after the due date will be 2.5%. Exceptions will only be granted for valid and documented health reasons, at the discretion of the Professor.

Topics and Readings:

1. September 4 – **Introduction**
 - Marsh and Stoker, Introduction
2. September 11 - **Research, Knowledge and Knowing**
 - Marsh and Stoker, 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).
3. September 18 – **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) Oxford University Press. Ch. 1
4. September 25 - **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.
5. October 2 - **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.
 - Plumper, Thomas and Eric Neumayer. 2006. "The Unequal Burden of War: The Effect of Armed Conflict on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy." *International Organization*, 60, 3, Summer: 723-54.
6. October 9 - **Rational Choice, Institutionalism and Path Dependence**
 - Marsh and Stoker, chs. 2 and 3
 - Peters, Guy. 2005. *Institutional Theory in Political Science*. Continuum Press: London, UK. Ch.1.
 - Paul Pierson, 2000, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 94(2): 251-67.

7. October 16 - **Research Design, Conceptualization, Measurement, Sampling and Issues of Validity**
- Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the cases you choose affect the answers you get," *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150.
 - Lincoln, Yvonna. 1995. "Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 1(3): 275-289.
 - Lustick, Ian. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," *American Political Science Review* 90(3): 605-618.
 - 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 4-7
8. October 23 – **Research Design, Conceptualization, Measurement, Sampling and Issues of Validity**
Readings continued from previous week
9. November 6 – **Experimentation in Political Science**
- Druckman, J. D. Green, J. Kuklinski and A. Lupia. 2011. *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. Cambridge University Press: New York. Chs. 1-2
 - Loewen, Peter and Daniel Rubenson. 2010. "For want of a nail: Negative persuasion in party leadership race." *Party Politics*, 17: 45-65.
 - Roy, Jason and Shane Singh. 2012. "Canadian and American Voting Strategies: Does Institutional Socialization Matter?" *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 45, 2, June: 289-312.
10. November 13 - **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.
11. November 20 - **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.

12. November 27 – **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.

13. December 4 – **Wrap up and Conclusions**

- No assigned readings