



Scope and Methods in Political Science

PS 9502a

University of Western Ontario

Fall 2018

Class Information:

Tuesday 9:30am-11:30am

SSC 4103

Instructor Information:

Dr. Laura Stephenson

Office: SSC 4228

Office Hours: Thursday 1-3pm or by appointment

Email: laura.stephenson@uwo.ca

Phone: ext. 85164

Course Description:

The objective of this course is to provide graduate students with an understanding of the fundamental principles that underlie research in political science. By the end of the course students will be able to recognize the value of different approaches, and will be able to critically evaluate the theories, empirical strategies, causal claims and validity of other research. The course will not cover *every* method or *every* approach – there simply is not time. However, it is expected that by the end of the course each student will be better readers of research and will also have a better understanding of how to conduct an original research project.

Note:

One's choice of approach, method and analysis can be controversial. Many supporters of specific methods are unsympathetic to others. This course endeavours to present an overview of the various approaches in political science. Thoughtful critiques of *all* methods will be encouraged. No one method is perfect; in fact, not all methods are equally appropriate, depending on the research question at hand. 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.

Learning Objectives:

- This course will help you to understand the scientific method, why political science is a “science”, and also why many political scientists object to that characterization.

- By the end of this course, you should be able to identify and assess the positive and negative qualities of major approaches to the study of political problems.
- Through the topics covered, you will gain an appreciation of major issues related to research design.
- PhD Students: You will be able to navigate major issues of research design with your own research questions.

Course Materials:

Required Books [also on reserve or available electronically from Weldon Library]

- John Gerring, 2012, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*, (New York: Cambridge University Press). [referred to as Gerring below] ISBN: 9780521132770
- Barbara Geddes, 2003, *Paradigms and Sand Castles*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press). [referred to as Geddes below] ISBN: 0472098357
- Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, 1994, *Designing Social Inquiry*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press). [referred to as KKV below] ISBN: 9780691034713

Note: Readings not included in these books will be available electronically, either on the course OWL site or through one of the library's database. A search for the journal title on the main library site will usually turn up the electronic site. If not, try JStor (a database also available through the library).

Assignments:

PhD Level

Participation – 20%

Short Assignments – 20%

1/ Approach Presentation – 10%

2/ Article Theory Design – 10%

Book Review – 20%

1/ Overview – 10%

2/ Critique of Methodology – 10%

Research Proposal – 40%

1/ Outline – 5%

2/ Peer Critique – 5%

3/ Proposal – 30%

Participation:

All students are expected to be active participants in the class. This means being prepared by finishing the assigned readings, **preparing at least three discussion questions for the week (to be brought to class)**, and engaging in discussion.

Book Review:

Students will choose a book from the list below (or one agreed upon by the instructor) and prepare a book review in two parts. The first part, due **October 16**, should provide an overview of the book in which the author's approach, research design, methodology and major findings/conclusions are identified. It should be at least 3 and no more than 5 pages (double-spaced) in length. The second part is due **October 30** and will be a critique of the author's methodology. Students should consider the appropriateness of the methodology for the research question, how the methodology and evidence used did or did not influence the conclusions reached, and whether an alternative approach may be used with reason. This part of the assignment should

also be at least 3 and no more than 5 pages (double-spaced). EACH STUDENT MUST CHOOSE A UNIQUE BOOK, so that these book reviews can be shared with other members of the class to help build a personal “library” of information about different research projects.

Books:

Marshall Sahlins, *How “Natives” Think*, University of Chicago Press, 1995.
Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions*, Cambridge University Press, 1999.
Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, Princeton University Press, 1993.
Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, Cambridge University Press, 1979.
André Blais, *To Vote or Not To Vote*, Pittsburgh University Press, 2000.
Neil Nevitte, *The Decline of Deference*, Broadview Press, 1996.
Michael Lewis-Beck, *Economics and Elections*, University of Michigan Press, 1988.
Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.
Peter Hall, *Governing the Economy*, Oxford University Press, 1986.
Ronald Rogowski, *Commerce and Coalitions*, Princeton University Press, 1989.
Gosta Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Princeton University Press, 1990.
Miriam Golden, *Heroic Defeats*, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, Yale University Press, 1985.
Jared M. Diamond, *Collapse*, Viking Press, 2005.
Thomas Scheffer, *Adversarial Case-Making: An Ethnography of English Crown Court Procedure*, Brill, 2010.

Short Assignments (10% each)

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Presentation of Approach:

Each PhD student is responsible for “teaching” the class about one of the approaches covered by the readings assigned for September 25: rational choice, grounded theory, interpretative theory, positivism or institutionalism. Students should confer with the instructor about their preference to ensure there is no overlap. Students are expected to find two different examples of work that uses the approach that they can present to the class.

Article Theory Design:

Students are expected to find an article in a peer-review, scholarly Political Science journal (for example, Canadian Journal of Political Science; American Political Science Review; American Journal of Political Science; Electoral Studies; International Organization; Journal of Politics; if you are unsure please ask the instructor) and analyze the theory design put forth by the author. As will be discussed in class, theories are made up of hypothesized relationships between components that lead to specific outcomes. Part of critically reading research is being able to understand the underlying theoretical structure. Papers are expected to be at least 1 and no more than 3 pages in length, and to include a diagram that clarifies the theory. Papers are due on **October 2**.

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Research Design Paper:

- Outline – 5% - Due November 6
- Peer critique – 5% - Due December 4
- Final submission – 30% - Due December 11

This is the major assignment of the course. Students are expected to prepare a research proposal (minimum 15 - maximum 17 pages, double-spaced), applying the knowledge they gained throughout the course to a research topic (hopefully, a tentative dissertation idea). The proposal should identify the topic, provide a review of existing literature on the topic, state the hypotheses to be examined, develop the concepts, and outline the procedure (operationalization, measurement, data) to be used. Specific data gathering techniques (i.e., details of experiments or surveys) are not expected, but a clear discussion of the type of data that is required to address the research question should be provided. Papers should use Chicago style for referencing (reference list style), footnotes instead of endnotes, 12-pt font and one-inch margins, and include a reference list.

An outline of the research design is due on **November 6** (to be submitted through OWL). This will be an opportunity for feedback and a check against any major issues that would make the proposal less successful. The first draft of this research design is due on **November 27** (please bring a hard copy to class). Drafts will be distributed to designated discussants (other students) so that peer critiques can be prepared for the Proposal Workshop on **December 6**. The peer critiques should be submitted to the instructor through OWL for grading at the Proposal Workshop. At the Proposal Workshop, each student will present his/her research proposal. Discussants will then present their critiques. Time will also be set aside for general discussion and comment from the MA students. Students will have the opportunity to revise their papers in light of the comments and discussion at the Proposal Workshop. The final paper is due to the instructor on **December 11** (to be submitted through OWL).

Topics and Readings

September 11 Introduction

- A Wuffle, 2015, "Uncle Wuffle's Reflections on Political Science Methodology," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 48(1): 176-182.
- Christopher H. Achen, 2014, "Why do we need Diversity in the Political Methodology Society?" *The Political Methodologist* 22(2): 25-28. <https://thepoliticalmethodologist.com/2014/04/30/we-dont-just-teach-statistics-we-teach-students/>

September 18 Is Political Science a science?

- KKV, ch. 1.
- Ruth Grant, 2002, "Political Theory, Political Science, and Politics," *Political Theory* 30(4): 577-595.
- Gerring, ch. 1.
- Geddes, ch. 1.
- Thomas C. Walker, 2010, "The Perils of Paradigm Mentalities: Revisiting Kuhn, Lakatos, and Popper," *Perspectives on Politics* 8(2): 433-451.
 - Carl G. Hempel, 1942, "The Function of General Laws in History," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 39(2): 35-48. [JSTOR DATABASE]

September 25 Approaches

Approach Presentation

(The first two readings are for everyone and the others will be distributed amongst students for presentation. Feel free to read everything of course!)

- 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), ch. 1 (pp. 17-38).
- Geddes, ch. 5
- Bo Rothstein, 1996, "Political Institutions: An Overview," in *A New Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert E. Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press), ch. 4 (pp. 133-166).
- Craig Parsons, 2010, "Constructivism and Interpretive Theory," in *Theory and Methods in Political Science* 3rd ed., ed. David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), ch. 4 (pp. 80-98).
- Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded Theory," in *Approaches to Qualitative Research*, ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy (New York: Oxford University Press), ch. 23 (pp. 496-521).
- Keith Dowding, 2016, "Analytic Political Philosophy," *The Philosophy and Methods of Political Science* (London: Palgrave), ch. 9 (pp. 213-242).
- Lee Harvey, 1990, *Critical Social Research* (London: Unwin Hyman), ch. 1.
- Charles Taylor, 1971, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," *Review of Metaphysics* 25: 3-51.

October 2 Research Questions and Theories

Article Theory Design Due

- Geddes, ch. 2
- Gerring, chs. 2-4
- Karl Gustafsson and Linus Hagstrom, 2017, "What is the point? Teaching graduate students how to construct political science research puzzles." *European Political Science* 1-15, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-017-0130-y>.
- Roger M. Smith, 2007, "Systematizing the Ineffable: A Perestroika's Method for Finding a Good Research Topic," *Qualitative & Multi-Method Research: Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research* 5(1): 6-8.

- Jeffrey W. Knopf, 2006, "Doing a Literature Review," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(1): 127-132.

October 9

FALL BREAK

October 16

**Description,
Conceptualization and
Measurement**

- Gerring, chs. 5-7.
- KKV, chs. 2, 4-5
 - Robert Adcock and David Collier, 2001, "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research," *American Political Science Review* 95(3): 529-46.
 - Giovanni Sartori, 1970, "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics," *American Political Science Review* 64(4): 1003-53.
 - David Collier and James E. Mahon, Jr., 1993, "Conceptual Stretching Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 87(4): 845-855.

Book Review Part 1 Due

October 23

Causality

- Gerring, chs. 8, 9-12
 - KKV, ch. 3
 - Tulia G. Falleti and Julia F. Lynch, 2009, "Context and Causal Mechanisms in Political Analysis." *Comparative Political Studies* 42(9): 1143-66.
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October 30

**Comparative Method and
Experiments**

- Geddes, ch. 3
 - KKV, ch. 6.
 - Arend Lijphart, 1975, "The Comparable-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research," *Comparative Political Studies* 8(2): 158-177.
 - Charles Ragin, 1987, *The Comparative Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press), ch. 6
 - Rebecca B. Morton and Kenneth C. Williams, 2008, "Experimentation in Political Science." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady and David Collier. New York: Oxford University Press.
 - Stanley Lieberson, 1991, "Small N's and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases," *Social Forces* 70(2): 307-320.
 - Thad Dunning, 2008, "Improving Causal Inference: Strengths and Limitations of Natural Experiments." *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2): 282-293.
 - Cindy D. Kam and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister, 2013, "Name Recognition and Candidate Support." *American Journal of Political Science*. 60(1): 37-63.
 - Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, 1970, "Research Designs" in *Logic of Social Inquiry* (Toronto: Wiley-Interscience), pp. 31-46.
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Book Review Part 2 Due

November 6

**Case Studies and Process
Tracing**

- Geddes, ch. 4
 - Andrew Bennett, 2010, "Process Tracing and Causal Inference," in *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, 2nd ed., ed. Henry E. Brady and David Collier (Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield), ch. 10 (pp. 702-21).
 - Jason Seawright and John Gerring, 2008, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2): 294-308.
 - John Gerring, 2004, "What is a Case Study and What is it Good for?" *American*
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*Research Design Outline
Due*

Political Science Review 98(2): 341-354.

- KKV, ch. 4
- James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, 2004, "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research," *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 653-70.
- 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).

November 13
**Fieldwork, Focus Groups
and Interviews**

- Katherine J. Cramer, 2016, *The Politics of Resentment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), ch. 2.
- Elisabeth Jean Wood, 2007, "Field Research," in *The Handbook of Comparative Politics*, ed. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (New York: Oxford University Press), ch. 5 (pp. 123-146).
- Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, 1995, "Choosing Interviewees and Judging What They Say," in *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (Sage 1995), ch. 5.
- Various authors, 2002, "Symposium: Interview Methods in Political Science," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4):663-688.
- Layna Mosley, 2013, "'Just Talk to People'? Interviews in Contemporary Political Science." In Layna Mosley, ed., *Interview Research* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), pp. 1-28.

November 20
**Sampling, Surveys and
Questionnaires**

- Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and David Nachmias, 2008, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (Worth Publishers), ch. 8.
- Nora Cate Schaeffer and Stanley Presser, 2003, "The Science of Asking Questions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29: 65-88.
- Richard Johnston, 2008, "Survey Methodology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady and David Collier (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Henry E. Brady, "Contributions of Survey Research to Political Science," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33(1): 47-57.
- Jon A. Krosnick, 1991, "Response Strategies for Coping with the Cognitive Demands of Attitude Measures in Surveys." *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 5: 213-236.
- Efrén Pérez, 2012, "Rolling off the Tongue into the Top-of-the-Head: Explaining Language Effects on Public Opinion." *Political Behavior* 38: 603-634.

November 27
Mixing Methods

- Larry M. Bartels, 2004, "Some Unfulfilled Promises of Quantitative Imperialism," in *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, ed. Henry E. Brady and David Collier (Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield), ch. 4 (pp. 69-74).
- Henry E. Brady, David Collier, and Jason Seawright, 2006, "Toward a Pluralistic Vision of Methodology." *Political Analysis* 14(3): 353-368.
- Evan S. Lieberman, 2005, "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99(3): 435-452.
- Frieder Wolf, 2010, "Enlightened Eclecticism or Hazardous Hotchpotch? Mixed Methods and Triangulation Strategies in Comparative Public Policy Research." *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 4(2): 144-167.
- Ingo Rohlfing, 2008, "What You See and What You Get: Pitfalls and Principles

*Research Design Draft
Due for Peer Comment*

of Nested Analysis in Comparative Research.” *Comparative Political Studies* 41(11): 1492-1514.

- Nathaniel Beck, 2006, “Is Causal-Process Observation an Oxymoron?” *Political Analysis* 14(3): 347-352.
- Nathaniel Beck, 2010, “Causal Process “Observation”: Oxymoron or (Fine) Old Wine.” *Political Analysis* 18: 499–505.
- David Collier, Henry E. Brady, and Jason Seawright, 2010, “Outdated Views of Qualitative Methods: Time to Move On.” *Political Analysis* 18: 506–513.

December 4
Ethics

- Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, ch. 1 (Ethics Framework). <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>
- Review NMREB process at Western: http://www.uwo.ca/research/services/ethics/nonmedical_reb/submission.html
- Tony Porter, 2008, “Research Ethics Governance and Political Science in Canada,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 4(3): 495-499.
- Christie Aschwanden and Maggie Koerth-Baker, 2016, “How Two Grad Students Uncovered An Apparent Fraud - And A Way To Change Opinions On Transgender Rights.” <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-two-grad-students-uncovered-michael-lacour-fraud-and-a-way-to-change-opinions-on-transgender-rights/>
- Arthur Lupia and Colin Elman, 2014, “Openness in Political Science: Data Access and Research Transparency.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47(1): 19-42.
- Laura R. Woliver, 2002, “Ethical Dilemmas in Personal Interviewing,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4): 677-678.

December 6 *NOTE
SPECIAL DAY
Proposal Workshop
Research Design Critique
Due

- PhD students will present their research proposals and receive prepared feedback from their discussant. Time for open discussion will be set aside for each paper. **RESEARCH DESIGN PAPERS ARE DUE DECEMBER 11**