

# Intermediate Research Methods for Applied Political Science

PSCI 4702/ PSCI 5702

Wednesdays 11:35-14:25

Please confirm location on Carleton Central

**Instructor:**

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613-

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**Office Hours:**

8:00 to 10:30 and 15:00 to 16:00 to Wednesdays

8:00 to 8:30 and 11:45 to 12:15 Thursdays

8:00 to 8:30 Fridays

Note that the above office hours may not be held during the first week of classes and are sometimes cancelled due to conflict with various university meetings.

**Sep 10 to Nov 26**

Note that actual lectures and discussion may usually only occupy the first part of the period, and the last part will often be used for computer lab work, answering student questions or other activities.

Read this syllabus carefully. This syllabus stipulates class and university policies. Exemptions from these policies will almost never be granted.

**NOTE: IN SO FAR AS POSSIBLE, YOU SHOULD TRY TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE INSTRUCTOR IN CLASS OR THROUGH ELECTRONIC MAIL. IN PERSON MEETINGS DURING OFFICE HOURS SHOULD BE RESERVED FOR PROBLEMS THAT CANNOT BE DEALT WITH IN ANY OTHER WAY.**

**NOTE: EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS MUST BE VIA YOUR CARLETON CONNECT ACCOUNT.**

Nature of Course

At one point or another, most students in political science or related fields have probably been confronted with the question, “What can you do with your degree or degrees?” While there are some opportunities to use your education in purely non-quantitative areas, such opportunities are increasingly rare. Alternatively, there are a great many professions which fundamentally involve the use of empirical, particularly quantitative, analysis in politics and policy. A list of some relevant activities in those professions would include, *inter alia*, the following:

- Public opinion polling which drives almost all parts of the policy process
- Campaign and election analysis often involving polling to track electorate response, evaluate campaign strategies or serve media interests
- Evaluation of public policy and programmes—a multi dimensional set of activities involving everything from the simplest monitoring and performance measurement activities to full scale multi-methods evaluations and experiments
- Developing public affairs communication strategies for political parties, interest group, government agencies and even corporations
- Using some of the same skills required in the above to do private sector market research.

For that matter, in many parts of the discipline, even if one wishes to be an academic, knowing about the substance of the above activities and the skills used in them is increasingly important.

The purpose of this course is to provide you with an opportunity to become more acquainted with applied political analysis by doing do one of the types of projects noted above. Since our time frame is very limited, it will probably not be possible to do a full scale project based on a large project data set. So, we will emphasize the development stages of these projects. For example: constructing the nature of the problem, deciding on research design issues, making a plan for case selection/sampling, instrument/questionnaire design and pretesting. Nevertheless, there will be some quantitative analytic activity in this sort of preliminary project, and students will be expected to make strategic recommendations based on their work.

The type of project that students will work on this term is the preliminary development of a strategy to change public opinion in a particular policy area. Specifically, we will be working on the preliminaries of a strategy to move public opinion toward some currently unpopular views about the environment. An example of a small scale experiment will be presented in class in which opinions on the environment were measured at an early time, then people were exposed to new information, then their opinions were measured again to determine if the information was an effective tool for changing opinion. Analysis was then conducted to determine if there was a significant change and whether there was any other information from the over time measurements that could be used to design either further studies or a general population opinion change program.

Each student will be expected to do something like this on their own and to produce a paper summarizing results and providing suggestions for future study and the content of a real opinion change program.

One of the unusual features of this course is that there are really very few readings available that realistically reflect the nature of these projects. The academic work done on the nature of public affairs analysis tends to be at several removes from, the practical features of this kind of work. That means that a great deal of the material will have to be imparted to the students through participation and example. At the same time, students will usually need to do a great deal of work finding their own substantive sources for their research and generating their own small scale data set.

### Main Texts

There are no main texts for the course. Various review sources may be recommended depending on the backgrounds of the students.

Secondary readings may also be suggested from time to time and will sometimes available on reserve.

### Grading and Preliminary Comments on Course Work

Major Seminar Paper                      80 % of course grade

Presentations                                20 % of course grade

More details on the major paper will be provided in class. If time permits, an oral presentation on the paper will be made to the class during its last meeting on November 26, 2008. The final version of the paper is due in the last class on November 26, 2008.

Ideally, there will be at least two major presentations, apart from any minor presentations of exercises. One of these should be during the final class when the results of the major paper are presented. The other major presentation will occur at about the sixth class (depending on class progress) when each student will be asked to briefly preliminary aspects of their project plans.

Those registered in PSCI 5702 will be evaluated in essentially the same way as those registered in PSCI 4702. However, it is expected that students registered in a graduate course will pay a bit more attention to placing their work in existing literature than those registered in an undergraduate course.

### Main Topics

**Note that the instructor considers it to be bad pedagogy to assign in advance specific dates to the coverage of specific topics. We will cover as many of the topics as is appropriate and possible in the order listed below. Our progress will primarily depend on student background and interests.**

It is assumed that students will have taken at least an introductory quantitative methods course prior to taking this course. There will likely be some opportunity to review that material during the course, but the review will be inserted at a couple of different points within the following topics.

1. Introduction to the Course
2. The Problem: How to Design a Program to Change Policy Opinion
3. The Pre-test Research Design: Using Surveys and Focus Groups to Develop Later Research Strategy
4. Develop Preliminary Questionnaires and Related Schedules
5. Gathering and Processing the Basic Data
6. Analysing the Data
7. Using Results to Create a Recommendation for a Change Strategy and Further Research
8. Problem Solving Sessions
9. Final Presentations if Time Permits

Some of the above topics may require more than a week of course time for proper coverage.

### Other Issues

Without going into great detail, various other course, departmental and university rules apply to the conduct of any course. You are expected to know them. From, my point of view, the important rules are:

1. Do your work on time as described in this outline and in class.
2. Do not engage in plagiarism.

3. Do not disrupt the class.
4. Keep an open mind with respect to value systems and approaches to inquiry.

Under special circumstances, an incomplete can be granted to graduate students, but graduate students should try to adhere to the same schedule as undergraduates. Note that a student registered for PSCI 4702 or an undergraduate registered for either PSCI 4702 or PSCI 5702 cannot take an incomplete. Only a graduate student registered in PSCI 5702 has the possibility of the incomplete option.

With respect to point one above, the final copy of the course paper should be handed in at the last class on November 26, 2008. It should be in a large envelope and it must be in both typed form and on disk/cd/dvd that is both readable and writeable. Be sure you keep copies of the paper. No excuses for lateness will be accepted except for some extreme emergency (such as the student's hospitalisation) that makes it physically impossible for the student to turn in a paper. Failure to observe this rule will lead to a loss of all marks associated with the paper.

Presentations must be done on time as assigned. The only excuses accepted are the same as those noted in the previous paragraph. Failure to observe this will lead to a loss of all marks associated with a presentation.

Other rules of general interest from a departmental or university perspective are contained in an attachment that follows.

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### **Academic Accommodations**

**For students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities 9500 University Drive) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Registered PMC students are required to contact the centre, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that I receive your letter of accommodation, **no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations**. If you require accommodation for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodation to PMC by **November 7, 2008**, for December examinations, and **March 6, 2009**, for April examinations."

**For Religious Observance:** Students requesting accommodation for religious observances should apply in writing to their instructor for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student. Instructors and students may contact an Equity Services Advisor for assistance ([www.carleton.ca/equity](http://www.carleton.ca/equity)).

**For Pregnancy:** Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. Then, make an appointment to discuss your needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

**Plagiarism:** The Undergraduate Calendar defines plagiarism as: "to use and pass off as one's own idea or product, work of another without expressly giving credit to another." The Graduate Calendar states that plagiarism has occurred when a student either: (a) directly copies another's work without acknowledgment; or (b) closely paraphrases the equivalent of a short paragraph or more without acknowledgment; or (c) borrows, without acknowledgment, any ideas in a clear and recognizable form in such a way as to present them as the student's own thought, where such ideas, if they were the student's own would contribute to the merit of his or her own work. Instructors who suspect plagiarism are required to submit the paper and supporting documentation to the Departmental Chair who will refer the case to the Dean. It is not permitted to hand in the same assignment to two or more courses. The Department's Style Guide is available at: <http://www.carleton.ca/polisci/undergrad/Essay%20Style%20Guide.html>

**Oral Examination:** At the discretion of the instructor, students may be required to pass a brief oral examination on research papers and essays.

**Submission and Return of Term Work:** Papers must be handed directly to the instructor and will not be date-stamped in the departmental office. Late assignments may be submitted to the drop box in the corridor outside B640 Loeb. Assignments will be retrieved every business day at **4 p.m.**, stamped with that day's date, and then distributed to the instructor. For essays not returned in class please attach a **stamped, self-addressed envelope** if you wish to have your assignment returned by mail. Please note that assignments sent via fax or email will not be accepted. Final exams are intended solely for the purpose of evaluation and will not be returned.

**Approval of final grades:** Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by an instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

**Course Requirements:** Students must fulfill all course requirements in order to achieve a passing grade. Failure to hand in any assignment will result in a grade of F. Failure to write the final exam will result in a grade of ABS. FND (Failure No Deferred) is assigned when a student's performance is so poor during the term that they cannot pass the course even with 100% on the final examination. In such cases, instructors may use this notation on the Final Grade Report to indicate that a student has already failed the course due to inadequate term work and should not be permitted access to a deferral of the examination. Deferred final exams are available **ONLY** if the student is in good standing in the course.

**Connect Email Accounts:** The Department of Political Science strongly encourages students to sign up for a campus email account. Important course and University information will be distributed via the Connect email system. See <http://connect.carleton.ca> for instructions on how to set up your account.

**Carleton Political Science Society:** The Carleton Political Science Society (CPSS) has made its mission to provide a social environment for politically inclined students and faculty. Holding social events, debates, and panel discussions, CPSS aims to involve all political science students in the after-hours academic life at Carleton University. Our mandate is to arrange social and academic activities in order to instill a sense of belonging within the Department and the larger University community. Members can benefit through numerous opportunities which will complement both academic and social life at Carleton University. To find out more, please email [carletonpss@gmail.com](mailto:carletonpss@gmail.com), visit our website at [poliscisociety.com](http://poliscisociety.com), or come to our office in Loeb D688.

