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Why research methods

A quick scan of news and social media illustrates the complexity and conflicting ideas and information that inform political debate. Understanding the principles and techniques of social research can help you to become a more intelligent and informed consumer of information, whether it's the news, scholarly materials, or data you are inundated with on a daily basis. Applying research methods principles and techniques can also help you to become a competent producer of information, in the form of rigorous research, informed analysis, and critical commentary. These practical skills are invaluable to your success as a student and are also highly valued in the workforce, regardless of your career path.



Course description

This course is intended to introduce you to key concepts and techniques of empirical inquiry in political science research. It will give you tools to critically analyze and produce information, including an understanding and appreciation of the general principles, processes, and issues associated with empirical social science.

We will begin the course with an introduction to significant developments in the 'science' of politics, including different philosophies of science and techniques of logical argumentation. We will examine how to analyze and construct logical arguments for lay audiences based on empirical information, including writing an op-ed.

Focusing on the issue of electoral behavior, we will then turn to the main elements of research design including: ethical issues in social science research, with particular focus on doing research with Indigenous communities; framing researchable questions and hypotheses; and defining and measuring social and political phenomena. We will discuss issues related to the range and selection of methods for collecting and analyzing data, focusing primarily on non-quantitative approaches, and their application in political science.



Learning objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- ☑ Describe the major philosophical and theoretical approaches to political science research;
- ☑ Explain and apply the elements of logical argumentation;
- ☑ Identify and compare the components of empirical research design;
- ☑ Identify and apply the principles of research ethics, with reference to specific concerns for political science;
- ☑ Discuss various social scientific research methods for collecting and analyzing data;
- ☑ Find, read, and critically assess published research and on-line materials;
- ☑ Identify and apply the tenets of research design and methodology in a research paper.



Assessments

Argumentation: writing an op-ed (Oct 8)	10%
Defining and measuring concepts (Nov 12)	15%
Textual analysis research paper (Dec 3)	30%
Tutorials (see schedule)	20%
Final exam (exam period)	25%

Detailed instructions and rubrics for written work will be posted in CULearn. All written work must be submitted in CULearn. Grades will be posted and graded work will be returned to students in CULearn.

Late assignments

Late assignments will be penalized up to 5 days, including weekends (see individual assignment instructions for deductions). After 5 days, late assignments will be given a zero. E-mailed/ hard-copy assignments are NOT accepted.



Required textbooks and readings

- Halperin & Heath (2017). *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. 2nd Ed. Oxford.
- Menard (2016). *Political Argument. A Guide to Research, Writing, and Debating*. Oxford.

Texts are available at [Haven Books](#) and on reserve at [MacOdrum](#). Other required readings are on electronic reserves, accessed via [Ares](#).

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Course Expectations



Guidelines for Written Work

Detailed instructions for each assignment will be posted in CULearn and discussed in class. Assignments must follow accepted bibliographic and citation formats. All written work must be original and done individually, and accord with the University's [Academic Integrity](#) policies.



Attendance and Participation

Attendance for this course is required in both lectures and tutorials. “Showing up” is the attendance component and is a minimum expectation but I will not take attendance during lecture. What you do when you show up is participation: it is a measure of your engagement with course materials, your peers, and instructors/tutors. Tutorial grades are a combination of attendance and active, engaged, and respectful participation in discussion and activities. You should make sure you are familiar with the University's [Academic Integrity and Offenses of Conduct](#) policies for students



CULearn

I will regularly update CULearn with announcements, assignments, and information about the class. It is your responsibility to check the site each week before class. If you miss a class, please check the website for announcements, readings and other materials, such as power point slides from the lecture and worksheets from tutorials.



Email Communications

Your emails should:

- ✓ Use a clear subject line
- ✓ Have a salutation (e.g., Hello Professor Bhatia...) and signature (Regards, followed by your first name, last name, and student number)
- ✓ Concisely identify your issue and/or question

I will:

- ✓ Check my email regularly and do my best to respond with 24-hours, Monday to Friday
- ✓ Not review drafts by email but can meet with you during office hours to discuss your work
- ✓ Not accept assignments by email

Communication is key: If you miss an assignment, are ill, or experiencing an emergency that is affecting your performance in the course, please let me know as soon as possible. DO NOT wait until the end of the term to identify issues or concerns you have because I will not be able to address the situation at that late stage.

Course Schedule & Readings

The course is organized to enable flexibility in covering the course material while moving at a pace that is comfortable for both students and instructor. The proposed schedule is to serve as a tentative guide only. Some changes may be made.

Schedule in Brief

Part I: Introduction to the Fundamentals of Inquiry				
1.	Sep 10	Introduction & the Science of Politics		
2.	Sep 17	Forms of Knowledge		
3.	Sep 24	Thinking Critically	Tutorial #1: Writing an Op-Ed	
Part II: Designing Research				
4.	Oct 01	Ethics in Social Research	Tutorial #2: Ethical Research Practice	
5.	Oct 08	Asking Questions, Finding Answers	Tutorial #3: Hypotheses & Questions	Assignment 1 Due
6.	Oct 15	Research Design	Tutorial #4: Comparing Across Nations	
	Oct 22	Fall Break – No Class		
7.	Oct 29	Concepts and Measurement	Tutorial #5: Operationalizing Variables	
Part III: Research in Practice				
8.	Nov 05	Content Analysis Research	Tutorial #6: Content Analysis	
9.	Nov 12	Experimental Research	Tutorial #7: Designing Experiments	Assignment 2 Due
10.	Nov 19	Survey Research	Tutorial #8: Survey Question Design	
11.	Nov 26	Interviews & Focus Groups		
12.	Dec 03	Observation and Field Research	Assignment 3 Due	

For all statutory holidays, important university dates, and other university holidays, please refer to the Undergraduate calendar at <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/>.

Part I: Introduction to the Fundamentals of Inquiry

Lecture 1 (Sep 10): Introduction and the Science of Politics

Introduction and course overview; the purpose of political science research.

Required Readings:

- Gutting, G. (2013). [How reliable are the social sciences?](#) *The New York Times*, May 17.
- Ménard, Chapter 1 (The Importance of Research in Political Argument), pp. 24-43

Lecture 2 (Sep 17): Forms of Knowledge: Laws, Explanations, and Interpretations

How we know what we know; ontology and epistemology in political science; interpretivism, scientific realism and positivism; quantitative and qualitative approaches; the role of objectivity and values in research.

Required Readings:

- HH, Chapter 2 (Forms of Knowledge), pp. 25-50
- HH, Chapter 3 (Objectivity and Values), pp. 54-75

Supplementary Readings:

- Dryzek, J. (2006). Revolutions without enemies: Key transformations in political science. *American Political Science Review*, 100(4):487-492
- Issak, A.C. (1969). *Scope and Methods of Political Science*. Homewood: Dorsey Press. Chapter 2: Politics and science, pp. 13-30, Chapter 4: Is political science a science? pp. 45-57.

Lecture 3 (Sep 24): Thinking Critically – Logic and Argumentation

The form and structure of logical arguments; key elements of strong arguments; writing a persuasive op-ed.

TUTORIAL #1: WRITING AN OP-ED

Required Readings:

- Stephens, B. (2017). [Tips for Aspiring Op-Ed Writers](#), *New York Times*, August 25.
- Menard, Chapter 4 (Preparing the Argument), pp. 97-128

Supplementary Readings:

- Gutting, G. (2012). [Facts, Arguments and Politics](#), *New York Times*, September 13.
- Foresman, G. A. (2017). *The Critical Thinking Toolkit*. Wiley-Blackwell. [e-book]
- Vaughn, L. (2018). *Concise Guide to Critical Thinking*. Oxford University Press.

Part II: Designing Research

Lecture 4 (Oct 1): Ethics in Social Research

Ethical principles in conducting research; doing research with human subjects; ethical research with Indigenous communities.

TUTORIAL #2: ENGAGING WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES – ETHICAL RESEARCH PRACTICE

Required Readings:

- Palys, T. & C. Atchison (2008). Chapter 3: Ethics in Social Research. In *Research Decisions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives* (4th Edition). Toronto: Thomson-Nelson.
- Riddell, J.K. et al (2017). [Laying the groundwork: A practical guide for ethical research with Indigenous communities](#). *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 8(2).

Supplementary Readings:

- Cronin-Furman, K., & Lake, M. (2018). Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 51(3), 607-614.
- Fujii, L. A. (2012). Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 45(04): 717-723.
- Lupia, A., & Elman, C. (2014). Openness in political science: Data access and research transparency. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 47(1), 19-42.
- Mosby, I. (2013). Administering colonial science: Nutrition research and human biomedical experimentation in Aboriginal communities and residential schools, 1942-1952. *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 46(91), 145-172.
- Wood, E.J. (2006). The ethical challenges of field research in conflict zones. *Qualitative Sociology*, 29:373-386.

Lecture 5 (Oct 8): Asking Questions, Finding Answers: Theory Building, Causation, and Explanation

Developing researchable questions; inductive and deductive theory development; causation, correlation, and explanation

TUTORIAL #3: FRAMING HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO STUDY VOTER TURNOUT

Required Readings:

- HH, Chapter 4 (Asking Questions: How to Find and Formulate Research Questions), pp. 81-108
- HH, Chapter 5 (Finding Answers: Theories and How to Apply Them), pp. 111-142

Supplementary Readings:

- Blais, A. (2006). What affects voter turnout? *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9:111-125.
- Knopf J.W. (2006). Doing a literature review. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 1:127-132.

Lecture 6 (Oct 15): Research Design

Methods of data collection; identifying and selecting cases; the principles of comparison; comparative designs.

TUTORIAL #4: COMPARING VOTER TURNOUT ACROSS NATIONS

Required Readings:

- HH, Chapter 6 (Research Design), pp. 146-164
- HH, Chapter 9 (Comparative Research), pp. 211-235

Supplementary Readings:

- Geddes B. (1990). How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics *Political Analysis*, 2(1): 131-150
- Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *American Political Science Review*, 98(May): 341-354
- Lijphart, A. (1971). Comparative politics and the comparative method. *The American Political Science Review*, 65(3):682-693
- Seawright, J. and J. Gerring (2008). Case selection techniques in case study research: A menu of qualitative and quantitative options. *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2):294-308

Lecture 7 (Oct 29): Concepts and Measurement

Conceptualizing and measuring the political world; finding and collecting data; selecting a research design

TUTORIAL #5: OPERATIONALIZING VARIABLES

Required Readings:

- HH, Chapter 7 (What is Data?), pp. 168-185

Supplementary Readings:

- Adcock, R. and Collier, D. (2001). Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research. *American Political Science Review*, 95(3): 529-546.
- Dahl, V., E. Amnå, S. Banaji, M. Landberg, et al. (2018) Apathy or alienation? Political passivity among youths across eight European Union countries. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 15:3, 284-301
- Finifter, A. (1970). Dimensions of political alienation. *The American Political Science Review*, 64(2): 389-410
- Gerring, J. (1999). What makes a concept good? A critical framework for understanding concept formation in the social sciences. *Polity* 31(2): 357-93

Part III: Research in Practice

Lecture 8 (Nov 5): Content Analysis

Analyzing documents and texts; content and discourse analysis techniques; analysis of qualitative data

TUTORIAL #6: CONTENT ANALYSIS: IDENTIFYING THEMES AND CODING

Required Readings:

- HH, Chapter 14 (Textual Analysis), pp. 335-356
- Wallace, R. (2018). Contextualizing the crisis: The framing of Syrian refugees in Canadian print media. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 51(2): 207-231

Supplementary Readings:

- DiFrancesco, D. A., & Young, N. (2011). Seeing climate change: The visual construction of global warming in Canadian national print media. *Cultural Geographies*, 18(4), 517-536.
- Meeks, L. (2012). Is she “man enough”? Women candidates, executive political offices, and news coverage. *Journal of Communication*, 62(1):175-193

Lecture 9 (Nov 12): Experimental Research

Classical experimental design; field and natural experiments in social science.

TUTORIAL #7: DESIGNING EXPERIMENTS IN ELECTORAL RESEARCH

Required Readings:

- HH, Chapter 8 (Experimental Research), pp. 191-207
- Anderson, C.D., P.J. Loewen, R.M. McGregor (2018). Implementation intentions, information, and voter turnout: An experimental study. *Political Psychology*, 39(5): 1089-1104.

Supplementary Readings:

- Berinsky A.J. and D.R. Kinder (2006). Making sense of issues through media frames: Understanding the Kosovo crisis, *Journal of Politics*, 68(3):640-656
- John, P. & T. Brannan (2008). How different are telephoning and canvassing? Results from a 'Get Out the Vote' field experiment in the British 2005 General Election. *British Journal of Political Science*, 38: 565-574
- Loewen, P.J., D. Rubenson and L. Wantchekon (2010). Help me help you: Conducting field experiments with political elites. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science March*, 628(1): 165-175

Lecture 10 (Nov 19): Survey Research

Sampling and probability; designing survey instruments; question structure and format

TUTORIAL #8: SURVEYS AND QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Required Readings:

- HH, Chapter 11 (Surveys), pp. 261-283
- Harvard University Program on Survey Research (2007). [Tip Sheet on Question Wording](#).

Supplementary Readings:

- Breton, C., Cutler, F., Lachance, S., & Mierke-Zatwarnicki, A. (2017). Telephone versus online survey modes for election studies: Comparing Canadian public opinion and vote choice in the 2015 federal election. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 50(4), 1005-1036
- Fowler, F.J. (2014). *Survey Research Methods* (Fifth Edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications
- Morin-Chassé, A. (2018). How to survey about electoral turnout? Additional evidence. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 5(3), 230-233.

Lecture 11 (Nov 26): Interviews and Focus Groups

Interview formats and techniques; advantages and disadvantages of each; focus groups as a special form of interview

Required Readings:

- HH, Chapter 12 (Interviewing and Focus Groups), pp. 285-309
- Bastedo, H. (2015) Not 'one of us': understanding how non-engaged youth feel about politics and political leadership, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(5): 649-665. DOI: [10.1080/13676261.2014.992309](https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2014.992309)

Supplementary Readings:

- Aberbach, J. and B.A. Rockman (2002). Conducting and coding elite interviews. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4): 673-76
- Frey, J. and A. Fontana (1991). The group interview in social research. *The Social Science Journal*, 28(2):175-187.
- Leech, B.L. (2002). Asking questions: Techniques for semi-structured interviews. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 35: 665-668.
- Noy, D. (2009). Setting up targeted research interviews: A primer for students and new interviewers. *The Qualitative Report*, 14(3): 454-465 <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR14-3/noy.pdf>

Lecture 12 (Dec 3): Observation and Field Research

Observational research; political ethnography; techniques; ethical issues

Required Readings:

- HH, Chapter 13 (Ethnography and Participant Observation), pp. 313-331
- Fenno, R.F. (1986). Observation, context, and sequence in the study of politics. *American Political Science Review*, 80(1): 3-15.

Supplementary Readings:

- Cohen, N., & Arieli, T. (2011). Field research in conflict environments: Methodological challenges and snowball sampling. *Journal of Peace Research*, 48(4), 423-435.
- Majic, S. (2017). Participating, observing, publishing: Lessons from the field. *PS, Political Science & Politics*, 50(1), 103-108.
- Ortobals, C.D. and M.E. Rincker (2009). Fieldwork, identities, and intersectionality: Negotiating gender, race, class, religion, nationality, and age in the research field abroad. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 42(2): 287-328.
- Speckhard, A. (2009). Research challenges involved in field research and interviews regarding the militant jihad, extremism, and suicide terrorism. *Democracy and Security*, 5: 199–222.

~ Please Note ~

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

Campus Resources for Students

If you need assistance with...	Refer to...	Contact Information
× A disability	Paul Menton Centre	501 University Centre Tel: 613-520-6608, TTY: 613-520-3937 Hours: 08:30 -16:30
× Study skills × Finding a tutor × Peer-assisted subject coaching × On-line, in-person workshops	Centre for Student Academic Support	4 th Floor MacOdrum Library Phone: 613-520-3822 Hours: Mon, Wed, Fri 10:00-16:30 Tues, Thurs 10:00-19:00
× Academic support and advice × Choosing, changing major × Academic planning		302 Tory Building Tel: 613-520-7850 carleton.ca/sasc/advisingcentre
× Hone writing skills × Writing tutors – drop-in × Academic writing workshops	Centre for Student Academic Support – Writing Services	MacOdrum Library, 4 th Floor Tel: 613-520-6632
× English conversation skills × Drop-in sessions to polish language skills	Centre for Student Academic Support – English Conversation Sessions	MacOdrum Library, 4 th Floor Phone: 613-520-3822 Regular weekly sessions
× Research assistance	Research Help Desk MacOdrum Library	MacOdrum Library, Main Floor Tel: 613-520-2735 Email: askthelibrary@carleton.ca
× Government information collection × Data sources	Maps, Data, and Government Information Centre, MacOdrum Library	MacOdrum Library, 1 st Floor 613-520-2600 x2749 Email: GIS@carleton.ca
× IT support – email, wireless × On-campus computing issues	Information Technology Services	Online Help Centre ITS Service Desk: 613-520-3700 Email: its.service.desk@carleton.ca Drop-in: IT Help Desk – Discovery Centre, MacOdrum Library
× Coping with stress or crisis × Health care services × Health promotion, wellness	Health and Counseling Services	2600 CTTC Building Tel: 613-520-6674 Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30-4:30
× Sexual violence, assault, or harassment	Carleton Sexual Assault Support Centre	Bailey Reid - Coordinator 503 Robertson Hall Tel: (613) 520-2600 x 8454 Email: bailey.reid@carleton.ca
× Discrimination or harassment	Equity Services	503 Robertson Hall Tel: (613) 520-5622 Email: equity@carleton.ca

Academic Accommodations & Regulations

Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Religious obligation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. carleton.ca/pmc

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: students.carleton.ca/course-outline

Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They may include a mark of zero for the plagiarized work or a final grade of “F” for the course.

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

Submission and Return of Term Work

Papers must be submitted directly to the instructor according to the instructions in the course outline 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. Final exams are intended solely for the purpose of evaluation and will not be returned.

Grading

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Final standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is:

Percentage	Letter grade	12-pt scale	Percentage	Letter grade	12-pt scale
90-100	A+	12	67-69	C+	6
85-89	A	11	63-66	C	5
80-84	A-	10	60-62	C-	4
77-79	B+	9	57-59	D+	3
73-76	B	8	53-56	D	2
70-72	B-	7	50-52	D-	1

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.

Carleton E-mail Accounts

All email communication to students from the Department of Political Science will be via official Carleton university e-mail accounts and/or cuLearn. As important course and University information is distributed this way, it is the student's responsibility to monitor their Carleton and cuLearn accounts.

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. By hosting social events, including Model Parliament, debates, professional development sessions and more, CPSS aims to involve all political science students 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 our networking opportunities, academic engagement initiatives and numerous events which aim to complement both academic and social life at Carleton University. To find out more, visit us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/CarletonPoliticalScienceSociety/> and our website <https://carletonpss.com/>, or stop by our office in Loeb D688!"

Official Course Outline

The course outline posted to the Political Science website is the official course outline.

Updated August 7, 2019