

**Institute of Political Economy, Carleton University
Winter Term 2016**

PECO 5001: Methodology of Political Economy

**Wednesdays 2:35 -5:25 a.m.
DT 1524**

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Course Description and Objectives:

This graduate seminar prepares students to develop an independent research project and to become familiar with the process involved in designing, conducting, and producing research. The focus is on qualitative methods and methodologies. As suggested by John Comaroff, methodology refers to “the principled practice by which theory and the concrete world are both constituted and brought into discursive relationship with one another” (2010: 530), and our main task in this class will be to reflect on this relationship. As such, this seminar does not provide students with a set of practical methods or techniques, but instead invites critical thinking on questions of epistemology, as well as on the ethics and politics of knowledge production. Over the course of the term, students will thus be exposed to various ways of thinking critically about methodologies, and will apply this newly gained knowledge into the design of their own research project.

The main objectives of the course are:

- To examine the relationship of methodology to theory and evidence;
- To understand the process involved in designing a research project, from the selection of a topic, to the design of research questions and choice of methods, to the ethical and political issues involved in the production of knowledge;
- To explore key epistemological debates and to understand the production of knowledge as a contested practice;
- To reflect on the ethical issues that may arise in the research process;
- To think critically about one’s positionality, including the ways in which it mediates the research process and the production of knowledge;
- To examine various ways of practicing political economy research, and to consider the possibilities and limits of various methods and methodologies;
- To select a relevant method and to understand its possibilities and limits;
- To develop a solid draft thesis research proposal (in conjunction with their supervisor).

A note, on the format of this course:

This course will be conducted as a seminar. Students will take turns leading class discussions; occasionally, we will count on the participation of guest speakers with knowledge and experience relevant to our endeavours. It is thus crucial to come prepared to contribute to discussions, with thoughts, questions, and comments on our weekly readings.

Required Readings:

All required course materials are available on CuLearn. To access your course materials, go to: <https://carleton.ca/culearn>. It is strongly recommended to save a copy of the readings on your computer, and/or to print the required readings during the first week of the term in order to avoid any problem. Please contact me well in advance of any deadline and class time if you have any difficulty accessing the required readings.

Course Requirements & Methods of Evaluation:

Your grade in this course will be calculated on the following basis:

Assignments:	%	Due date
1. Discussant	10 %	TBA Jan 20-Feb 24
2. Weekly participation in discussion	20 %	every week
3. Research Design Spine	15%	February 10
4. Method exercise	15%	March 2, March 9
5. Proposal	40%	
First draft & peer-reviewed exercise	5%	March 16
Oral presentation of draft proposal	5%	March 30 or April 6
Proposal	30%	April 11

1. Discussant (10%)

Beginning in week 2 and until reading week, there will be between 2 and 4 discussants every week taking turns to lead the discussion on an assigned article (sign-in during the first week of class). Students are expected to act as discussant once during the term. The role of the discussant is to guide the class through the reading for a period of 15 to 20 minutes, but you should avoid simply summarizing the content of the article as it is expected that your peers will have read it. The aim of this assignment is to respond critically and creatively to the reading, by discussing key contributions, assessing the validity/relevance of the arguments beyond personal opinion, drawing points of contrast and comparison with course content, engaging the topic in a creative manner, raising thought-provoking questions for discussion, pointing to a particularly telling passage, etc. You're encouraged to be creative in terms of format and issues raised and can use slides, handouts, group activities, etc. – as long as you meaningfully and critically engage with the reading, you're welcome to move the discussion where your interests lie and to use your presentation time creatively.

2. Weekly participation in seminar discussion (20%)

Students are expected to come well prepared for our seminar discussion and to participate in an informed and engaged way. In a graduate seminar, it is expected that not only you will have done the required readings for a given week, but that you will come prepared with questions, insights, and points for discussion and debate. Punctuality, regular attendance, informed participation, active listening, meaningful contributions, completion of in-class activities when requested, openness to challenging taken-for-granted assumptions, and respect for different opinions are expected during the discussion periods in order to create a mutually supportive, respectful, rich and productive learning environment.

3. Research Design Spine (15%)

The Research Design Spine is a tool developed by Dr. Janet Siltanen with Riva Soucie to help with the thinking and decision-making that form part of the research process. The aim is to think about your research project as a spine, in that it should flow and have some linearity (i.e. there are logical connections between various aspects of your research, and each aspect contribute to the whole). This tool is meant to be flexible and adaptable to various stages in your thinking; it may help you identify your research questions, your theoretical approach, your methods, and the limits you may be facing. But you should be mindful that the elements to include (or headings) will vary at different stages, and between different projects. On February 3rd, Dr. Janet Siltanen will come to discuss the Research Design Spine and provide tips on how to use this tool productively and creatively. The assignment should be about 4 pages (single space); further guidelines will be provided in class.

4. Method Exercise (15%)

As part of the process of designing the research proposal, students are required to select a method and to present it in class for a period of 12-15 minutes. Students will individually select 2 readings in conjunction with the instructor and their supervisor (if applicable), and provide a summary of the possibilities and limits of their chosen method, its relationship to the process of knowledge production, and how it may be productive in the context of their research. Possible topics include: policy analysis, case studies, interviews, participant-observation, focus group, discourse analysis, media analysis, archival research, visual methods, etc.

5. Proposal (40%)

Students are expected to develop a solid first draft of their research proposal (10-12 pages), in conjunction with their tentative supervisor. The proposal should include (i) a discussion of selected research topic (including the problematic, research questions, or issues examined), (ii) a very, very brief overview of relevant scholarly literatures (iii) a plan of the proposed methodological approaches, and finally (iv) a brief reflection on ethical considerations, limitations, questions of positionality relating to the research project. This assignment includes the following steps:

First draft and peer-reviewed exercise (5%)

Students will familiarise themselves with one of the key aspects of academic writing: the revision process. Students will submit a first draft of their proposal on March 9, and participate in a peer-reviewed exercise on that day (in class), in which they will provide critical feedback on a peer's paper, based on a list of criteria reviewed in class. I will also provide feedback on your first draft.

Presentation (5%)

Students will present their proposal in class, and are invited to use this opportunity to get feedback on their project, before their final submission. Students will present their proposal in a panel format (along with 2 or 3 peers) and answer questions from the 'audience'. Students are encouraged to use this opportunity to discuss any unresolved questions/issues they may have with their proposal, and to make final revisions based on the comments received. Presentations will occur March 23 or April 6.

Proposal (30%)

Students are expected to use the written and verbal feedback received by their peers & instructor to rework their project (and thus should submit their graded first draft with their final submission). The final proposal is due April 11.

Important information regarding your assignments:

Unless otherwise specified or without special permission, assignments sent via e-mail or slipped under my office door will not be accepted for evaluation. Late assignments will lose 5% of the final grade for each day late including weekends and will not be accepted more than 7 days late. Requests for extension must be properly justified within 24 hours of the due date.

The letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52
F = Below 50	WDN = Withdrawn from the course		

ABS = Student absent from final exam

DEF = Deferred (See above)

FND = (Failed, no Deferred) = Student could not pass the course even with 100% on final exam

Please note, however, that at the graduate level, a final grade of less than B- at the end of the term is considered a failure, and that, as a result, the grading scheme will be as follows:

A: Excellent, high quality, and very insightful work; reveals a very solid engagement with the course materials and an outstanding capacity to articulate their significance; excellent communication skills (written/oral); highly sophisticated analytical and critical thinking skills.

B: Some good insights but with some significant shortcomings too; the capacity to understand and meaningfully engage with the course materials is visible, but the quality of the work is unequal, and presents some important flaws or omissions. Some ideas could be more fully articulated, explained, illustrated, or developed.

C: At the graduate level, this is considered a fail. This means that the works does not meet the overall expectations for the assignment, including that it fails to meet the basic guidelines of the assignment, or that it reflects poor critical, analytical, or communication skills.

Course Calendar

Week 1 (Jan 13) Introduction to the course

Introduction to course and to each other (expectations, reflections on previous research, sign-up for presentation dates).

No required readings

Activities:

- Part I: Intellectual bibliographies
- Part II: Panel with a selection of senior/former graduate students in Political Economy: reflections, lessons learned, tips and advices based on their experience. With Leslie Munoz, Maggie Fitzgerald Murphy and Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood.

Week 2 (Jan 20) Thinking Methodology

What is methodology? What is the relationship of methodology to theory, to evidence? How do scholars go about their research craft?

Read:

Becker, Howard. 1996. The Epistemology of Qualitative Research. In *Essays on Ethnography and Human Development*. Richard Jessor, Anne Colby, and Richard Schweder, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 53–71

Clement, Wallace. 2007. Chapter 2: Methodological Considerations: Thinking about Researching Works in *Work in Tumultuous Times: Canadian Perspectives* eds Vivian Shalla and Wallace Clement. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. Pp. 30-51

Mills, C. Wright. 2000 [1959]. On Intellectual Craftsmanship (Appendix) in *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 195-226.

Monk, Janice & Richard Bedford. 2010. Chapter 16: Writing a Compelling Research Proposal in *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. Third Edition. Iain Hay (ed.) Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press. Pp. 314-332.

Watts, Michael. 2001. The Holy Grail: In Pursuit of the Dissertation Proposal. Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, University of California.

<http://iis.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/InPursuitofPhD.pdf>

Activities:

- Part I: 3 discussants.
- Part II: Panel with Faculty from the Institute of Political Economy (Pablo Mendez, Jennifer Ridgley and Pablo Heidrich).

Week 3 Jan (27) Decolonizing Knowledge & Methodologies

What is the relationship between power, knowledge and discourse? What critical insights may be drawn from postcolonial scholarly literatures, and then applied to our research projects?

Read:

Escobar, Arturo. 1995. Introduction: Development and the Anthropology of Modernity. In *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press: Pp. 3-20.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 1988. Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses in *Feminist Review*. 30 (1): 61-88

Robbins, Paul. 2009. Research is Theft: Environmental Inquiry in a Postcolonial World in *Approaches to Human Geography*, eds. S. Aitken and G. Valentine, London: Sage. Pp. 311-324

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 1999. Imperialism, History, Writing, Theory. In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books. Pp. 19-41.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2003. North Atlantic Fictions: Global Transformations, 1492-1945. In *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*. Pp. 29-46. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Activities: 5 discussants.

Week 4 (Feb 3) Feminist/queer/critical approaches to methodology

What are the contributions of feminist and queer scholars to questions of knowledge production? Issues of positionality, reflexivity, situated knowledges.

Read:

Browne, Kate and Catherine Nash. 2012. Queer methods and methodologies: An introduction in *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*. Eds. Nash and Browne. Farnham: Ashgate. Pp. 1-24.

Haraway, Donna. 1988. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies* 14(3): 575-599.

Harding, Sandra. 1987. The Method Question *Hypatia* 2(3): 19-35

Khan, Shahnaz. 2005. Refiguring the Native Informant: Positionality in the Global Age. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30 (4): 2017-2037.

Activities:

- Part I: Dr. Janet Siltanen on the Research Design Spine at 2:30 p.m.
- Part II: 3 discussants

Week 5 (Feb 10) Ethnographic Approaches

The process of ethnographic research, including its ethics and politics, the theoretical improvisations that characterize it, the ways it can be applied to the study of the political economy, and the changing contour of the ethnographic endeavour in the 21st century.

Read:

Cerwonka, Allaine. 2007. Nervous Conditions: The Stakes in Interdisciplinary Research In *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. eds Allaine Cerwonka and Liisa Malkki. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 1-40.

Ho, Karen. 2009. Introduction. In *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham: Duke University Press. Pp. 1-38

Marcus, George E. 1995. Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95-117.

Tsing, Anna. 2005. Introduction in *Friction An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: The University of Princeton Press.

Activities: 4 discussants

Assignment: Research Design Spine due in class

Reading Week: February 15-21. No class February 17th

Week 6 (Feb 24) Ethics & Politics of Knowledge Production and Representations

Questions of ethical knowledge production: what are the ethical considerations involved in constructing and representing knowledge? What kinds of ethical challenges emerge in the process of conducting research? And, what does it mean to be “ethical”?

Read:

Brainard, J. 2001. The Wrong Rules for Social Science? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 47(26), March 9.

Dingwall, Robert. 2008. The Ethical Case against Ethical Regulation in Humanities and Social Research. *Twenty-First Century Society* 3: 1-12.

Guilhot, Nicolas. 2012. The Anthropologist as Witness: Humanitarianism between Ethnography and Critique. *Humanity an International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism and Development* 3(1): 81-101

Halse, C. and A. Honey. 2005. Unravelling Ethics: Illuminating the Moral Dilemmas of Research Ethics. *Signs: a Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(4): 2141-2162.

Kleinman, Arthur and Joan Kleinman. 1996. The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times. *Daedalus* 125(1): 1-13

Activities:

- Part I: Guest speaker, Melissa Jennings, Research Ethics Coordinator on the ethic application process at Carleton University.
- Part II: 3 discussants.

Week 7 (March 2) Methods I

Presentation by students on a method of their choice; readings will vary, depending on the topic and method selected. Students will individually select 2-3 readings in conjunction with the instructor and their supervisor (if applicable), and provide a summary of the possibilities and limits of their chosen method, its relationship to the process of knowledge production, and how it may be productive in the context of your research. Possible topics include: policy analysis, case studies, interviews, participant-observation, focus group, critical discourse analysis, media analysis, archival research, visual methods, etc.

Readings TBA; each student will select 2 readings. Half the class, or 9 students, will present.

Week 8 (March 9) Methods II

Presentation by students on a method of their choice; readings will vary, depending on the topic and method selected. Students will individually select 2-3 readings in conjunction with the instructor and their supervisor (if applicable), and provide a summary of the possibilities and limits of their chosen method, its relationship to the process of knowledge production, and how it may be productive in the context of your research. Possible topics include: policy analysis, case studies, interviews, participant-observation, focus group, discourse analysis, media analysis, archival research, visual methods, etc.

Readings TBA; each student will select 2 readings. The rest of the class, or 8 students, will present.

Week 9 (March 16) Writing qualitative research

The process of writing and publishing research; giving and getting feedback; peer review workshop of proposal in class.

Read:

Belcher, Wendy L. 2009. Giving, getting, and using others' feedback in *Writing your Journal Article in 12 Weeks* Sage Publications. Pp. 221-234.

Berg, L. And Mansvelt, J. 2000 Writing in, speaking out: Communicating Qualitative Research findings in Hay, I. (ed) *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, 161-181

Cerwonka, Allaine 2007. The Fulbright Proposal: Statement of Proposed Study of Research in *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Allaine Cerwonka and Liisa Malkki eds. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Pp. 41-43

Orwell, George. 1971. Politics and the English Language in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, eds. Volume 4. London: Secker and Warburg. Retrieved at <http://www.netcharles.com/orwell/ext/222.htm>

Activities: Peer Review Workshop
Assignment: First draft of proposal due in class

Week 10 (March 23) Individual consultations

Students will have the opportunity to consult with the instructor and discuss their proposal and the feedback received, before their presentation and final proposal submission. Each student will meet for 15-20 minutes, in Loeb D795.

Week 11 (March 28) Proposal presentations I

Students will present their proposal to their peers to get feedback before their final submission. Further guidelines will be provided in class.

***** We will exceptionally meet Monday, March 28 at 3:00 p.m. Room TBA.**

Week 12 (April 6) Proposal presentations II

Students will present their proposal to their peers to get feedback before their final submission. Further guidelines will be provided in class.

Assignment: Final proposal due April 11th