

PSCI 5700 A

Basic Research Methods

Instructor:	Scott Edward Bennett
Contact Information:	C 672 Loeb Building scottbennett@cunet.carleton.ca Use this email. Do not use emails derived from the University's search system as there are various people with names similar to the instructor's name. You may also use sebcarletonmail@magma.ca
Class Times:	11:35 am to 14:25 pm on Tuesdays beginning on September 15 and ending on December 8. Please confirm location on Carleton Central.
Online Office Hours:	There are no fixed office hours, but you can communicate with the instructor by email at any time. He will usually get back to you within a day.

NOTE: 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 or through regular email.

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 in a preliminary way 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 probably other classes you can take that will meet your needs.

This year, we will be placing an emphasis on thinking about analyzing a particular data set: The National Identity and Citizenship Survey conducted in Canada as part of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). This is very recent data, and it is a very positive aspect of Canada's renewed participation in the ISSP. It is possible other modules of ISSP will be available as well. It is possible, we will use some other years of data from ISSP.

There are many other kinds of research and data other than those involved with survey research. We will comment on some of those. However, survey research and related data provide an easy way for most people to begin to understand empirical research.

Course Format:

The instructor will usually lecture 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.

We may sometimes divide the class into groups to pursue certain topics, but we will not have discussion or lab groups separate from the main meeting of the class.

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. Ideally, you would focus on the data set the instructor uses in his examples. 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 8, and that is the nominal due date for submission of final 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 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 (8th edition) by Brians, 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. Note that the readings in parentheses are very secondary, and just provide another view of certain topics.

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.
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.

With respect to point one above, the final copy of the course paper should be submitted by the end of December 8, 2026. It must be in electronic form as a WORD attachment to an email. Be sure you keep copies of what you submit, and wait for the instructor's return message that he has received and can open the attachment. If you do not turn in the paper on time (or within a very few days after the due date), you will initially get an F in the course. However, a failing grade can be changed at some later date if the paper is finally submitted. Nevertheless, the student should keep in mind that there are elements of grade change policy not within the instructor's control, and authorities in the university hierarchy may not accept a submitted grade change at an extremely late date. Other aspects of the timing of work submission and related flexibility will be discussed in class.

As to the use of artificial intelligence in course work, my expectation is that you should not use it to write up your final papers, but it is acceptable to use it in doing underlying research that will lead to the final paper. Please do document what use you make of it if any.

A New and Pointless Administrative Burden

In their infinite wisdom and their never-ending quest to solve the problems of the world through performative policy making, check box bureaucracy and pandering to the most uninformed desires of the legislature, the great minds in the Ministry of Colleges and Universities have decreed that every course outline in an Ontario post-secondary institution must contain the costs of the text books and related material required for a course.

In this course, there is no cost to any of the material to be used in the course. Anything of any importance is available free online in one form or another.

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. The additional material and its manner of presentation also indicate the growing influence of bureaucratic overreach in the contemporary university. The following material should not have to be added to a course outline. It should be referenced as an external URL to which people can refer without it being a distraction from specific course structure.

Standard Departmental Attachment

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/safety/resources/>

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/>

Good2Talk: 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