INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Thursdays, 4:35 pm to 6:25 pm. See Carleton Central for location
Instructor: Dr. Simon Langlois-Bertrand
Office hours: Thursdays 3:00pm-4:00pm, Loeb B642
Tel: 613.520.2600 x 1422 (only valid during office hours)
Email: simonlangloisbertran@cmail.carleton.ca (please always put ‘PSCI2701’ in the subject line)

Course description

This course offers an introduction to key strategies and methods required for understanding, analyzing and researching problems in political science. Students will learn and reflect on the different philosophical and practical issues, the concepts, the empirical methods and other components in conducting and consuming scientific research in political science. The emphasis will be on the main non-quantitative methods and other tools used in political science, including literature reviews, data source research, case studies, content analysis, interviews, surveys, observation, and experiments, among other topics.

Broadly speaking, this introduction to research methods in political science emphasizes how to generate legitimate scientific knowledge about political problems. In practice, this means (1) learning how to identify these problems and generate a workable research question to answer, and (2) figuring out how to design and carry out research in order to answer it and create legitimate knowledge. More specifically, the course is designed to enable students to:

• Build arguments that are coherent, logically sound, and empirically supported, and analyze and criticize arguments and claims made by others;
• Be familiar with the techniques for measuring social and political phenomena;
• Choose which methods and methodological approaches are appropriate in a given context, as well engage with debates about the benefits and drawbacks of each. This includes being able to judge and criticize the methods used by other researchers and analysts;
• Know the fundamentals of comparative and descriptive research in political science, in order to be able to create and plan a research project;
• Overall, distinguish careful scientific analysis from anecdotal or fallacious opinions, helping answer important questions about social and political life.

Course text

Most of the readings in this course come from the required textbook:

The text is available at the Carleton bookstore, including online, and is also on reserve at the MacOdrum Library, where it is available on a short-term loan (2 hours) basis. Used copies may also be available on Amazon.ca or at Haven Books. Other readings will be made available through the Ares link (online library reserve) on cuLearn.

**Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Quiz</td>
<td>Open from November 4th to 6th</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1: Operationalizing concepts</td>
<td>September 21st</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2: Evaluating measurement</td>
<td>October 19th</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 3: Content analysis</td>
<td>November 30th</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial attendance and participation</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Final exam period (date TBD)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Students will be provided with detailed instructions and guidelines for each assignment in class and via cuLearn (login at [www.carleton.ca/culearn](http://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 be penalized by 10% a day, up to a maximum of 5 days (50%). The midnight cut-off always applies to determine the number of days to be counted in the late penalty. Assignments submitted after midnight on the night of the fifth day following the due date will automatically be given a grade of 0.

Extensions/exceptions will not be granted except on medical grounds, with appropriate documentation. These rules are enforced to ensure fairness across the large number of students registered in the course.

**Online quiz.** You will need to log into your cuLearn account and complete the quiz between 6:00am on Friday, November 4th and 11:59pm on Sunday, November 6th. More instructions will be provided prior to the quiz.

**Tutorials.** Students are strongly encouraged to attend and participate to weekly tutorials. Half of the points allocated to tutorials will go to attendance, while the other half will be assigned according to the quality of the participation. More details will be provided during the first tutorial.
Final exam. The cumulative final exam will be held during the exam period (between December 10th and December 22nd). A description of the exam format and content will be provided during the last class.

Academic Resources

<table>
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<tr>
<th>If you need assistance with...</th>
<th>Refer to...</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Finding a tutor</td>
<td>Student Academic Success Centre – Learning Support Services</td>
<td>302 Tory Building, 613-520-7850 <a href="http://www2.carleton.ca/sasc/">http://www2.carleton.ca/sasc/</a> No appointments necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One-on-one study skills support</td>
<td>Student Academic Success Centre – Academic Advising</td>
<td>302 Tory Building, 613-520-7850 <a href="http://www2.carleton.ca/sasc/">http://www2.carleton.ca/sasc/</a> No appointments necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Group study skills workshops</td>
<td>Paul Menton Centre</td>
<td>501 University Centre, 520-6600 <a href="http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/">http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reserving group study rooms</td>
<td>Writing Tutorial Service</td>
<td>4th Floor MacOdrum Library, 613-520-6632 <a href="http://www2.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/">http://www2.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic support and advice</td>
<td>International Student Services Office, Conversation Groups</td>
<td>128 University Centre, 613-520-6600 <a href="http://www1.carleton.ca/issso/">http://www1.carleton.ca/issso/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Choosing, changing major</td>
<td>Research Help Desk, MacOdrum Library</td>
<td>MacOdrum Library, 520-2735 <a href="http://www.library.carleton.ca/">http://www.library.carleton.ca/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Academic planning</td>
<td>Data Centre, MacOdrum Library</td>
<td>Statistical Consultant, 520-2600 x 2619 <a href="http://www.library.carleton.ca/contact/services-points/data-centre">http://www.library.carleton.ca/contact/services-points/data-centre</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A learning disability</td>
<td>Office of Student Affairs</td>
<td>613-520-2600, x 2573 <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/studentaffairs">http://www.carleton.ca/studentaffairs</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developing writing skills</td>
<td>Health and Counseling Services</td>
<td>613-520-6674 <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/health">http://www.carleton.ca/health</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Polishing English conversation skills</td>
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<td>• Research assistance</td>
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<td>• Statistics/SPSS assistance (by appointment only)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Coping with stress or crisis</td>
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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.
SECTION 1: THE FUNDAMENTALS

LECTURE #1 (8 September)
Introduction; Scientific approaches to politics and social phenomena; objectivity in social science research
No tutorial.

Required:
- Halperin and Heath, Chapter 1 (Political Research);
- Halperin and Heath, Chapter 3 (Objectivity and Values), pp. 53-60.

Optional:
- Crash Course Philosophy #8: Karl Popper, Science, and Pseudoscience https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-X8Xfi0JdTQ&index=8&list=PL8dPuualJxtNgK6MZucdYldNkMybYIHKR;
- Last Week Tonight: Scientific studies https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Rng1NpHdmw;

LECTURE #2 (15 September)
Questions, answers, hypotheses and theories: the starting points of research projects; literature review
Tutorial #1

Required:
- Halperin and Heath, Chapter 5 (Asking Questions);
- Halperin and Heath, Chapter 6 (Answering Research Questions), pp. 129-144.
Optional:

- Halperin and Heath, Chapter 2 (Forms of Knowledge);
- WKT. 2008. “It is not just a theory... it is a theory!” Chandra Chronicles. Online, http://chandra.harvard.edu/chronicle/0308/theo/;

SECTION 2: MEASURING THE SOCIAL WORLD

LECTURE #3 (22 September)

Concepts, variables and indicators

Tutorial #2

Required:

- Berdahl, L. and K. Archer. 2015. Explorations: Conducting empirical research in Canadian political science. Oxford. Chapter 4 (Defining the political world: Concepts);

Optional:

- Salking, N.J. 2011. Statistics for people who (think they) hate statistics. Chapter 6 (Just the truth: An introduction to understanding reliability and validity);

LECTURE #4 (29 September)

Asking questions to people: surveys, interviews and focus groups

Tutorial #3

Required:

- Halperin and Heath, Chapter 10 (Surveys);
- Halperin and Heath, Chapter 11 (Interviewing and Focus Groups).

Optional:


**LECTURE #5 (6 October)**

**Asking questions to texts**

*Tutorial #4*

**Required:**
- Halperin and Heath, Chapter 13 (Textual Analysis).

**Optional:**

**LECTURE #6 (13 October)**

**Observing first hand and political ethnography; institutional data**

*Tutorial #5*

**Required:**
- Halperin and Heath, Chapter 12 (Ethnography and Participant Observation).

**Optional:**
LECTURE #7 (20 October)

Ethical considerations

Tutorial #6

Required:


Optional:


27 October

NO CLASS. READING WEEK.

SECTION 3: RESEARCH DESIGNS

LECTURE #8 (3 November)

Comparative research and case selection

Tutorial #7

Required:

- Halperin and Heath, Chapter 7 (Research Design), pp. 164-78;
- Halperin and Heath, Chapter 9 (Comparative Research);

Optional:

- Geddes B. 1990. “How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics.” *Political Analysis* 2(1): 131-50;
Lecture #9 (10 November)

Experiments (1/2)

Tutorial #8

Required:
- Halperin and Heath, Chapter 8 (Experimental Research);

Optional:

Lecture #10 (17 November)

Experiments (2/2)

Tutorial #9.

No readings.

Lecture #11 (24 November)

Action research and critical methodologies

Tutorial #10

Required:
Optional:


**LECTURE #12 (1 December)**

Communicating results and conclusion; return on objectivity in social science; final review, part 1

*No tutorial.*

Required:


**LECTURE #13 (8 December)**

Final review, part 2

*No tutorial.*
Student Conduct, Academic Regulations and Academic Accommodations

For students with Disabilities: 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>63-66</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>57-59</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53-56</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50-52</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>1</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/](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.