PS 3324F (550)
Introduction to Research Methods in Political Science

1. Course Information

Political Science 3324F, Section 550

Instructor: Dr. Laszlo Sarkany

Contact Information: lsarkan@uwo.ca

Office: V125

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30 – 4:00pm, or via Skype.

Class Location: H227

Scheduled Class Times (including lab or tutorial hours): Thurdays, 2:30pm – 4:30pm

2. Course Description

The aim of this course is to familiarize the students with both, quantitative and qualitative methodologies used for scholarly inquiry relevant for political science. The course will begin with an overview of theories of knowledge, or how do we know what we know. Next, emphasis will be placed on how are we able to acquire such knowledge, as well as how best to communicate this knowledge. In practical terms, students will be asked to uncover their topic(s) of research interests relevant for political science, conduct a literature review, choose appropriate methodologies to conduct this research, and finally communicate their research agendas in the form of a research proposal, or, alternately, a grant proposal. While enrolled in the course, students will also be exposed to software relevant for quantitative and qualitative research, and software used for data visualization as well.

3. Textbooks and Course Materials

Required:

Loleen Berdahl and Jason Roy, *"Conducting Empirical Research in Canadian Political Science,"* 4th edition, Oxford University Press Canada, 2021.

Recommended:

Cresswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4th ed. SAGE Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA: 2013. [Available to download as a PDF.]

Margot Northey, Lorne Tepperman and Patrizia Albanese. *Making Sense in the Social Sciences: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing*, Fifth Edition. Oxford University Press, 2012.

Wheelan, Charles. *Naked Statistics: Stripping the Dread from the Data.* W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York: 2014.

I strongly encourage you to purchase the books and keep them for future reference, **in addition to reading them for the lectures**. I will also assign additional readings which will be marked with an asterisk (*). These readings will be available in the library under course reserves.

***The rest of the readings assigned are accessible on-line in the appropriate journals, which are available electronically through UWO library web page.

Recommended:

Margot Northey, Lorne Tepperman and Patrizia Albanese. *Making Sense in the Social Sciences: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing*, Fifth Edition. Oxford University Press, 2012.

4. Methods of Evaluation

GRADING	VALUE	Due Date:
Self Reflection	15 %	September 22nd
Literature Review	25%	October 13th
Group Project: Data gathering and Research Design	30 %	November 10th
Final Project	30%	December 8th

ASSIGNMENTS:

> **I)** **SELF-REFELCTION: 'What are my research interests?'**
>
>> i. Your task for this assignment is to write a 500-word exposition (2 double-spaced pages) of what your research interests are with respect to political science. In order to complete this assignment you should identify topics of interests, key questions or puzzles you find interesting, and general approaches as to how you would go about answering the questions and solving the puzzles. The assignment needs to be written in a formal essay format.

II) LITERATURE REVIEW: 'What others are arguing, and how I fit in the debate."

    i. For this assignment your task is to narrow down your research questions to one specific question, and then provide a summary of the 10 most pertinent scholarly sources on the research question of your choice. In this assignment your task will be, first, to clearly and succinctly identify the exact research question you would like to answer. Second, you will then need to explain what others have stated, argued, or wrote in general about that question. <u>Your review needs to be 1000-words, maximum (4 double-spaced pages)</u>.

III) GROUP PROJECT: <u>Qualitative and/or quantitative data gathering and research design</u>

    i. In groups of 2 or more students, your task is to provide an exposition of how you would approach answering your research question with the help of at least two (2) different qualitative or quantitative research methods. Your further task here will also be to explain what sources you would use to gather the information. For example, if you would like to use discourse analysis, you will then need to identify the texts (at least 2 sources, but perhaps more – depending on the research question) you would like to analyze, and provide the reasons as to why you would want to use these texts. Alternately, if you would like to use process tracing and interviews, you will then need to explain what processes you would like to analyze, using what sources, and whom you would like to interview and why. Finally, if you choose to conduct survey research and quantitative analysis, your task will be to explain – and justify – what sources of data you would use, and what type(s) of analyses you would conduct with the help of the data.

    ii. The length of this assignment should not exceed 1000 words, or 4 double-spaced pages.

FINAL PROJECT

The aim of this project is to essentially compose either a research proposal, or a grant proposal, based on the work you have done thus far in the course. The format and content of the assignment will be as follows: (please note that you must use these subheadings):

a. **'INTRODUCTION'** – In this section you will outline the study – or proposal – in broad and general terms.

   i. Maximum space allotted: 1 double-spaced page or 250 words.

b. **'PURPOSE STATEMENT'** – In this section your task is to explain why this question is important to study, or why this project is important to fund.

   i. Maximum space allotted: 1 double-spaced page, or 250 words

c. **'LITERATURE REVIEW'** – In this section, your aim is to use at most 15 scholarly sources to highlight what others have argued or stated about your research question. If you are writing a grant proposal, you task then is to show how your 'cause' is unique, compared to other similar 'causes'. This section of the proposal will differ from the previous one in that in this section your are not only providing the reasons why your question or cause is important in general, but here you are also explaining how your question or cause compares to how others have approached the question, or approached the social justice and peace issue. In essence, you are here conducting a 'market research', if you will.

   i. Maximum space allotted: 2 double-spaced page, or 500 words

d. **'METHODOLOGY'** – Your task in this section is to clearly outline what methods you have chosen for your study, and why. These methods can be quantitative, qualitative, or both. If you are writing a grant proposal, your task here is to provide a detailed explanation as to what you would like to spend the funds on.

   i. Maximum space allotted: 2 double-spaced page, or 500 words

e. **'CONCLUSION'** – Your task here is to provide a few brief concluding remarks.
   i. Maximum space allotted: 1/2 double-spaced page, or about 150 words

 ****PLEASE NOTE: In order to complete the final project, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO REUSE any of the assignments you completed up to this point in the course. The caveat here is that you MUST show that you have taken into consideration the edits and comments of the instructor. Any attempt to hand back in any one of the 5 assignments without making the necessary changes will be considered plagiarism!

WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS:

SEPTEMBER 8th: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE
- Introductions
- Organizational overview of the course
- Explanation of grading
- Overview of research methods

Babbie and Benaquisto, chapter 1

SEPTEMBER 15th – Political Science or Political Studies…or both?

Berdahl and Roy, chapter 1

SEPTEMBER 22nd – Theories, Measures, Designs, and Concepts

Berdahl and Roy, chapter 4

SEPTEMBER 29th – Research Designs, Part 1: Documents, Text and Interviews

Berdahl and Roy, chapters 6 and 7

Mahoney, James. The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences. *Sociological Methods & Research*. Vol. 41, No. 4. November 2012: 570 – 597.

Van Dijk, Teun A. Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. Discourse and Society. Vol. 4, No. 2, April 1993: 249 – 283.

OCTOBER 6th – Research Designs, Part 2: Case Studies and Comparative Research

Berdahl and Roy, chapter 10

OCTOBER 13th – Research Designs, Part 3: Surveys

Berdahl and Roy, chapter 8

OCTOBER 20th – Data Analysis, Part 1: Qualitative Data

Berdahl and Roy, chapter 11

OCTOBER 27th – Data Analysis, Part 2: Quantitative Analysis

Berdahl and Roy, chapter 12

*** OCTOBER 31st – November 4th – FALL STUDY BREAK ***

NOVEMBER 10th - Data Analysis, Part 3: Multivariate Analysis

Berdahl and Roy, chapter 13

NOVEMBER 17th – REVIEW: Designs and Analysis

Readings TBA

NOVEMBER 24th – Research Ethics

Berdahl and Roy, chapter 3

DECEMBER 1st – Social Network Analysis

Readings TBA

DECEMBER 8th – Political Science as Craft

Berdahl and Roy, chapter 14

5. **FASS Appendix** (to be added by FASS Program Assistants)
   Includes the required statements as per Senate Policy:
   - Prerequisite checking – the student's responsibility
   - Statement on Use of Electronic Devices
   - Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems ("Clickers")
   - Statement on Academic Offences
   - Support Services