PECO 5001: Methodology in Political Economy

SYLLABUS  Winter 2018

Instructor: Marc-André Gagnon  Class: DT 1524
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PECO 5001 [0.5 credit]
The Methodology of Political Economy
An examination of the methods, procedures, and rules for developing theory and guiding inquiry in political economy research, including topics such as logic of inquiry, conceptualization, research design, dialectics, level of analysis, comparison, evidence and statistics.

“The outcome of any serious research can only be to make two questions grow where only one grew before.”
― Thorstein Veblen

“The conventional view serves to protect us from the painful job of thinking.”
― John Kenneth Galbraith

“The curious task of economics is to demonstrate to men how little they really know about what they imagine they can design.”
― Friedrich August von Hayek
Core Objectives

The purpose of this course is to better understand the research process in the production of knowledge in social science as well as to sharpen critical skills to conduct rigorous, ethical research in political economy.

The course is designed to help students select or develop an appropriate methodological approach for their own research, while making sure to understand the merits and constraints of their approach. In particular, the course emphasizes the societal structures and power relations in which social research is done, and how it can play a role in promoting inequality and disenabling some people.

The course will explore both quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as mixed methods. It will survey critical insights from the post-structural, post-colonial, indigenous and feminist methods.

Finally, the course will allow students to develop a draft thesis proposal in conjunction with a tentative supervisor. The course will also allow each student to receive feedback from their peers on their proposal and will also allow them to deepen their critical feedback skills by peer-reviewing research proposals.

Good sense is, of all things among men, the most equally distributed; for every one thinks himself so abundantly provided with it, that those even who are the most difficult to satisfy in everything else, do not usually desire a larger measure of this quality than they already possess. And in this it is not likely that all are mistaken; the conviction is rather to be held as testifying that the power of judging aright and of distinguishing truth from error, which is properly what is called good sense or reason, is by nature equal in all men; and that the diversity of our opinions, consequently, does not arise from some being endowed with a larger share of reason than others, but solely from this, that we conduct our thoughts along different ways, and do not fix our attention on the same objects. For to be possessed of a vigorous mind is not enough; the prime requisite is rightly to apply it. The greatest minds, as they are capable of the highest excellences, are open likewise to the greatest aberrations; and those who travel very slowly may yet make far greater progress, provided they keep always to the straight road, than those who, while they run, forsake it.

- René Descartes 1635

Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason, and seeking Truth in the Sciences
SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Class 1 (January 10): Introduction and Overview.
What is research? Why do we need methods? What is the difference between research in political economy and discussion in a bar? The role of evidence in the policy process. Overview of Methods in social science: Positivism and after. Defining Political Economy. Disciplines and the political economy of knowledge production.

Reading Material:

Class 2 (January 17): Epistemology, or how does scientific knowledge evolves? Hardcore methodological debates.
Bachelard, Popper, Kuhn, Lakatos, Feyerabend, Friedman.
Positive vs normative; Formal vs substantive; Individualism versus holism; Nomothetic vs historical sciences. Methodenstreit (Schmoller versus Menger).

Reading Material:

Class 3 (January 24): The Neoclassical Fortress; Understanding the dominant approach in economics, and its limits.
Rationality and Equilibrium.
From Adam Smith to General Equilibrium General. Partial Equilibrium (Ceteris Paribus).
Blackboard economics: Assumption, models, data, outcomes... repeat.

Reading Material:
Class 4 (January 31): **Quantitative Approaches (do not throw out the baby with the bathwater...)**
Econometrics and Statistics
Experimental Research
Game Theory Modeling
Debates over Statistical Significance and other dangers with numbers.
**Reading Material: TBA**

Class 5 (February 7): **How to write a proposal: Research Question/Central proposition/Concepts.**
Ethics and Reflexivity.
The role of Ethics Research Boards.
**Reading Material: TBA**

Class 6 (February 14): **Qualitative Methods: Interviews; Ethnographic approach; Mixed Methods.**
How, Why, What?
Data collection approaches for qualitative research.
Getting a richer and deeper insight into the phenomenon under study.
**Reading Material: TBA**

Class 7 (February 28): **Data, Data Everywhere.**
Be careful: Garbage in, Garbage out.
Working with databases.
Intro to the main databases
Access to Information and Privacy
**Reading Material: TBA**

Class 8 (March 7): **Feminist approaches**
Overcoming biases in research and Understanding Power imbalances.
Displaying human diversity
Acknowledging the position of the researcher and bringing about social change.
**Reading Material: TBA**

Class 9 (March 14): **Indigenous and Post-Colonial approaches; Anti-Oppressive research**
Overview of Colonial Education
Honouring the Past, Present and Future
Two-Eyed Seeing
Acknowledging the position of the researcher and bringing about social change.
Methodological nationalism.
**Reading Material: TBA**
Class 10 (March 21): **Post-Structuralist Approaches**

WPR approach
Making and unmaking problems, subjects and objects.
Archives and genealogy of knowledge.
**Reading Material:** TBA

Class 11 (March 28): **Discussing Proposals**

Peer-reviewing proposals.
**Reading Material:** TBA

Class 12 (April 4): **Political economy of knowledge production in the era of corporate capitalism.**

What’s your communication plan?
**Reading Material:** TBA

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

No textbook is required but a useful writing guide is available through Octopus Bookstore (116 Third Avenue):


**REQUIREMENTS**

- **Participation** 10%
- **Oral Presentation (Critical review of one of the readings)** 10%
- **Research Design poster and presentation (February 28)** 15%
- **First draft of proposal and presentation (March 21)** 15%
- **Presentation of draft proposal (March 28)** 5%
- **Peer-review of proposals (March 28)** 10%
- **Final Proposal (April 9)** 35%
**Participation (10%)**
Students are expected to do all the readings and come prepared to all classes. Participation will be based on attendance and contribution to class discussion during seminars.

**Oral Presentation (10%)**
Each student must present a 5 minutes presentation about a specific reading in order to open discussion about the reading with the rest of the class. The student must provide a critical review of the text by identifying:
1-the research question,
2-the central proposition
3-the main arguments.
The student must also provide commentaries about the text in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the text, and suggest 1-2 questions for discussion.

**Research Design Poster and Presentation (15%)**
As a first step in the process of thinking about your proposed research, the student must prepare a poster introducing his/her research topic, including a research question and a central proposition, and the tentative methodological strategies and tools that will be used for the analysis.

Models of posters will be presented (Research Design Spine, Mind map)
Students will present their poster in speed-dating format and then the hard copies will be collected by the prof for evaluation. The mark encompasses both the presentation and the poster.

**First draft of proposal (15%)**
The student must write a first draft of their proposal. The draft is TO BE SUBMITTED IN 3 PAPER COPIES on March 21. The draft will introduce the issue, identify the research question, present the main idea that will be defended, present the method used for the research and outline the main elements that will normally be used in defending the main idea. Include a bibliography of relevant sources.

**Presentation of proposals (5%)**
The students will present their draft to the rest of the class on March 28 in order to get their feedback.
Peer-review of proposals (10%)

On March 21, each student will receive two proposals submitted by peers. They will have to peer-review the proposals (around one page for each proposal) and present their evaluation of the proposals on March 28. SUBMIT TWO WRITTEN COPIES OF YOUR PEER-REVIEW.

Final proposal (35%)

Students are expected to use the written and verbal feedback received by their peers & instructor to address the comments and revise their proposal. The students will submit a clean version of the proposal, a version indicating modifications of the old version, and a Revision Note, indicating how you responded precisely to the reviewers’ comments. The final proposal is due April 9.

You can hand in your proposal at SPPA Main Office or by email (RB-5224, make sure they stamp your paper with the date). If the paper is late without prior agreement with the professor, a penalty of 5%/day will be applied.

GRADING

In graduate school, expectations about analytical abilities and performance are higher than in undergraduate work, and what is an acceptable grade is also different. Whereas a C+ is a passing grade in undergraduate studies, it is not in graduate school.

Carleton University uses a 12 point grading scale from A+ (12) to D- (1). Your overall Grade Point Average (GPA) will be calculated on the basis of this 12 point scale and the final evaluation you receive in courses will be submitted as letter grades corresponding to this scale. Here is how to interpret grades in terms of our expectations of performance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Carleton Numerical System</th>
<th>% Ranges</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>For written work, virtually publishable. Demonstrates exceptional evaluative judgement, outstanding critical thinking, and mastery of technical as well as literary aspects of writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>Demonstrates superior grasp of material, very strong critical thinking, and capacity to understand and extend underlying patterns.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>Demonstrates strong grasp of material, its component parts, and capacity to analyze their relationships to each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>Demonstrates clear understanding of material and ability to apply concepts. Written work is competent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>Satisfactory, but below average. Demonstrates comprehension of material, reasonable but not strong analytical capacity, with limitations in the ability to apply concepts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>Clearly below average. Demonstrates comprehension and understanding, with limited capacity for application. Communication skills problematic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>Did not demonstrate an adequate understanding of the material or the ability to apply the concepts. Writing and/or presentations show serious problems.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C to D-</td>
<td>50-66</td>
<td>Grades in this range indicate work that is passable in some respects but does not meet the standards of graduate work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>Did not meet minimal requirements.</td>
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Grades of A- or B+ should be considered as good, solid performances that hover around the average for graduate work. In any given class, most of the grades are likely to be A- or B+. There are usually fewer grades of A, and an A means you have done very well; grades of A+ are quite rare (but we do give them). A grade of B- is a strong signal that things did not go well in the course, and you were considerably below average. Normally, graduate students do not get credit for courses with a grade less than B-. 

In the case of this course, grades will be awarded as letter grades, but I will calculate your final grades as the weighted mean of the grade point equivalencies. Example: A- on an exam worth 30%; B+ on a paper worth 45%; and B for participation worth 25%:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A-} & \quad 10 \times 0.30 = 3.00 \\
\text{B+} & \quad 9 \times 0.45 = 4.05 \\
\text{B} & \quad 8 \times 0.25 = 2.00 \\
\text{Final} & \quad 9.05 \text{ or B+}
\end{align*}
\]

Please note in the example above that normally your letter grade will correspond to the interval in which your numerical grade falls (e.g., anything between 9.0 and 9.9 is a B+).
You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request (parental leave, religious obligations, disabilities), visit the Equity Services website https://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Instructional offences, such as plagiarism and cheating, are serious and may incur severe penalties. Please see the note on plagiarism below. Students should also consult the section of the Undergraduate Calendar on Academic Standing and Conduct to familiarize themselves with the regulations regarding instructional offences. For Carleton’s regulations on academic integrity, please see http://www.carleton.ca/calendars/ugrad/0910/regulations/acadregsuniv14.html

PLAGIARISM

The definition below is from Carleton University’s Academic Regulations, at http://www.carleton.ca/calendars/ugrad/0910/regulations/acadregsuniv14.html

Plagiarism is presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own. Plagiarism includes 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. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, and material on the Internet.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- 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, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks.

The purpose of the written work is to develop your writing and analytical skills. A work which contains material “borrowed” from other sources without proper acknowledgement cannot be marked as your own work.

Plagiarism is an instructional offence that occurs when a student uses or passes off as one’s own idea or product the work of another person, without giving credit to the source. The punishments for plagiarism at Carleton are significant. You could fail the course, or, under certain circumstances, be expelled from the university.
If you are using someone else’s words – in a quotation – refer to the source in a footnote or in-text citation. If you are referring to someone else’s text (that is, not quoting directly, but closely following the line of argument), refer to the source just as you would for a quotation, except that quotation marks are not used. If you are using someone else’s ideas, acknowledge this in a footnote, or by a clear reference in the text of your essay.

Material copied from the Internet must be treated like material from a book or any other source. If your are quoting a source you found on the Internet, use quotation marks and refer to the location of the item (name of website; identify the electronic journal and issue, etc) just as you would for a quotation from printed material. If you are borrowing ideas from an Internet source, the source must be identified in a footnote or in-text citation, just as a quotation would be. Excellent software is available for locating materials that might have been plagiarized from the Internet, and will be used.

To avoid plagiarism:
(i) Acknowledge every source from which you have drawn information or ideas for your paper. That is, even if you are not quoting directly from a source, you should still acknowledge where the idea, argument, or information came from.
(ii) Place every direct quote from a source in quotation marks (or indent it), and give a citation for the source. Nevertheless, try not to use quotes too frequently. Quotes should be used when they so beautifully or aptly sum something up that you cannot say it any better. An essay is not a collection of quotes.
(iii) Express other authors’ ideas in your own words. If you are outlining someone else’s argument, for example, outline it in your own words, and acknowledge the author at the end of your summation of his or her argument or idea/s. Any words not in quotation marks must be your own words. This advice has an intellectual as well as a legal purpose: being able to express an author’s ideas in your own words is part of your learning process.

CLASSROOM USE OF LAPTOPS, ELECTRONIC DEVICES, ETC

While you are welcome to use laptops and/or other electronic devices to take notes and look up information, you may not use these devices to update your Facebook status, email friends, check your twitter feed, or for any other purpose unrelated to the class discussion. While I will be lecturing for part of the time, the focus of the class is on discussion of the readings – you, and your classmates, cannot actively participate in the discussion if you are otherwise engaged. If this rule is violated, laptops and other devices will not be permitted in the classroom.