

RESEARCH METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Spring 2009

University of Wyoming POLS 5680 3:10-6:00PM Wednesday A&S 226	Prof.: Andrew Garner Office: A&S 146 Telephone: 766-2176 Office hours: Tuesday, 1-4:30PM e-mail: agarner1@uwyo.edu
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is about the “science” part of Political Science. In particular, we will learn how to think scientifically about politics, including how to develop theoretical explanations of political phenomena and the process of empirically testing these theoretical explanations. The first part of the course is devoted to the philosophy of science and determining whether our discipline can accurately be described as a science. Next, we turn to the scientific method and understanding how to apply it to the study of politics. This includes issues such as formulating research questions, developing hypotheses, operationalization, and measurement. The final part of the course will examine types of research design and how to collect observations for study in a systematic and valid manner. The goal of the course is to provide the analytical tools necessary for developing a master’s thesis or a Plan B paper that represents original research.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To help students develop an understanding of the role of science in the field of Political Science and to provide the methodological tools necessary for students to formulate their own research projects.

PREREQUISITES

The prerequisites for this course are a minimum of nine hours of political science and STAT 2050, STAT 2070 or an equivalent course. Those needing to refresh their knowledge of statistics should review chapters 11-14 of the Johnson and Reynolds book.

READINGS

Below are the required books for this course. All are available at the University bookstore and also can be found used (e.g., significantly cheaper) through several online bookstores.

Klemke, E.D., Robert Hollinger, and David Wyss Rudge. 1998. “Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science.” Publisher: Prometheus Books. ISBN: 1-57392-240-4.

Kuhn, Thomas. 1996. “The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.” Publisher: University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 978-0226458083

Hoover, Kenneth R. and Todd Donovan. 2008. “The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking.” 9th edition. Publisher: Wadsworth. ISBN: 9780495015857

Johnson, Janet and H.T. Reynolds. 2008. "Political Science Research Methods." 6th edition. Publisher: CQ Press. ISBN: 978-0-87289-442-6

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. "Designing Social Inquiry." Publisher: Princeton University Press. ISBN: 978-0691034713

There will also be several assigned readings from supplementary texts throughout the course as indicated in the course schedule below. These supplementary texts will be made available online or in class.

GRADES

Your final course grade will be determined as follows:

- 15%: Participation (Quality and Quantity)
- 20%: Analysis Papers (10% each; 3-4 pages)
- 25%: Thought Paper (7-10 pages)
- 40%: Research Proposal (20-25 pages)

PARTICIPATION (15% of final grade)

You are required to read all of the assigned readings prior to class and to participate in the discussions of that material. Your grade will be determined both by the quantity and the quality of your participation. Your grade will suffer if you act like a wallflower.

ANALYSIS PAPERS (10% EACH of final grade)

You will select two weeks this semester in which to write a 3-4 page critical analysis of a journal article from that week's readings. The analysis will focus on the topic that week (e.g, if the topic is Hypotheses then you will critically analyze the hypotheses in the article). More details will be provided later in the semester.

THOUGHT PAPER (25% of final grade)

The first part of the semester is devoted primarily to the philosophy of science. After we conclude the readings for this topic, you will write a 7-10 page thought paper on the nature and scope of scientific inquiry. The paper topic and details will be provided on February 4th and the paper will be due on February 14th.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL (40% of final grade)

Instead of a final exam, you will write a 20-25 page research proposal that will be due the day of the final exam. This is intended to be a *realistic* proposal of an original study you would like to conduct in the future. The proposal will be structured like a standard journal article and include an introduction, literature review, theoretical discussion, and a data and methods section that details how you plan to conduct your research (e.g., measuring your concepts, data sources, type of research design, and so forth). In sum, this paper is intended to allow you to apply the semester's course material to an actual research project that you can conduct at a later date. We will occasionally devote class time

to discussing each of your individual research topics.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY *Any form of academic dishonesty will be punished ruthlessly. This includes plagiarism on your papers, cheating on exams, and any other form of academic dishonesty falling under the University's guidelines. Students caught engaging in such dishonesty will be punished in the most severe manner allowed by the university. No exceptions.*

I cannot state this emphatically enough – I have a zero tolerance policy toward any form of academic dishonesty. Students should consult University Regulation 802 (www.uwyo.edu/legal/Uniregs/ur802.htm) as well as the Political Science Department's policy statement (www.uwyo.edu/Pols/Academic_Dishonesty.doc) regarding the definition and penalties for academic dishonesty. University Regulation 802 defines academic dishonesty thusly:

An act is academically dishonest when it is an act attempted or performed which misrepresents one's involvement in an academic task in any way, or permits another student to misrepresent the latter's involvement in an academic task by assisting in the misrepresentation. Some examples of academic dishonesty include such acts as:

- a. Representing as one's own work material copied or borrowed from any source, written or otherwise, public or private, without proper citation of the source.
- b. Using a ghost writer, commercial or otherwise, for any type of assignment.
- c. Submitting substantially the same work for more than one class without the explicit permission of all concerned instructors.
- d. Doing a class assignment for someone else or allowing someone to copy one's assignment.
- e. Using notes or prepared information in an examination unless authorized by the instructor.
- f. Taking an examination for someone else or allowing someone to take an examination for oneself.
- g. Copying from, or assisting, another student during an examination.
- h. Stealing, or otherwise improperly obtaining, copies of an examination before or after its administration.
- i. Submitting substantially the same work as someone else unless authorized by the instructor.

The University states the following about academic dishonesty:

The University of Wyoming is built upon a strong foundation of integrity, respect and trust. All members of the university community have a responsibility to be honest and the right to expect honesty from others. Any form of academic dishonesty is unacceptable to our community and will not be tolerated. Teacher and students should report suspected violations of standards of academic honesty to the instructor, department head, or dean. Other University regulations can be found at: <http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/legal/universityregulation.htm>

GETTING HELP It is important for you to realize that my job as professor is to help you learn the material. If you have questions, ask them! Chances are that if a point is unclear to you then it is also unclear to the majority of other students as well. Feel free to drop by my office, email me, see me after class, ask questions during class, or call me whenever you feel as though you do not fully understand the material. The sooner you ask for help, the more time I will have to help you. A

panicked email the day before your paper is due asking me to explain the last two weeks worth of material is probably a bad idea. Your new motto should be: "Ask Early and Ask Often."

I will be happy to accommodate any disability so long as it is documented with the University Disability Support Services at the University. Please see me after class so we can discuss what accommodations need to be made.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1, JAN 14: INTRODUCTION

WEEK 2, JAN 21: WHAT IS SCIENCE?

Readings:

Popper "Science: Conjectures and Refutations." In *Philosophy of Science*
Ziman "What is Science?" In *Philosophy of Science*
Kitcher "Believing Where We Cannot Prove." In *Philosophy of Science*
Literature Review on Rationalism versus Empiricism

WEEK 3, JAN 28: SOCIAL SCIENCE POSERS?

Readings:

Kuhn "The Natural and the Human Sciences." In *Philosophy of Science*
Machlup "Are the Social Sciences Really Inferior?" In *Philosophy of Science*
Rosenberg "If Economics Isn't Science, What Is It?" In *Philosophy of Science*
Kramer "Political Science as Science." Copies provided.
MacRae "The Science of Politics and Its Limits." Copies provided.

Recommended Readings

Johnson and Reynolds, pages 45-54
Hoover and Conover, Chapter 1

WEEK 4, FEB 4: SO YOU SAY YOU WANNA REVOLUTION?

Readings:

Kuhn *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. ENTIRE BOOK.

WEEK 5, FEB 11: THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD *****Thought Papers Due!*****

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 2
Hoover and Donovan, Chapter 2
Courtney Brown 1996 excerpt, Copies provided
Abramson 1997

WEEK 6, FEB 18: CHOOSING RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THE STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH PAPERS

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 6
KKV, Chapter 1
Shively, pages 22-32, Copies provided

Additional readings: TBA

WEEK 7, FEB 25: THEORIES AND CAUSALITY

Readings:

Philosophy of Science, pages 309-315
Carnap "The Nature of Theories." In *Philosophy of Science*
Johnson and Reynolds, pages 122-126
Hoover and Donovan, pages 31-37
Shively, Chapter 2, Copies provided.

Additional readings: TBA

WEEK 8, MAR 4: HYPOTHESES

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 3
Hoover and Donovan, Chapter 2

Additional Readings: TBA

WEEK 9, MAR 11: OPERATIONALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 3
Hoover and Donovan, Chapter 5
Shiveley, Chapters 4 and 5, Copies provided.

Additional readings: TBA

WEEK 10, MAR 18: SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS

WEEK 11, MAR 25: TYPES OF RESEARCH DESIGNS

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 5

Additional readings: TBA

WEEK 12, APR 1: NO CLASS, PROFESSOR AT CONFERENCE

WEEK 13, APR 8: OBSERVATIONS AND DATA SELECTION

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 7
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 8 (pp. 243-258)

Additional readings: TBA

WEEK 14, APR 15: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES WITH CHOOSING OBSERVATIONS

Readings:

KKV, ENTIRE BOOK

WEEK 15, APR 22: QUANT'S VERSUS QUAL'S

Readings:

American Political Science Review Symposium on KKV:

Collier

Corporaso

Laitin

Rogowski

Tarrow

KKV respond

WEEK 16, APR 29: No class – work on research designs

FINAL EXAM: Research designs due May 6th