

PSCI 2701A
**INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODS
IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

Mondays, 2:35-4:25 pm
This course will be held remotely online

Instructor

Professor Vandna Bhatia

Contact

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On-line office hours

Mondays, 2:35 pm to 3:25 pm

Wednesdays, 11:00 am to 12:00 pm

WHY RESEARCH METHODS?

A quick scan of news and social media illustrates the complex, often conflicting and controversial, ideas that animate political dynamics and inform political debates and decisions.

As political scientists, we seek to understand and contribute to political life by making evidence-informed observations and arguments about the political world. The scientific method is a powerful tool for generating compelling and reliable evidence and is a central feature of rigorous and effective political analysis and political argumentation.

Understanding the principles and techniques of social scientific research can help students of politics become more intelligent and **informed consumers of information**, whether it's the news, scholarly materials, or data we are inundated with daily. Applying the principles and techniques of scientific inquiry helps us to become **competent producers of information**, in the form of evidence-informed analysis, critical commentary, and rigorous research.

These practical skills are invaluable for academic success. They will also equip you for life outside academia as active and informed citizens and for virtually any career path you may choose.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will 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.

In Part I of the course – **Fundamentals of Inquiry** – we will begin with a discussion of the *role of research* in political analysis, particularly its importance for making strong arguments. Then, we'll examine how to analyze and construct strong, *evidence-based arguments* (based on research and logic) for lay audiences, such as in op-eds and policy briefs. Finally, to complete this section, we'll explore some key historical developments in the 'science' of politics, including different philosophies of science and forms of empirical analysis.

In Part II – **Designing Research** – we'll look at the basic tenets of research design – elements and considerations that are essential to and common across all types of research methodologies. We'll start first the *role of theory* in designing research – different types of theories, how they help formulate research questions and guide the research process. An essential component of research design is the *literature review*, which is used to identify the existing theories, ideas, and research on a given topic. Next, we'll discuss how to clearly identify, define, and *measure concepts* that we use to study social and political phenomena. In Module 6, we'll turn to *ethical issues* and principles associated with doing research with human subjects, as well as *professional ethics* for political scientists.

We will conclude this section by putting all these elements of research design together to help identify and select the appropriate *samples and cases*.

In Part III – **Research in Practice** – we will explore several designs and methods for collecting and analyzing data in political science research, such as case studies, interviews, and experiments. We'll discuss issues related the selection and application of these approaches, including the fit between research goals, questions, techniques, and the validity and reliability of findings.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

1. Critically analyze the quality and logical strength of an argument;
2. Compose an original, persuasive argument using logic and empirical evidence;
3. Take and defend a position on whether political science should be considered a 'science'
4. Compare and contrast the major philosophical and theoretical approaches to political science research;
5. Identify and apply the principles of research ethics in political science;
6. Discuss the role of theory in designing research questions and methodology;
7. Identify, define, and operationalize concepts in political science research and analysis;
8. Explain the objectives and strategies for conducting and writing a literature review;
9. Distinguish between populations and samples, and different sampling techniques for selecting cases;
10. Identify, compare, and contrast between different research designs and methods for collecting data;
11. Differentiate between and identify the importance of validity and reliability;
12. Construct, justify, and evaluate a specific research design and a methodology for collecting data in relation to a research question.

ASSESSMENTS

The course is divided into three main **sections**, and each section is comprised of multiple modules, for a total of 12 modules over the course of the term. You should pace your progress through the course by aiming to complete one module per week for the 12 weeks of the fall term.

Each **module** consists of a combination of assigned readings, lecture videos, tasks, and activities. At the end of each module, you are expected complete a **formative assessment** to help keep track of your learning and progress through the course. These are low-stakes assignments, such as an online quiz, short answer questions, or online discussions, that are graded and individually worth a small portion of your final course grade. In total, however, formative assessments for all the modules are worth 50% of your final grade.

Assignment 1: Op-ed Argument	15%
Assignment 2: Literature Review	15%
Assignment 3: Research Design	20%
Module Assignments (12)	50%
Total	100%

At the end of each of the three sections of the course, you will be expected to complete a **summative assessment** to evaluate your learning. These are formal written assignments that you **must** to submit in order to earn credit for this course. Together, the three summative assignments are worth 50% of your final grade. There is no final exam for this course.

For **Assignment 1 [500-750 words, due October 11]** you will write short, op-ed paper on a current political or policy issue. The objective of this paper is to write an *informed and persuasive argument* that targets a general (lay) audience. The next two assignments are linked and require you to identify a research question and develop a research proposal on a political science issue or topic of interest to you. In **Assignment 2 [1000-1500 words, due November 22]**, you will select the topic and prepare a literature review to identify definitions and measures for key concepts related to your research question. In **Assignment 3 [1500-2000 words, due December 11]**, you will develop a research proposal for how you would design the research and collect the data to address your question. Detailed instructions and rubrics for written work will be posted in CU Learn. All written work must be submitted in CU Learn. Grades will be posted, and graded work will be returned to students in CU Learn.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES



CU Learn

Since this is an online and asynchronous course, all course content – lectures, assignments, tutorials, grades, etc. will be accessible through CU Learn. The course website will be updated regularly, so please log in frequently for updates and news. If you have technical difficulties with accessing CU Learn, please consult the [CU Learn Support](#) site and contact the help desk as soon as possible.



Engagement & Participation

All the instruction in this course will be done online and asynchronously, through lessons, assignments and tasks that are organized into weekly modules. A new module will be posted by 2:35 pm each Monday. You should plan to complete one module each week, beginning on Monday and ending with a short, graded assignment or task due by Sunday at 11:00 pm.

Participation during the scheduled lecture time (Mondays 2:35 to 4:25) is not mandatory. Instead, I will be online each week on Mondays from 2:35 to 4:25 to introduce the new module, answer questions and meet with students. Attendance in some tutorials *may be required* but not graded. Students will be given advance notice of at least one week when tutorial attendance is required.



Guidelines for Written Work

Instructions for all assignments will be posted in CU Learn and I will post videos to explain the details. You will have an opportunity to ask questions during weekly online office hours. All written assignments must follow accepted bibliographic and citation formats, must be your own original work, in accordance with the University's [Academic Integrity](#) policies.



Late Assignments Policy

Late summative 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. Weekly formative assignments for each module are due by 11:00 pm on the Sunday following the Monday on which they are scheduled and must conform to the expectations and instructions provided. No assignments emailed directly to me or to your TAs will be accepted. All assignments must be submitted in CU Learn as per the instructions provided with each.



Email Communication

Email will be the primary means of communication with me and your teaching assistant. In order to facilitate that process, please ensure that your emails:

- ✓ Have a clear subject line indicating the course and nature of the issue the email concerns;
- ✓ Include 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;
- ✓ Always come from your Carleton email address.

In turn, we will check our email regularly and do our best to respond with 24-hours, Monday to Friday.

Online Office Hours and Virtual Meetings



I will be available to meet with you during the regularly scheduled meeting time for this course, which is Mondays, between 2:35 and 4:25 pm. I will also have a mid-week office hour on Wednesday mornings, from 11:00 to 12:00 pm. Your TAs will also be available during your regularly scheduled tutorial times to chat or meet with you. Further details on how to arrange meetings will be available in CU Learn.

Communication is key: If you miss an assignment, are ill, or experiencing other issues that are affecting your performance in the course, please let me know as soon as possible. You can reach me by email or make an appointment for a virtual meeting. Please DO NOT wait until the end of the term to get in touch with me about issues or concerns because by then it may be too late for us to address them.

MODULES & READINGS

Required textbooks and readings

- Berdahl, Loleen and Keith Archer. *Explorations: Conducting Empirical Research in Canadian Political Science (Third Edition)*. Oxford University Press.
- Menard (2016). *Political Argument. A Guide to Research, Writing, and Debating*. Oxford.

Texts are available at [Haven Books](#) and can be purchased in hard copy or as e-books. Other required readings are available on electronic reserves, accessed via [Ares](#).

Schedule and Module Topics in Brief

Part I: Introduction to the Fundamentals of Inquiry			
Module 1	Sep 14	Research and Political Argument	
Module 2	Sep 21	Thinking Critically – Logic, Evidence & Argumentation	
Module 3	Sep 28	Forms of Knowledge – Ontology, Epistemology, the Science of Politics	
Part II: Designing Research			
Module 4	Oct 5	Theory Building, Causation, and Explanation	Summative 1 due Oct 11
	Oct 12	Thanksgiving – no new module	
Module 5	Oct 19	Concepts and Measurement	
	Oct 26	Reading Week Break – no new module	
Module 6	Nov 2	Ethics in Social Research	
Module 7	Nov 9	Selecting Samples and Cases	
Part III: Research in Practice			
Module 8	Nov 16	Interviews and Focus Groups	Summative 2 due Nov 22
Module 9	Nov 23	Survey Research	
Module 10	Nov 30	Experimental Research	
Module 11	Dec 7	Observation and Field Research	
Module 12	Dec 11	Content Analysis	Summative 3 due Dec 11

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

DETAILED SCHEDULE AND MODULE TOPICS

PART I: FUNDAMENTALS OF INQUIRY

Module 1 (Sep 14): Research and Political Argument

Types of political analysis; the goals and objectives of political science research; science as a form of argumentation

Assigned Readings

- ♦ Ménard, Introduction (Valuing the Political Argument), pp. 1-23
- ♦ Ménard, Chapter 1 (The Importance of Research in Political Argument), pp. 24-43
- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 1 (The Scientific Approach to Politics), pp. 3-15

Module 2 (Sep 21): Thinking Critically – Logic, Evidence and Argumentation

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

Assigned Readings

- ♦ Ménard, Chapter 3 (The Writing Process), pp. 73-96
- ♦ Ménard, Chapter 4 (Preparing the Argument), pp. 97-128

Supplementary Readings

- ♦ Gutting, G. (2012). *Facts, Arguments and Politics*, New York Times, September 13.
- ♦ Sucharov, M. (2019). *Public Influence: A Guide to Op-Ed Writing and Social Media Engagement*. University of Toronto Press. [e-book]

Module 3 (Sep 28): Forms of Knowledge: Ontology, Epistemology and the Science of Politics

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

Assigned Readings

- ♦ Sandra Halperin & Oliver Heath (2020). *Political Research*, 3rd Edition. Oxford University Press. Chapter 2 – Forms of Knowledge (pp. 27-63; skim pages 43-46, and 51-61)

Supplementary Readings

- ♦ 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.
- ♦ Dryzek, J. (2006). Revolutions without enemies: Key transformations in political science. *American Political Science Review*, 100(4):487-492

PART II: DESIGNING RESEARCH

Module 4 (Oct 5): Theory Building, Causation, and Explanation

Theory and causal arguments; causation, correlation, and explanation; developing researchable questions and hypotheses; doing a literature review

Textbook Readings

- ♦ Ménard, Chapter 2 (Research Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them), pp. 44-72
- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 3 (Theory-Oriented Research and the Issue of Causality), pp. 50-67
- ♦ Knopf J.W. (2006). Doing a literature review. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 1:127-132.

Module 5 (Oct 19): Concepts and Measurement

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

Textbook Readings

- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 4 (Defining the political world – Concepts), pp. 69-85
- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 5 (Defining the political world – Measures), pp. 87-113

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.
- ♦ Gerring, J. (1999). What makes a concept good? A critical framework for understanding concept formation in the social sciences. *Polity* 31(2): 357-93

Module 6 (Nov 2): Ethics in Social Research

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

Textbook Readings

- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 6 (Research Ethics), pp. 115-136
- ♦ Fujii, L. A. (2012). Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 45(04): 717-723.

Supplementary Readings

- ♦ Cronin-Furman, K., & Lake, M. (2018). Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 51(3), 607-614
- ♦ 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).
- ♦ Lupia, A., & Elman, C. (2014). Openness in political science: Data access and research transparency. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 47(1), 19-42.

Module 7 (Nov 9): Selecting Samples and Cases

Identifying and selecting cases; the principles of comparative design; probability and non-probability sampling and techniques.

Textbook Readings

- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 7 (Small-N Research)
- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 8 (Sampling the political world)

Supplementary Readings

- ♦ 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

Module 8 (Nov 16): Interviews and Focus Groups

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

Textbook Readings

- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 9 (Interview, Focus Group, and Observation Research), pp. 172-181
- ♦ Aberbach, J. and B.A. Rockman (2002). Conducting and coding elite interviews. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4): 673-76

Supplementary Readings

- ♦ 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)
- ♦ 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>

Module 9 (Nov 23): Survey Research

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

Textbook Readings

- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 10 (Survey Research and Official Statistics)
- ♦ 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.

Module 10 (Nov 30): Experimental Research

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

Textbook Readings

- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 11 (Experimental Research), pp. 208-224
- ♦ 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

- ♦ 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

Module 11 (Dec 7): Observation and Field Research

Observational research; political ethnography; techniques; ethical issues

Textbook Readings

- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 9 (Interview, Focus Group, and Observation Research), pp. 181-187
- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 13 (Analyzing Qualitative Data), pp. 245-257
- ♦ 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.

Module 12 (Dec 11): Content Analysis

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

Textbook Readings

- ♦ Berdahl & Archer, Chapter 12 (Textual Analysis), pp. 227-242
- ♦ 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

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS & REGULATIONS

Accommodations during COVID

Due to COVID, instructors will not request or require a doctor’s note when students seek accommodation for missed term work or exams due to illness. Instead, students will be asked to complete the self-declaration form available here: https://carleton.ca/registrar/wp-content/uploads/COVID-19_Self-declaration.pdf

Academic Accommodations

Pregnancy

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

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.

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

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.

More information on the University’s Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Intellectual property

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none">× Academic advising related to your Political Science courses, programs× Program information, courses, experiential opportunities	Department of Political Science	psci.advising@carleton.ca B640 Loeb Building Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00-4:00
<ul style="list-style-type: none">× Academic support and advice× Choosing, changing major× Academic planning	Academic Advising Centre	academicadvising@carleton.ca 302 Tory Building Hours: 08:30 -16:30
<ul style="list-style-type: none">× Accommodations for a disability× Individual learning needs and supports	Paul Menton Centre	PMC@Carleton.ca 501 University Centre Hours: 08:30 -16:30
<ul style="list-style-type: none">× Study skills× Finding a tutor× Peer-assisted subject coaching× On-line, in-person workshops	Centre for Student Academic Support	csas@carleton.ca 4 th Floor MacOdrum Library Hours: 08:30 -16:30
<ul style="list-style-type: none">× Hone writing skills× Writing tutors – drop-in× Academic writing workshops	Writing Services	csas@carleton.ca MacOdrum Library, 4 th Floor Hours: 08:30 -16:30
<ul style="list-style-type: none">× Research assistance× Library help× Research tips, citation guides	Research Help	Email: askthelibrary@carleton.ca Online chat: https://library.carleton.ca/help Texting: 613-505-4245
<ul style="list-style-type: none">× IT support – email, wireless× On-campus computing issues	Information Technology Services	its.service.desk@carleton.ca
<ul style="list-style-type: none">× Coping with stress or crisis× Health care services× Health promotion, wellness	Health and Counseling Services	Tel: 613-520-6674 2600 CTTC Building Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30-4:30
<ul style="list-style-type: none">× Sexual violence, assault, or harassment× Discrimination or harassment	Carleton Sexual Assault Support Centre	equity@carleton.ca Tel: (613) 520-5622 503 Robertson Hall

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