

PSCI 2701 A
How to Do Research in Political Science
Monday and Tuesday 2:35 – 5:25
Online Class

Instructor: Said Yaqub Ibrahim
Office Hours: By appointment
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Course Description

This course introduces students to concepts, methods, and processes of qualitative research in political science. The course contains both theoretical and empirical issues including the philosophy of social sciences, the nature and structure of argument, theory-building, research design, case selection, and multiple types of data collection and analysis. At the end of the course, students are expected to have a general understanding of qualitative research methods in political science and be able to use those methods in conducting their research. The course is taught online every Monday and Tuesday via Zoom. The zoom link is available on the course's Brightspace page.

Textbooks

- Berdahl, Loleen, and Jason Roy. 2021. *Explorations: Conducting Empirical Research in Canadian Political Science* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University. Students may purchase the book online (\$ 99).
- Menard, Marc. 2016. *Political Argument: A Guide to Research, Writing, and Debating*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Available online free of charge through MacOdrum Library.)
- Additional required readings and supplementary materials will be made available free of charge electronically through MacOdrum Library.

Course Evaluation at a Glance

Course evaluation includes two assignments, tutorials, and a final exam and will be calculated on the following basis:

Assignment 1	10%	July 20
Research Paper	35%	August 11
Tutorials	20%	Each class (with exceptions noted below)
Final Exam	35%	TBA (during official exam period August 17-23)

Course Evaluation in Detail

A. Assignment 1: Argument (10%)

Select a political science topic/concept and develop an argument about it. Your argument should include a major premise and two or more minor premises and lead to a logic conclusion. A list of topics/concepts with detailed instruction will be posted on Brightspace in due course. Select your topic/concept with the assumption that you will work on it in your second and third assignments. This assignment should not exceed 2-3 pages (double-spaced in 12-point font). Detailed instructions will be posted on Brightspace in due course.

B. Assignment 2: Research Paper (35%)

Students are required to write a research paper on a political science topic. The paper should include a literature review of at least 8 scholarly sources, a research question, an argument, a conceptualization of key terms, case study(s), and a conclusion. The paper should not exceed 12-14 pages (double-spaced in 12-point font, including bibliography). Detailed instructions will be posted on Brightspace in due course.

C. Group Discussion (20%)

Group discussion is a critical component of this course. Discussions will be led by the instructor and the TAs. Students must attend all group discussions and actively participate in breakout room discussions and in reporting the conclusion(s). The format and topics of group discussion will be provided at the end of each lecture.

D. Final Exam (35%)

In-person examination with 3 hours (180 minutes) fixed duration. Students are required to answer two essay questions on topics relevant to the course material. The final exam will be scheduled during the regular examination period. Detailed instructions on the format and requirements of the exam will be provided in the last class. Students 160 km or more away from Carleton on exam day can apply for a distance exam here: <https://carleton.ca/ses/examination-services/distance-exams/>. Please note that the application must be made by July 9, 2026.

E. Citation

Assignments must follow standard bibliographic and citation formats including MLA, APA, and Chicago Manual of Style. For each assignment select one citation format and use it consistently throughout the paper.

F. Submission Policy

All assignments should be submitted electronically in Brightspace. E-mailed assignments will not be accepted. Late submissions will be penalized 2 percent per 24 hours. If you need an extension for an assignment, contact the instructor or the TA prior to the due date.

Statement on use of AI

Unless explicitly authorized by the instructor or teaching assistants, the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to produce any content (e.g., text, code, equations, images, summaries, videos, or other materials) constitutes a violation of Carleton University's academic integrity standards. Therefore, the use of AI tools is not permitted for any written assignments in this course.

Course Summary

<i>Date</i>	Topic	Group Discussion	Assignments
	Part 1: Fundamentals of Research Methods		
<i>July. 6</i>	Course Introduction	No Tutorial	
<i>July. 7</i>	Research Methods & Philosophy of Social Sciences	Is Political Science a Science?	
<i>July. 13</i>	Argument, Causation & Theory Development	Argument	
	Part 2: Research Design		
<i>July. 14</i>	Research Question & Hypothesis	Answering RQ	
<i>July. 20</i>	Concept & Measurement	Measurement	Assignment 1 Due
<i>July. 21</i>	Case Study & Comparative Research	Comparative Research	
<i>July. 27</i>	Research Ethics	No Discussion	
<i>July. 28</i>	Part 3 Research in Practice		
	Textual Analysis	Discourse Analysis	
<i>August. 3</i>	Interview & Focus Group	Interview	
<i>August. 4</i>	Observation & Field Research	Ethnography	
<i>August. 10</i>	Survey & Final Exam Instruction	Survey	
<i>August 11</i>	Course Overview & Final Exam Discussion	No tutorial	Research Paper Due

Course Schedule

Lecture 1: Course Introduction

The instructor reviews the syllabus and discusses the course content, requirements, and organization.
No required reading

Lecture 2: Research Methods and Philosophy of Social Sciences

Required Reading:

Berdahl and Roy, Chapters 1 & 2.

Lecture 3: Argument, Causation & Theory Development

Required Reading:

Berdahl and Roy, Chapter 2 (read only *constructing an argument*)

Marc Menard, Chapter 4

Optional:

Baxter-Moore, N., Carroll, T. and Church R. *Studying Politics: An Introduction to Argument and Analysis* (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994), Chapters 2 & 3 (available electronically in Ares)

Lecture 4: Research Question and Hypothesis

Required Reading:

Sandra Halperin and Oliver Heath (2012). *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford University Press. Chapters 5 & 6 (available electronically in Ares)

Lecture 5: Concept and Measurement

Required Reading:

Berdahl and Roy, Chapter 4

Lecture 6: Case Study & Comparative Research

Required Reading:

Berdahl and Roy, Chapter, 10.

Optional:

John Gerring, What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For? *American Political Science Review* 98 (2), 2004: 341-354.

Lecture 7: Ethics in Political Science Research

Required Reading:

Berdahl and Roy, Chapter 3.

Optional:

Esikot F. Idorenyin, Social science and research ethics in developing countries: The perspective from Nigeria, *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development*, 6(4), 2014: 231-241.

Lecture 8: Textual Analysis

Required Reading:

Berdahl and Roy, Chapter, 6.

Lecture 9: Interview and Focus Group

Required Reading:

Berdahl and Roy, Chapter 7 (read only interview and focus group sections).

Lecture 10: Observation & Field research

Required Reading:

Berdahl and Roy, Chapter 7 (read only observation section)

N. Cohen, & T. Arieli, 'Field research in conflict environments: Methodological challenges and snowball sampling,' *Journal of Peace Research*, 48(4), 2011: 423-435.

R. F. Fenno, 'Observation, context, and sequence in the study of politics,' *American Political Science Review*, 80(1), 1986: 3-15.

Lecture 11: Survey and Final Exam Instruction

Required Reading:

Berdahl and Roy, Chapter 8.

Optional:

Harvard University Program on Survey Research (2007). *Tip Sheet on Question Wording*, Access online at: <http://psr.iq.harvard.edu/book/questionnaire-design-tip-sheet>

Political Science Course Outline Appendix

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:

Student Mental Health

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

Emergency Resources (on and off campus):

<https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

Carleton Resources:

Mental Health and Wellbeing:

<https://carleton.ca/wellness/>

Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>

Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

Academic Advising Centre (AAC):

<https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>

Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS):

<https://carleton.ca/csas/>

Equity & Inclusivity Communities:

<https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>

Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>

Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389,

<https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>

ood2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>

The Walk-In Counselling Clinic:

<https://walkincounselling.com>

Academic consideration for medical or other

extenuating circumstances: Students must contact the instructor(s) of their absence or inability to complete the academic deliverable within the predetermined timeframe due to medical or other extenuating circumstances. For a range of medical or other extenuating circumstances, students may use the online self-declaration form and where appropriate, the use of medical documentation. This policy regards the accommodation of extenuating circumstances for both short-term and long-term periods and extends to all students enrolled at Carleton University.

Students should also consult the [Course Outline](#)

[Information on Academic Accommodations](#) for more

information. Detailed information about the procedure for requesting academic consideration can be found [here](#).

Pregnancy: 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 accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, please contact Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC) at equity@carleton.ca or by calling (613) 520-5622 to speak to an Equity Advisor.

Religious obligation: 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 [click here](#).

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, please request your accommodations for this course through the [Ventus Student Portal](#) 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*). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the [University Academic Calendars](#). 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).

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:

<https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>.

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 will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me 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.

PETITIONS TO DEFER

Students unable to write a final examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control may apply within **three working days** to the Registrar's Office for permission to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully supported by the appropriate documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered. [See Undergraduate Calendar, Article 4.3](#)

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). Permissibility of submitting substantially the same piece of work more than once for academic credit. If group or collaborative work is expected or allowed, provide a clear and specific description of how and to what extent you consider collaboration to be acceptable or appropriate, especially in the completion of written assignments.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's official withdrawal dates

OFFICIAL FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's Official Exam Period (may include evenings & Saturdays or Sundays)

For more information on the important dates and deadlines of the academic year, consult the [Carleton Calendar](#).

GRADING SYSTEM

The grading system is described in the Undergraduate Calendar section [5.4](#).

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful career as a student. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

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:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, 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 that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts 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 can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

RESOURCES (613-520-2600, phone ext.)

Department of Political Science (2777)	B640
Loeb	
Registrar's Office (3500)	300 Tory
Centre for Student Academic Success (3822)	4 th floor
Library	
Academic Advising Centre (7850)	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre (6608)	501
Nideyinàn	
Career Services (6611)	401 Tory