Fall 9-1-2008

PSC 495.01: Politics Research Goals and Strategies

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political science is a broad discipline that addresses a range of questions and employs a wide variety of research methodologies. In this course, we explore the questions raised and methods used in the main subfields of political science: Theory, Comparative, International Relations, and American politics. Because many of the fundamental questions and methodological issues are common to all of the subfields, as well as to social science more generally, we will begin by examining basic issues in the philosophy of science, including the ways in which political science is and is not scientific. In the second part of the course, we will study how political scientists seek methodological rigor in their research, exploring the meaning and analysis of causation, the fundamentals of research design, the formation of concepts and hypotheses, common measurement problems, and case selection and sampling issues.

In the final part of the course, we examine the methodologies characteristic of work in the various subfields of political science, such as ordinary language analysis and textual analysis in Theory; field work, case studies and least-similar/most-similar analysis in Comparative; strategic-interaction modeling in International Relations; and survey research and simple quantitative analysis in American politics. The goal of the course is to familiarize students with these approaches, enable them to evaluate research that uses these approaches, and provide them with the tools to develop methodologically sound research of their own.

readings
There is one textbook for this course: John Gerring. Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework, 2001, W.W. Norton. All other readings will be available in paper and on electronic course reserves (ERES) at the Mansfield Library. The readings for each week are listed in the Course Topics and Readings section below. Depending on the progress of course, I may change some of the readings to reflect the interests of students and political events. The ERES password for this course is

Grades and course requirements
Each week there will be a set of readings broadly covering that week's topic, often from widely
divergent perspectives and levels. The assigned readings are varied, sometimes complex and theoretical, so students are expected to do all the readings and be prepared to discuss them each week. Being prepared will contribute to your understanding of the material and success in the course. Participation in class discussions will be 10% of the course grade.

**GRADES AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS (CONTINUED)**

Most weeks, students will write a one page (single spaced) analysis of the week=s readings. This analysis can be an overview of the full set of readings for that week, an intensive comparison of two or more of the readings, or an analysis of the current week=s readings that relates them to relevant readings from previous weeks. These weekly analyses must be typed and turned in by noon the day class meets (Monday), either to my Poli Sci mailbox or to christopher.muste@umontana.edu and will provide the basis for our class discussion. Papers turned in later than noon will receive only half credit, and papers not turned until after 2:00 will receive no credit.

There are thirteen possible reading analyses. All students must do analyses for the first two weeks, the readings listed under September 8 and September 15 in the Course Topics and Readings section of this syllabus. After this week, undergraduate students will choose four weeks in which to do reading analyses in the remaining eleven weeks, selected by you based on your interests. Graduate students will choose eight weeks to do reading analyses. This will be a total of six reading analyses for undergrads, each worth 5% of the grade, for a total of 30%. For graduate students, each of the ten reading analyses will be worth 3% of the grade, also 30%.

There will be a midterm exam at the end of the second section of the course, which will cover the readings and discussions up to that time. The midterm exam is worth 30% of the course grade.

The other requirement for this course is to prepare a research design for a research project you would like to carry out, based on your interests in political science. The research design must incorporate a literature review, hypotheses, and a comprehensive plan of the research process and the research strategies and methods that will be used to carry out the plan. The first draft of your research design will be presented during class in the week in which we cover the subfield within which your paper falls (for example, students doing political theory research designs will present them November 10). During that week the class will discuss your project and problems in the research design and potential solutions. Draft designs are due in to me at 2:00 on the day before you present your draft. The final version of the research design is due December 8, when we will meet to discuss all the projects. The research design is worth 30% of the course grade.

**GRADES:** Grades will be calculated according to the following percentages:

- **A** = 93-100
- **B+** = 87-89.9
- **C+** = 77-79.9
- **D+** = 67-69.9
- **below 60=F**
- **A** = 90-92.9
- **B** = 83-86.9
- **C** = 73-76.9
- **D** = 63-66.9
- **B** = 90-92.9
- **B** = 80-82.9
- **C** = 70-72.9
- **D** = 60-62.9

- Participation in discussion 10%
- Reading Analyses 30%
- Midterm exam 30%

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Final exam 30% of course grade

ACADEMIC HONESTY:
* All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.
All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/VPSA/name/StudentConductCode.

* The University of Montana Student Conduct Code prohibits plagiarism, which is representing another person=s words, ideas, data, or materials as one=s own. This is a serious academic violation that can result in penalties up to suspension or expulsion from the University. I take academic honesty very seriously, and will do my utmost to prevent, uncover, and penalize any form of cheating in this course. See the UM plagiarism warning at http://www.umt.edu/catalog/academic/policy.htm#plagiarism and the Student Conduct Code at http://life.umt.edu/VPSA/name/StudentConductCode.
Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about academic honesty.

CLASS COURTESY:
In order to have a pleasant and effective learning environment in class, we need to observe a few basic courtesies. This is a small campus, so it is possible to get to the classroom on time from all other campus buildings; arriving late or leaving early disrupts the class and disturbs other students and the instructor. Please turn off all cell phones before class begins. If you have a question or comment about the material, please raise your hand so we can all discuss it, instead of talking to your neighbor. We all benefit if we just keep in mind the reason we are in the room together.

DROP POLICY AND INCOMPLETES:
You can drop classes on Cyberbear until September 15. From September 16 until October 6 you can drop using a drop slip signed by me. After October 6, you must go through the more formal and difficult late drop petition process. I will sign late drop petitions for only one week after the midterm exams are graded, and not thereafter except under extraordinary circumstances.
Incompletes will only be permitted when all the conditions set forth in the official University policy are met. The Incompletes policy is on page 23 of the University of Montana 2007-2008 Catalog.

DSS STUDENTS:
Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Students with
disabilities requesting accommodations on exams, papers, or other course requirements should contact me as soon as possible, and must contact DSS in order to arrange for and provide me with a letter of approval for accommodations. DSS is in Lommasson Center 154.

EMAIL AND BLACKBOARD
In order to obtain course materials and access your grades and other important course information, you will need to sign into the Blackboard website that has been created for this course. Information on how to access your account is at: http://umonline.umt.edu/StudentInfo/welcome.htm
Blackboard uses your official UM email account, so you should check it frequently. I may also send e-mails to your official UM e-mail account. If you use another email account, go into Cyberbear to have your official UM email forwarded to your preferred email account.

GRADUATE STUDENTS
- Graduate students taking this course must complete supplemental graduate-level readings for each course topic as specified by the instructor, ten reading analyses, and must complete a 20-25 page research paper consisting of a research design and hypothesis, data analysis, literature review, and an analysis that synthesizes the three components.

COURSE TOPICS AND READINGS

PART I: POLITICAL SCIENCE AS A SCIENCE

August 25       Introduction
September 1     No Class: Labor Day Holiday
September 8     Philosophy of Science and How Science is Social

Note: these readings may seem abstract and complex. However, reading them carefully and slowly, more than once, and taking notes on them, will greatly increase your understanding of the material and your reading analysis short paper, which is due at noon Monday, September 8. We will discuss these articles and related issues in class.

Gerring, John. 2001. APreface@ and AThe Problem of Unity Amid Diversity@ (chapter 1) in Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework, pp. xi - xx and 1-18.
Supplemental Reading (not required - to be discussed in class 9/8):

September 15 Natural Science and Social Science: Causation, Interpretation, and Alternatives
Supplemental Readings:

PART II: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

September 22 Natural Science and Social Science: Causation, Interpretation, and Alternatives
- an analysis of how political science got where it is, and what the major methodological and substantive schools in Poli Sci are
- an analysis of what Shapiro believes is a misplaced emphasis on methodology as a guide to evaluating what research is important
- a very short and straightforward alternative view of how Poli Sci is organized into schools
- two very different views of qualitative and quantitative approaches and how to reconcile them
Developing Research Questions, Concepts, and Hypotheses

September 29


October 6

Problems in Measuring Political Phenomena: Reliability and Validity
review: Gerring, John.  2001.  AOperationalization@ and AValidity@ from chapter 3 of Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework, pp. 43-50 only.

New Readings:

October 13

Sampling in Quantitative and Qualitative Research
Geddes, Barbara.  1990.  AHow the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics.@ Political Analysis 2, pp. 131-150.

October 20

Library Research, Archival Research, and Data Collection
Becker, Howard S.  1986.  ATerrorized by the Literature.@ Chapter 8 in Writing for Social Scientists, pp. 135-149.


UM Library Website: Under Research Tools read first four links starting with Library Catalog. Under Subject Guides read Popular or Scholarly? Successful Researching and Writing (the first six topics therein), Techniques for Refining and Focusing Searches, and Evaluating Web Pages (under Internet).


October 27 MIDTERM EXAM - TENTATIVE DATE

November 3 Research Design, Analysis and Writing in Political Science


UM Library Website: Under Research Tools click on Subject Guides (in the left margin) and read Successful Researching and Writing under "General Guides" (the first three topics therein, on "Choosing..." "Writing..." and "Designing...").

PART III: SUBFIELD EXAMPLES

November 10 American Politics: Quantitative Analysis, Survey Research & Other Methods


Read two of the following articles; your selection should be guided by your substantive and methodological interests.


American Political Science Review 71: 883-917. This is an example of participant-observation.

Kingdon, John W. 1977. AModels of Legislative Voting.@ Journal of Politics 39: 563-595. This is an analysis of competing models of Congressional voting and methods used to evaluate the models. [supplemental: Shepsle and Weingast on APositive Theories of Legislative Institutions@ in Legislative Studies Quarterly 1994.]

Norrander, Barbara. 1989. AExplaining Cross-State Variation in Independent Identification.@ American Journal of Political Science 33: 516-536. This is an example of aggregate data analysis, combining individual-level opinion data with state-level measures.

Hochschild, Jennifer. 1981. AWhy There is No Socialism in the United States@ (part) and AAlternative Patterns of Belief, (part) in What=s Fair? American Beliefs About Distributive Justice, pp. 17-26 and 228-237. This is an example of in-depth, small-N research using in-person interviews.

Gilens, Martin. AThe News Media and the Racialization of Poverty.@ Chapter 5 in Why Americans Hate Welfare, pp. 102-132. This is a content analysis of news media.

Schafer, Mark and Stephen G. Walker. 2002. AU.S. Presidents as Conflict Managers: The Operational Codes of George Bush and Bill Clinton.@ Chapter 4 in Political Leadership for the New Century: Lessons from the Study of Personality and Behavior Among American Leaders, Feldman and Valenty, eds., pp. 51-63. This is a content analysis of leaders=s speech patterns and their impact on foreign policy decisions. NOTE: available only online as an AE-book@ through the Mansfield Library catalog.

November 17 Comparative: Case Studies, Least-similar/Most-similar, QCA, and Single State Studies


Read two of the following seven articles; your selection should be guided by your substantive and methodological interests.

Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen. 1989. AChina and India.@ In Dreze and Sen, Hunger and Public Action. This is an example of a small-N comparison examining the factors involved in the development of two countries - is it a most-different or most-similar design?

Skocpol, Theda. 1979. AExplaining Social Revolutions: Alternatives to Existing Theories@ and ACauses of Social Revolutions in France, Russia and China.@ Chapter 1 in States and Social Revolutions, pp. 3-43. Classic small-n study, selecting for the same value on the dependent variable.

Steinmo, Sven. 1989. *Political Institutions and Tax Policy in the United States, Sweden, and Britain.* *World Politics* 41: 500-535. *Another small-N comparison - is it a most-different or most-similar design? Compare this to...*

Steinmo, Sven and Caroline J. Tolbert. 1998. *Do Institutions Really Matter?: Taxation in Industrialized Democracies.* *Comparative Political Studies* 31:2 (April) 165-87. *Steinmo here increases the number of cases, providing an interesting comparison to his 1989 article, above.*


**November 24**

**International Relations: Variety in Methods of Analysis**


*Read three of the following articles; your selection should be guided by your substantive and methodological interests.*

**review** Schafer, Mark and Stephen G. Walker. 2002. *U.S. Presidents as Conflict Managers: The Operational Codes of George Bush and Bill Clinton.* Chapter 4 in *Political Leadership for the New Century: Lessons from the Study of Personality and Behavior Among American Leaders*, Feldman and Valenty, eds., pp. 51-63. *This is a content analysis of leaders= speech patterns and their impact on foreign policy decisions.* **NOTE:** available only online as an AE-book through the Mansfield Library catalog.


Holsti, Ole R. 2001. *Politicization of the United States Military: Crisis or Tempest in a Teapot?* *International Journal* 57: 1-18. *Holsti uses data from surveys of civilian and military leaders as well as the public to explore the potential for division among these groups.*


December 1 Political Theory: Analytic and Normative, Explanation and Interpretation


A strongly analytic approach to representation as an idea, using ordinary language analysis.


Optional Readings:


December 8 FINAL RESEARCH DESIGNS DUE IN CLASS

Summary Discussion of Final Research Designs & Political Science Methods