

CUNY-College of Staten Island
Department of Political Science and Global Affairs

POL 198-D001: Tools of the Trade: The Art and Science of Political Research

Fall 2017
Mon. & Wed. 12:20-2:15 pm
Classroom 3N215
Office Hours: 2:30-3:30 pm., M.,
5:00-6:00 pm, W.

Professor: Dr. Ming Xia
Phone No.: 718- 982-3197 (O)
Office: 2N236 (John Marchi Hall)
Email: ming.xia@csi.cuny.edu
Homepage: www.dr-ming-xia.org

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Can political science be a science? The answer is both yes and no. Judged by the criteria of hard sciences (such as physics, chemistry and biology), political science can best be called a soft science. However, Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba have argued in their classic *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* that “scientific research has the following four characteristics”: 1. The goal is inference; 2. The procedures are public; 3. The conclusions are uncertain; 4. The content is the method. To a large extent, the defining factor for political studies to be scientific is that researchers on politics have become conscious and disciplined thinkers who apply empirical, transparent and repeatable practice and method to their research subject.

As an introduction to the social-scientific study of political phenomena, this course will aim to help students, mainly political science majors, to achieve two goals: First, to have the capacity to read, understand, and appreciate political research analytically and critically; second, to achieve the capacity to design, carry out and present a research in a systematic and rigorous manner. To achieve these two goals, this course is divided into four major parts: 1. Philosophy of Social Scientific Research; 2. The Nuts and Bolts of Research Design; 3. Varieties of Research Tools; 4. Quantitative Method and Statistical Analysis.

Specifically speaking, this course presents the essentials, “nuts and bolts”, of political research process. They include the following issues and topics: At the introductory level, what tools and techniques do political scientists and analysts use to create knowledge? How should political arguments and data encountered in newspapers, policy reports and journal articles be evaluated? To a more scientific level, topics include the logic of the scientific method, research design, the measurement of political concepts, research methods, data collection, case-study design and selection, statistical techniques for describing data, statistical inference, survey research and qualitative research procedures. Some more practical topics also include ethical code of conducts in research, criteria for evaluating sources and arguments in political research, basics of writing up and reporting research findings, and avoiding plagiarism.

Prerequisites: POL 100 or POL 103 and (MTH 020 or an appropriate score on the CUNY Test in Mathematics)

LEARNING GOALS

- Through formal lectures and sample analysis of instructor's own research projects, the instructor will socialize students into the world of political research.
- The students will learn the philosophical foundations and research strategies of different methods in political studies.
- The students will learn how to carry out a research, from the selection of a topic to reporting the findings.
- The students will acquire basic skills in quantitative research and statistical analysis in politics.
- The students will strengthen their writing skills in political research.
- The students will improve their logical thinking, critical thinking, and analytical skills.

TEXTBOOKS

1. Greg M. Scott and Stephen M. Garrison, *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual*, 8th/E, Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.
2. Jeffrey C. Dixon, Royce A. Singleton, Jr., and Bruce C. Straits, *The Process of Social Research*, Oxford University Press, 2016.

REFERENCE BOOKS FOR THE SERIOUS AND VORACIOUS

1. Sandra Halperin and Oliver Heath, *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*, Oxford University Press, 2012.
2. Jeffrey C. Dixon, Royce C. Singleton, Jr. and Bruce C. Straits, *The Process of Social Research*, Oxford University Press, 2016.
3. W. Phillips Shively, *The Craft of Political Research*, 6th Edition, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005.
4. Roger Pierce, *Research Methods in Politics: A Practical Guide*, Sage: 2008.
5. C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, Oxford University Press, 1959.
6. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd Edition, The University of Chicago Press, 1996 (1962 1st edition).
7. S.I. Hayakawa and Alan R. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action*, 5th Edition, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1990.
8. Gerardo L. Munck and Richard Snyder, *Passion, Craft, and Method in Comparative Politics*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.
9. William Roberts Clark, Matt Golder, Sona Nadenichek Golder, *Principles of Comparative Politics*, 2nd Edition, CQ Press, 2013.

The American Political Science Association website (apsanet.org) can be a useful source for political science majors, especially in "Resources for Students" where you can find journals for students, internship opportunities and code of ethics for political scientists.

REQUIREMENTS

Mid-term Exam (2017/10/23)	25%
Final Exam (2017/12/18)	25%
Letter to Editor (2017/08/30)	5%
Reaction Paper (2017/09/06)	5%
Textual Analysis (2017/11/20)	5%
Research Proposal (2017/10/23)	5%
Research Report (2017/12/06)	20%
Participation	5%
Attendance	5%

All the above scores will follow a 100-point system. Final score will be converted into A-to-F system roughly on the basis of:

A A- 100-90 B+ B B- 89-80 C+ C C- 79-70 D+ D D- 69-60 F Below 60

Final grades will be assigned roughly on the basis of:

- A 93-100
Thorough understanding of all material; sound grasp of all theoretical and empirical materials directly listed in the syllabus. Independent reading and research follow the suggestions in the syllabus. Expression of insights, both orally and in writing, at an adult level of presentation. Attend class regularly and participate classroom discussion actively.
- A- 90-92
Thorough understanding of all material; sound grasp of all theoretical and empirical materials. Expression of insights at an adult level of presentation. Attend class regularly and participate in classroom discussion.
- B+ B B- 89-80
Reasonably sound understanding of most conceptual principles and familiarity with most of the empirical materials. Attend class regularly.
- C+ C 79-70
Weak understanding of conceptual principles. Marginal familiarity with empirical materials. Attend class regularly.
- D 69-60
Serious conceptual and factual errors. Attend class irregularly, come late or leave early. Behavioral problems in classroom.
- F
Completely detached from the materials of the class. Excessive absence or serious behavioral problems resulting in disruption of lecture.

All tests consist of definition and short-answer questions. A study guide will be distributed before each examination is administered.

Work turned in late without convincing justifications will not be accepted. Even if a delay is justifiable, one day after due day will cause a deduction of one point. If you are unable

to take an exam due to circumstances beyond your control (for example, illness), you are required to contact me timely to work out a suitable make-up arrangement. In case of an emergency, documents are required for justifying a special arrangement for the make-up. Usually this should be done before the exam happens or within one week after your return to my class. **I will not give grade to student who has an accumulated absence of class to more than two weeks.** Academic cheating and plagiarism are absolutely not tolerated. If you are not clear about regulations regarding academic cheating and plagiarism, please read the handbook for undergraduate students.

SCHEDULE

Aug. 28, 2017, Monday

Course Introduction

Aug. 30, Wed.

Warm up: Write and Think

Letter to Editor due.

(Read: Chaps. 1, 2 and 3 in Scott & Garrison)

Sept. 4, Mon.: No class, Labor Day.

Sept. 6, Wed.,

Practice to Write

Reaction Paper due

(Read: Chaps. 6, 7 & 8 Scott & Garrison)

Sept. 11, Mon. and Sept. 13, Wed.

Overview: Method and Political Research

(Reading: Introduction and Chap. 1 in Dixon, et al)

Sept. 18, Mon. and Sept. 25, Mon

The Ethics of Social and Political Research

(Read: Chap. 3 in Dixon, et al)

Sept. 27 Wed. and Oct. 2, Mon.

Research Design: Find Research Topic and Formulate Research Question

(Read: Chap. 4 in Dixon; Chaps. 4 and 5 in Scott & Garrison)

NO CLASS 10/04-18/2017

Due to instructor's international conference, independent research will be assigned.

Oct. 9, Mon.: No class, Columbus Day.

Oct. 23, Mon.

Midterm Exam

Research Proposal due on Oct.23.

Oct. 25, Mon.

Measurement
(Read: Chap. 5 in Dixon)

Oct. 30, Mon. and Nov. 1, Wed.

Sampling
(Read: Chap. 6 in Dixon, et al)

Nov. 6, Mon.

Experiments
(Read: Chap. 7 in Dixon, et al)

Nov. 8, Wed.

Surveys
(Read: Chap. 8 in Dixon, et al; Chap. 8 in Scott & Garrison)

Nov. 13, Mon.

Interviewing, Ethnography and Participant Observation
(Read: Chap. 9 in Dixon, et al)

Nov. 15, Wed. and Nov. 20, Mon.

Data Analysis
(Read: Chap. 10 in Dixon, et al; Chap. 9 in Scott & Garrison)

Textual Analysis Report due on Nov. 20.

Nov. 22, Wed. and Nov. 27, Mon.

Quantitative Analysis: Description and Inference
(Read: Chap. 12 in Dixon, et al)

Nov. 29, Wed.

Qualitative Analysis
(Read: Chap. 13 in Dixon, et al)

Dec. 4, Mon. and Dec. 6, Wed.

A Mixed Strategy and Methodological Pluralism
(Read: Chap. 11 in Dixon, et al)

Research Report due on Dec. 6.

Dec. 11, Mon.

Writing-up and Presentation
(Read: Chap. 10 and 11 in Scott and Garrison; Chap. 14 in Dixon, et al)

Dec. 13, Reading Day, No Class.

Dec. 18, Mon.
Final Exam!

Thank you for taking my class and have a happy holiday season!