

Department of Political Science
Carleton University

Fall 2012

PSCI 5700 F

Basic Research Methods

Instructor:

Contact Information

Scott Edward Bennett
A627 Loeb Building
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Lecture Times:

11:35 to 14:25 am on Fridays beginning on September 7.
Location will ultimately be posted on Carleton Central.

Office Hours:

The instructor will usually be in his office from 14:30 to 17:00 Tuesdays, 9:30 to 11:00 Fridays and 15:00 to 16:00 Fridays (unless altered by last minutes adjustments arising from University Scheduling or University meetings). These hours will probably not be held during the first week of the term.

The instructor may also be contacted throughout the week via e-mail. Read this syllabus carefully. This syllabus stipulates class policies. Exemptions from these policies will not be granted.

NOTE: NEARLY ALL OF THE TIMING AND LOCATION INFORMATION GIVEN ABOVE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS OF THE TIME THIS OUTLINE IS BEING SUBMITTED.

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

Course Description:

The course is an introduction to the preliminary aspects of logic and techniques of political science research methods. There are five major aspects of the material presented. The first to be presented is the logic and assumptions of research on politics and policy. The second is the logic of research design. The third aspect covers various types of data collection and measurement techniques. The fourth aspect is a limited introduction to quantitative data analysis techniques.

The use of computers to store and analyse data for research on politics and policy is also introduced in a preliminary way as relevant throughout the course and may be viewed as a fifth course element.

NOTE: IN MORE SUMMARY FASHION, THE PRIMARY THING THAT THE INSTRUCTOR WANTS STUDENTS TO GET OUT OF THIS COURSE IS SOME SENSE OF HOW TO DEAL WITH DATA IN THE OVERALL CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS. MANY OF YOU MAY NOT SEE YOURSELVES AS BEING PRIMARILY INVOLVED WITH DATA IN YOUR INTENDED FIELDS OF STUDY. HOWEVER, TOTAL IGNORANCE OF THIS AREA WOULD BE A MAJOR HANDICAP IN NAVIGATING CONTEMPORARY ACADEMIA, NOT TO MENTION THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD.

Course Format

The instructor will usually lecture for part at least part of each time slot. The remaining time will usually be allocated to answering students' questions, dealing with students' technical problems in class, conducting class exercises/quizzes, discussing course material and illustrating computer applications.

Grade Components:

You will be expected to develop the preliminary steps of a research project and write a paper or papers about each step. You can take a suggested topic from the course instructor, or you can develop your own. Either approach is perfectly acceptable. You may turn the papers in any time before the course ends. If you wish, you may turn them all in at the very end of the course as a unified paper. The unified paper would be graded as such rather than as an assembly of sections. Our last class is November 30, but you will be given at least until December 3 to complete course work. There will also be a small participation component which will be explained in more detail in class.

Grading Device	% of Total Course Grade
1. Research Proposal and Design	25%
2. Measurement Device and Issues in Data Collection	25%
3. Production and Analysis of Example Data Set	30%
4. Participation	20%

Note that any papers should be submitted to me as WORD attachments to an email. Be sure to keep a back up, and wait for my notification that I have received and opened whatever you submit. More details about the structure of the papers will be provided in class. Further rules and penalties relating to grading and class conduct are described in the final part of the

instructor's outline. Read them and understand them because they may be more severe than what you have experienced in other classes and because they are observed without exception.

Main Texts:

The main texts are:

Empirical Political Analysis (8th edition) by Brians, Willnat, Manheim and Rich (Longman, 2011)

Public Affairs Research Methods: A Quantitative Introduction by Bennett (Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1996)

Occasional reserve or secondary readings may also be suggested from time to time.

NOTE: DON'T BUY THESE BOOKS UNLESS YOU PERSONALLY WANT TO HAVE YOUR OWN COPIES. THERE WILL BE PLENTY OF COPIES ON RESERVE OR OTHERWISE AVAILABLE.

Course Topics & Readings

Note that the instructor considers it to be bad pedagogy and probably bad administration to assign in advance specific dates to the coverage of specific topics. We want to cover the material below at a pace and in a manner that is consistent with student background and progress. It is conceivable that some topics will have to be expanded or reduced slightly in light of such considerations compared to what is indicated below.

1. **Introduction to the Class**
2. **Introduction: The Research Process**
Bennett, Chapter 1-3
Brians, et. al. , Chapter 1
3. **The Logic of Problem Generation and Explanation**
Bennett, Chapter 4
Brians, et. al., Chapters 2, 4 and first part of 5 (pages 88 to 94)
4. **Research Design: General Strategies for Testing Hypotheses and Exploring Data**
Bennett, Chapter 5
Brians, et. al., Chapter 6
5. **Basic Concepts of Estimation and Measurement**

Bennett, Chapter 6
 Brians, et. al., Chapter 7

6. **Data Collection Methods**

Bennett, Chapter 7 (first part)
 Brians, et. al., Chapters 19, 20 and 21

7. **Concepts of Computerised Data Use in Research**

Since aspects of this topic will be covered as needed earlier in the course, it will probably be a fairly minor component of the material presented at this point. Some remarks will be presented to establish continuity at this point in the course.

8. **Types of Statistical Analysis: An Overview**

Bennett, Chapter 8
 Additional material may be presented at this time depending on time constraints.

9. **An Overview of More Advanced Topics In Statistics**

Bennett, Chapter 9 to 12 and possibly some secondary readings
 We may not be able to cover this topic completely. However, if time permits, it probably will be a major topic.

Important Guidelines and Rules

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

1. Do your work on time as described in this outline and in class. There are no lateness penalties apart from late work not receiving any credit. Having said that, a graduate student usually has the option of taking an INC in a course in order to obtain additional time to finish work.
2. Do not engage in plagiarism.
3. Do not disrupt the class.
4. Keep an open mind with respect to value systems and approaches to inquiry.

Other rules of general interest from a departmental or university perspective are contained in an attachment that follows. The instructor only takes responsibility for the essence of the material above.

Standard Departmental Attachment

Academic Accommodations

For students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (500 University Centre) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Registered PMC students are required to contact the centre (613-520-6608) every term to ensure that the instructor receives your request for accommodation. After registering with the PMC, make an appointment to meet with the instructor in order to discuss your needs **at least two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations**. If you require accommodation for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodation to PMC by *(November 9th, 2012 for December examinations and March 8th, 2013 for April examinations)*.

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

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 include a mark of zero for the plagiarized work or a final grade of "F" for the course.

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

Submission and Return of Term Work: Papers must be handed directly to the instructor and will not be date-stamped in the departmental office. Late assignments may be submitted to the drop box in the corridor outside B640 Loeb. Assignments will be retrieved every business day at **4 p.m.**, stamped with that day's date, and then distributed to the instructor. For essays not returned in class please attach a **stamped, self-addressed envelope** if you wish to

have your assignment returned by mail. Please note that assignments sent via fax or email will not be accepted. Final exams are intended solely for the purpose of evaluation and will not be returned.

Grading: Assignments and exams will be graded with a percentage grade. To convert this to a letter grade or to the university 12-point system, please refer to the following table.

Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale	Percentage	Letter grade	12-point 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

Grades: Final grades are derived from the completion of course assignments. Failure to write the final exam will result in the grade ABS. Deferred final exams are available **ONLY** if the student is in good standing in the course.

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.

Connect Email Accounts: All email communication to students from the Department of Political Science will be via Connect. Important course and University information is also distributed via the Connect email system. It is the student's responsibility to monitor their Connect account.

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