Course description

This course is an introduction to principles of social scientific research. The main focus is on key research strategies required for understanding, analyzing and researching problems in political science. Broadly speaking, the overall objective is to facilitate the students’ critical reflection about research in political science (i.e., assessing other researchers’ work and judging their results) and to enable them to build their own research project with these considerations in mind (i.e., assessing the quality of your own projects).

In order to do this, four aspects will be covered in the course:

1) The identification of political science problems, the generation of workable research questions to answer, and the situating of such work within the current scientific knowledge;
2) The design and carrying out of the research steps needed to answer such questions and create legitimate knowledge. This includes the planning of research, conducting a proper literature review, and knowing the benefits and drawbacks of the most common methods and methodological approaches for the research context;
3) The analysis of data resulting from research. Some basic quantitative data analysis techniques will be covered in the second half of the class.
4) The use of computer software to organize, present and analyze data for research.

Overall, these aspects will make students able at distinguishing careful scientific analysis from anecdotal or fallacious opinions, helping answer important questions about social and political life. This includes being able to build arguments that are coherent, logically sound, and empirically supported, and analyze and criticize research conducted by others, by understanding the advantages, limits, and drawbacks of each of different research methods in order to develop a critical ability, both for your own research projects and analyses and as a reader of others’ work.

cuLearn and communications

This course uses cuLearn, Carleton’s learning management system (login at www.carleton.ca/culearn). Students will be provided with detailed instructions and guidelines for each assignment in class and via cuLearn. Students are responsible for getting this information and
contacting the instructor for any precisions they feel necessary. Regular updates will be posted on cuLearn, so students are strongly encouraged to check the website on a daily basis for important messages, as well as ensuring that their Carleton email inbox works properly.

All assignments will be submitted through the cuLearn platform, and feedback and grades will be posted on cuLearn as well, although please keep in mind that your official final grade is what appears on Carleton Central (in case of discrepancy, please contact the instructor).

For help and support, go to [http://carleton.ca/culearnsupport/students](http://carleton.ca/culearnsupport/students). Any unresolved questions can be directed to Computing and Communication Services (CCS) by phone at 613-520-3700 or via email at ccs_service_desk@carleton.ca.

**Course format and text**

Classes will be lectures for the most part, but will integrate discussion and demonstrations whenever possible. For the quantitative analysis part, the course will mostly use a textbook to ensure continuity and facilitate learning techniques:


Note that you do not need to buy this textbook (or any other) unless you want to have your own personal copy. The textbook will be placed at the library reserve. Other readings will be made available on cuLearn, through the online library reserve, or at the physical library reserve in some rare cases.

**Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature review and research problem</td>
<td>October 9th</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research design and data collection</td>
<td>October 30th</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique of research design</td>
<td>November 6th</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results, data analysis and conclusions</td>
<td>December 8th</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main evaluation in this course is done through the development of the preliminary steps of a research project (items #1, #2 and #4). Item #3 (critique of research design) will have students anonymously evaluate one of their peers’ methodology, and provide a critique and a set of suggestions on how to improve the design. Students who wish to do so may turn items #1, #2 and #4 as a unified paper, but this requires approval by the instructor ahead of October 9th.
Students will be provided with detailed instructions and guidelines for each evaluation item in class and via cuLearn (login at www.carleton.ca/culearn). Students are responsible for getting this information and contacting the instructor for any precisions they feel necessary. Regular updates will be posted on cuLearn, so students are strongly encouraged to check the website on a daily basis for important messages, as well as ensuring that their Carleton email inbox works properly.

**Policy on late assignments.** All assignments are due online through cuLearn, before midnight on the night of the due date. No email copy will be accepted. No copy handed in the political science department drop box will be accepted. Exceptions on these criteria must be justified with the instructor ahead of the due date, in which case alternative arrangements will be made if necessary. Late assignments will not be accepted, although there will be some flexibility for submissions at the end of the term.

**Topics and Schedule**

The following list of topics is offered as a tentative schedule only. Flexibility being essential in order to cover the course material at a pace that works for both the students and the instructor, some changes may be made at the discretion of the latter. Please refer to cuLearn throughout the semester for an up-to-date list of readings and topics.

**Part 1 – Research design**

**Week 1: September 12th**

Introduction: questions and answers in scientific research; how we (get to) know what we know, and how we know we know

**Required:**

- Tufekci, Zeyneb. “Hollaback and why everyone needs better research methods: and why all data needs theory.” *The Medium*. Online: https://medium.com/message/that-catcalling-video-and-why-research-methods-is-such-an-exciting-topic-really-32223ac9c9e8;

**Optional:**

• Crash Course Philosophy #8: Karl Popper, Science, and Pseudoscience. 2016. Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-X8Xf10d7TQ&index=8&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNgK6MZucdYidNkMybYIHKR;

Week 2: September 19th
Measuring the social world: concepts, variables, indicators; institutional data; Literature reviews and annotated bibliographies;

Required:
• Berdahl, L. and K. Archer. 2015. Explorations: Conducting empirical research in Canadian political science. Oxford. Chapter 4 (Defining the political world: Concepts) and 5 (Defining the political world: Measures), pp. 87-96 and 103-110;

Optional:
• Roselle, Laura and Sharon Spray. 2011. Research and Writing in International Relations, 15–31 (Toronto: Longman);

Week 3: September 26th
Data collection methods

Required:
• Rathbun, Brian C. 2008. “Interviewing and Qualitative Methods: Pragmatism and Practicalities.” In J. M. Box-Steppensmeier, H. E. Brady and D. Collier (eds), The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology;
• Berg, Bruce and Howard Lune. 2011. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*, Chapter 5;

*Optional:*

• Berg, Bruce and Howard Lune. 2011. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*, Chapter 4, pp. 136-163;

**Week 4: October 3rd**

*Research designs, part I: thinking about causality; experiments in social sciences*

*Required:*

• Halperin, S. and O. Heath. 2012. *Political Research : Methods and Practical Skills*, Oxford, Chapter 7 (Research design), pp. 164-78 and Chapter 8 (Experimental research);
• Duflo, Esther. 2010: *Social experiments to fight poverty*. Ted Talk video. Online: [https://www.ted.com/talks/esther_duflo_social_experiments_to_fight_poverty?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/esther_duflo_social_experiments_to_fight_poverty?language=en);
Optional:


Week 5: October 10th
Research designs, part II: cases, case studies and comparative research

Required:


Optional:

- Levi-Faur, David. 2004. “Comparative research design in the study of regulation: how to increase the number of cases without compromising the strengths of case-oriented analysis.” In Jacint Jordana and David Levi-Faur (eds), *The Politics of Regulation: Institutions and Regulatory Reforms for the Age of Governance*, Elgar and the Centre on Regulation and Competition, University of Manchester, 177-199;
Part II – Data analysis

Week #6 – October 17th
Introduction and basic concepts of quantitative methods in political science; data organization and presentation; institutional data sources

Required:
- Haan and Godley: Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Week #7 – October 31st
Measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion; introduction to Microsoft Excel and data organization

Required:
- Haan and Godley: Chapters 5 and 6.

Optional:

Week #8 – November 7th
Univariate data analysis; standard scores and confidence intervals

Required:
- Haan and Godley: Chapters 7 and 9;
Weeks #9 and #10 – November 14th and November 21st
Hypothesis testing; bivariate relationships (ordinal and nominal); types of error; measures of association

Required:
- Haan and Godley: Chapters 10, 11 and 12.

Optional:
- Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten (2013), The Fundamentals of Political Science Research, Cambridge University Press, chapter 7 (145–150);
- Haan and Godley: Chapter 13 (141–149).

Week #11 – November 28th
Bivariate relationships between interval/ratio variables; introduction to more advanced statistical techniques

Required:

Optional:
- Agresti, Barbara and Alan Finlay, 2008, Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences, chapter 10;
- Haan and Godley: Chapter 16, 17 and 18.

Week 12: December 5th
Conclusions

Required:

Optional:
- Roselle, Laura and Sharon Spray. 2011. Research and Writing in International Relations, 46–66 (Toronto: Longman);
- Kirkpatrick, David D. 2007. “This war is not like the others — or is it?” New York Times, August 26;

Student Conduct, Academic Regulations and Academic Accommodations

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and 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 me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

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).

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 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>12-point scale</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>12-point scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
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<td>67-69</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>73-76</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>50-52</td>
<td>D-</td>
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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. Holding social events, debates, and panel discussions, 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 numerous opportunities which will complement both academic and social life at Carleton University. To find out more, visit https://www.facebook.com/groups/politicalsciencesociety/ or come to our office in Loeb D688.

Official Course Outline: The course outline posted to the Political Science website is the official course outline.