

Department of Political Science  
Fall 2019  
Carleton University  
<https://carleton.ca/polisci/>

## **PSCI 5700 F**

### **Basic Research Methods**

**Instructor:** Scott Edward Bennett

**Contact Information:** C 672 Loeb Building Tel: 613-520-2600 ext 2791  
[scott.bennett@carleton.ca](mailto:scott.bennett@carleton.ca)

**Class Times:** 8:35am to 11:25am on Thursdays beginning on September 5.  
Please confirm location on Carleton Central.

**Online Office Hours:** Fridays from 8:00 to 13:00 by appointment at least 48 hours in advance

**NOTE: Although nominal online office hours are available by advance appointment, students should use those hours only if absolutely necessary. Most matters can be dealt with in class or by email any time through your Carleton email account. Although the instructor is not available around the clock every day, you will find that he generally responds to emails rapidly and in detail. There are no in person office hours for this course as experience has shown that nearly all relevant matters can be addressed in class, through regular email or through email during online office hours.**

## Course

### Description:

This course is an introduction to the preliminary logic and techniques of data-oriented political science research methods. There are five major aspects of the material presented. The first is the logic and assumptions of research on politics and policy. The second is the logic of research design. The third covers various topics of data collection and measurement. The fourth aspect is an introduction to quantitative data analysis techniques. The use of computer software (primarily

SPSS) to analyze data for research is also introduced throughout the course, and that constitutes the fifth course element.

The primary benefit that the instructor wants students to take from this course is some sense of how to deal with data in the overall context of the research process. Some 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. Note that if you are totally uninterested in learning about the applied side of data oriented methods, there are other classes you can take that will fulfill your methods requirement.

## Course Format:

The instructor will usually lecture for 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, 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. Unless, there are very good reasons to do otherwise, the instructor will constrain the types of topics you can pursue. Exceptions may be made if this would serve the research agenda of a student in pursuit of their dissertation or thesis. 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 December 5, and that is the nominal due date for submission of final work. You will definitely get a few days beyond that to complete work if necessary, and graduate students usually have an option for further extension. 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 backup, 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 this outline.

Read them and understand them because they may be different from what you have experienced in other classes.

The best way to learn this material the first time around is to do a project based on survey research. A second best approach might involve certain kinds of aggregate data. Attempts to pursue projects based on content analysis or similar are usually very unsatisfying and problematic unless they are part of a very large project that could not be successfully completed in one term.

## Main Texts:

The main text is:

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

A sometimes cited secondary text is:

Empirical Political Analysis (8<sup>th</sup> edition) by Briens, Willnat, Manheim and Rich (Longman, 2011)

**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. In addition, much of the text material is recapitulated in slides that will be made available to you.**

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

In addition, the instructor will likely make a lot of lecture references to very recent literature and trends relating to data collection and measurement. These areas are evolving so quickly, there is no conventional text that summarizes them well.

## 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.

Also note that almost every topic will be linked to slides or files that recapitulate or expand on the readings referred to 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 in the course.
8. **Types of Statistical Analysis: An Overview**  
Bennett, Chapter 8
9. **Basic Univariate Statistics as an Example of Descriptive and Inferential Data Analysis**  
Bennett, Chapter 9
10. **An Overview of Slightly More Advanced Topics in Statistical Analysis**  
Bennett, Chapter 10 to 12 and possibly some secondary readings

We may not be able to cover this last topic completely. However, if time permits, it probably will be a major topic.

## Important Guidelines and Rules

From, the instructor's 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 "in progress" grade in a course in order to obtain additional time to finish work. Recent changes to rules surrounding such extensions have not been clearly described by the relevant authorities.
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 insertion that follows. The instructor only takes responsibility for the essence of the material above.

---

### Academic Accommodations

#### 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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](http://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-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

### 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.