

September 8, 2009

**POL 455Y1: THE CRAFT OF POLITICAL RESEARCH 2009-2010**  
**Tuesdays, 10 am – noon**

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**WHAT THIS COURSE IS ALL ABOUT:**

The subject-matter of this political science course is political science itself. The course introduces students to the “how” of political science. Political Science is defined by the content of its investigations, not its methods. As a result, we find political scientists employing a variety of methods to answer questions of state, power and collective action. We survey both qualitative and quantitative research methods and approaches commonly employed by political scientists. With illustrations provided by guest speakers sharing their own research, the class contrasts and compares the diverse approaches taken by Political Scientists when they conduct their research to understand common dilemmas faced by researchers. We critically examine their strengths and weaknesses of these methods while identifying common hallmarks of good research. The class culminates with a research design proposal incorporating knowledge of the approaches covered during the class.

By the end of the course, you should gain some insight into how professional political scientists formulate research questions, design research strategies, undertake the research, analyze the results, and present their findings in scholarly form. In addition, you should be equipped with the analytical tools needed to read empirical research critically and assess its merits. This is the essential step toward becoming a discerning consumer of academic publications and public policy literature and becoming an effective researcher yourself. This course should not only help you think more critically about data presented in academic research, but also about media coverage of politics and policy issues. In addition, the research skills you should acquire during the course of year will be useful to you in a variety of careers after university.

**FORMAT:**

Each week, we will partake in a discussion about different social science research methods. Frequently, we will be joined by other U of T political scientists who will discuss their work and research strategies. The syllabus will be updated to reflect a list of visitors and the readings they choose. Everyone will be expected to complete these readings in advance in order to facilitate their full participation in the discussion.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- Creswell, John W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.
- King, Gary W., Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton University Press. "KKV"

There are also other readings, primarily available on-line or through the Blackboard website that highlight topics and subjects chosen by the class guests. Many of these readings were authored by the visitors.

**RECOMMENDED TEXTS & PREPARATION:**

This class is designed to help prepare students for graduate school in Political Science (or other social sciences) or those students interested in a "capstone" class at the culmination of their studies. *No prior knowledge of qualitative or quantitative methods is assumed*. Students who have completed courses like POL 242, though, will have opportunities to extend their knowledge base.

There is a list of recommended research methods and design books on Blackboard written for an undergraduate audience. Depending on your prior level of familiarity with the scientific process or research methods, possessing a copy of any of these books may prove to be a useful reference. The Creswell text often assumes that one has access to, or knowledge of, the material contained within these volumes.

Additionally, the following books are excellent reviews of different schools of research in political science and contain overviews of current research in specific areas written primarily for graduate students. Students are strongly urged to consult chapters of their specific interest. Depending on student interest and the number of guest speakers, I may require the purchase of the first book in the spring.

Lichbach, Mark Irving and Alan S. Zuckerman. *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure*

Katzelson, Ira and Helen V. Milner. *Political Science: State of the Discipline III*, W.W. Norton 2002 (see also *State of the Discipline II* edited by Ada Finifter).

A journal, the *Annual Review of Political Science*, may also contain interesting reviews of recent research, which is useful for identifying possible research topics.

**GRADING SCHEME:**

PARTICIPATION: 25%

SHORT PAPERS: 28%

RESEARCH ARTICLE REVIEW (due Oct. 27): 10%

CAUSALITY ANALYSIS (due Nov. 24): 8%

RESEARCH SKETCHES (2, one due before Dec. 1): 10%

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT (due March 30): 12%

RESEARCH-DESIGN PROJECT: 35%

INITIAL PROPOSAL (due Jan. 5): 5%

FINAL WRITE-UP (due March 16): 30%

*Final drop date for course: Feb. 15. 28-33% due before the drop date.*

## **GRADING POLICIES:**

The late penalty for the assignments in this course is 2% per calendar day. After ten days of lateness, the instructor will refuse to accept the work for grading. Extensions for non-health reasons may only be granted prior to the day of the deadline, exam or quiz.

All other matters of grading, exemptions, and discipline procedures will be handled in accordance with the Faculty of Arts and Science Academic Handbook. See <http://www.artsandscience.utoronto.ca/studentaffairs/handbook.shtml> for the complete handbook. Students who believe that their work was unfairly graded may request a re-evaluation in writing. Such re-marking may involve the entire piece of work, and may raise or lower the mark. All other appeals and complaints will be handled in a manner consistent with the regulations described in the handbook.

## **Plagiarism**

Although there may be opportunities to consult with classmates, or even to collaborate on an assignment, all work submitted must be original and reflect the student's own efforts. It is recommended you read an essay on plagiarism by the esteemed sociologist Earl Babbie, which is available on the Blackboard site.

**Turnitin.com** Class ID: 2873905; Password: Causality

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

## **Accessibility Needs:**

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: [disability.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:disability.services@utoronto.ca) or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

*NOTE: Complete details of the assignments will be available in separate hand-outs distributed in class and Blackboard.*

**Research Article Review.** Due October 27.

Write a short report describing the research method, hypothesis, variables, data and conclusion of an article reporting an empirical investigation published in the past 30 years in the *American Political Science Review*, *Perspectives on Politics*, the *British Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *International Security*, or *International Organization*. Examine a second article that either cites this article or is cited by

this article, comparing the research design or data of the second article, and evaluate how one updates or corrects the other (3-5 pages).

**Causality Analysis.** Due November 24

From the same pool of journals as the research article review, select one empirical article and identify whether it makes a causal claim or not. Based on readings from class, discuss whether this causal claim is a mean causal effect, a necessary or sufficient effect (etc) and generalizable to similar phenomena. Evaluate whether such claims are warranted, valid and reliable given the author's research design, and whether alternative approaches might result in different claims (2-3 pages).

**Research Sketches.** Varying due dates (one before Dec 1 2009).

After learning about a particular approach or research design, each student should identify a research question and briefly sketch a design that could answer this question utilizing the approach covered in class, noting possible strengths and weaknesses of that approach. Each sketch (maximum: two pages) is due within three classes of the introduction of that topic. At least one sketch must be turned in before December 1, 2009.

At the start of the year, students will be required to generate at least two possible research questions to be shared with the class as part of a collective 'bank.' This bank can be consulted for inspiration for these sketches. Last year's list will also be made available.

**Quantitative Research Assignment.** Due March 30, 2010.

Computers are now enabling qualitative researchers, especially those working with documents, to analyze and organize their information systematically. At the end of the year, each student will learn how to use a program called QDA Miner / WordStat (<http://www.provalisresearch.com>) to analyze a set of speeches, newspaper stories or other documents.

**Final Research Design**

In this major assignment for the course, students will write two different research proposals for conducting research on the same question about politics. Rather than carrying out the research yourself, students will design a research plan that could be carried out with the appropriate amount of time and money. By making two proposals, students demonstrate how much they have learned about political science's methodologies and research practices. This assignment comes in two stages. The first stage, the Preliminary Proposal, is due January 5, 2010 after meeting with the professor before the winter holidays, and is worth up to five marks. The final paper is due March 16, 2009, and is worth 30%. Students are strongly encouraged to complete a rough draft before your second required meeting with the professor (March 4 and 11).

**PARTICIPATION:**

400-level courses such as this one are seminars, not lecture courses where students sit passively and take notes. Instead, we expect everyone to come to class prepared to actively engage in a discussion of the topic with their peers. It

follows that preparation, attendance and participation are crucial if you aspire to success in this course. If you know in advance that you must miss a class, please email your professor.

*If you are not feeling well, or had flu-like symptoms 24 hours before class, you should not come to class.* Email the instructor. Pending full details of university policy from [www.preparedness.utoronto.ca](http://www.preparedness.utoronto.ca), no medical note is necessary if you are just missing a week and all assignments can be completed before the next class. You may be asked to complete a brief assignment to make-up for your missed participation. Check your email in the event of H1N1 causing class to be cancelled or moved on-line. It is recommended that everyone pair up with a "flu-buddy" in the class who will keep you informed of anything you miss while ill and can update the professor of their buddy's status.

I expect students in this class to complete the reading(s) before every class, enabling them to participate thoughtfully, constructively, and respectfully in class discussions. On Blackboard, there will be a discussion forum for every class with a guest speaker. *No later than the night before class*, students should post questions they would like to ask the speaker. These questions will be given to the speaker before class begins. I expect all "B" students to post at least one question every three visits.

I reserve the right to administer a quiz or other short assignment on the week's reading. These quizzes may be open book on the class Blackboard site or a short, ten-minute closed book quiz at the start of class to ensure that the students have completed the reading that week. Assignments might include a short summary of the reading, or a required posting to the Blackboard discussion forums. These quizzes or assignments will be incorporated into the participation grade. No quiz or short assignment (other than the ones listed above) will be worth more than 2.5% of the final grade.

The following is a *rough* guide to how students' in-class verbal participation will be marked:

GRADE	CLASS PARTICIPATION	THE READINGS
A	Comments show a strong understanding of the readings; asks insightful questions of guest speakers; does not interrupt other speakers or require undue attention	Shows a strong understanding of the readings, their relevance, and demonstrates an ability to offer reasoned critique
B	Shows a good understanding of the readings; professor may need to clarify some points s/he makes in class	Does all the readings and understands them with some sophistication; may have some gaps in understanding
C	Makes occasional comments that may sometimes be off-	Does some reading and shows knowledge of some aspects of

GRADE	CLASS PARTICIPATION	THE READINGS
	topic or demonstrate lack of familiarity with the readings	the material, but has significant gaps in understanding
D/F	Says very little; restates what the readings say; lacks familiarity with basic themes	Shows little familiarity with the readings; misunderstands basic aspects of the reading material

**Course Blackboard Site:** The Blackboard website is accessible when you log into <http://portal.utoronto.ca> using your UTORid. You can find the course listed along with other course websites in the top-left corner. On the Blackboard website you will find course readings, updated versions of this syllabus, details of all assignments, class discussion forums and the course gradebook.

From time to time, class announcements & material will be delivered via e-mail. It is the students' responsibility to maintain their e-mail addresses in good working order and to ensure that the e-mail address known to the university (and listed on Blackboard) is accurate. Failure to receive important class announcements & messages are NOT legitimate excuses for missing class work.

### SCHEDULE

*Changes and updates to the schedule will be posted to the Blackboard site.*

Date	Theme	Readings
15-Sep	Intro / Basic themes and asking questions	Korey/Fletcher, KKV 1
22-Sep	Research and Exemplars	Charles McCall, "How to Write Research Designs and Research Reports," <a href="http://www.csub.edu/ssric-trd/howto/mccall.htm">http://www.csub.edu/ssric-trd/howto/mccall.htm</a> , L. Powner, "Reading and Understanding Political Science" (2004) PS, PLUS [at least] ONE of the following: Jackman, Robert W. & Ross A. Miller. 1995. "Voter Turnout in the Industrial Democracies during the 1980s" <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> 27(4): 467-492; OR Gerber, Alan and Todd Rogers. 2009 "Descriptive Social Norms and Motivation to Vote: Everybody's Voting and so Should You." <i>Journal of Politics</i> 71 (1): 178–191; OR Pape, Robert . 2003. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," <i>American Political Science Review</i> 97: 343-361; OR MacDonald, David. 2007. "First Nations, Residential Schools, and the Americanization of the Holocaust: Rewriting Indigenous History in the United States and Canada," <i>Canadian Journal of Political Science</i> 40: 4:995-1015; OR Wilson, J. Matthew and Michael Lusztig. 2004. "The Spouse in the House: What Explains the Marriage Gap in Canada?" <i>Canadian Journal of Political Science</i> 37: 979-995
29-Sep	Identifying Topics	Creswell Ch. 1 & 2
6-Oct	<b>Guest: Prof. Joe Wong</b>	"Democratization and the Left:

13-Oct	Paradigms, Theory and Research	Comparing East Asia and Latin America." <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> , 2004. Creswell, Ch. 3, Riker; Abramson et al.
20-Oct	Causality	KKV 2 & 3; Mahoney, James. 2008. "Toward a unified theory of causality." <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> , 41(4-5), 412-436.
27-Oct	<b>Guest: Peter Russell</b>	TBA – Minority Governments in Canada
3-Nov	Qualitative vs Quantitative	Creswell, Ch 5 Adcock, Robert, and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 95: 529-46.
10-Nov	Sampling and Control	KKV 4, 6, Trochim on Sampling
17-Nov	<b>Guest: Christian Breunig</b>	TBA – Comparative Political Economy
24-Nov	Meetings	Creswell, Ch 4, 5
1-Dec	Meetings	
<i>Winter Break</i>		
5-Jan	<b>Guest: Randall Hansen</b>	TBA: Allied bombing and Anti-Muslim cartoon controversy
12-Jan	Case Studies	Gerring, John. "What Is a Case Study and What Is it Good for?" <i>American Political Science Review</i> 98, no. 2 (May 2004): 341-354.; Ragin, Charles. "Turning the Tables: How Case-Oriented Research Challenges Variable-Oriented Research." <i>Comparative Social Research</i> 16 (1997): 27-42.
19-Jan	Ethnography	Dickson Eyoh, "Through the Prism of a local tragedy: Political Liberalisation, Regionalism and Elite Struggles for Power in Cameroon." <i>Africa</i> 68, 3 (1998): 338-359; B. Tedlock, in Denzin & Lincoln <i>Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry</i> (Sage 2003) Ed Schatz & L. de Volo, "From the Inside Out: Ethnographic Methods in Political Research," <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i> 37(2) (April 2004): 267-271; Recommended: K.C. Walsh, "Scholars as Citizens: Studying Public Opinion through Ethnography" in Schatz (forthcoming - Bb)

26-Jan	<b>TBA</b>	
2-Feb	Quantitative Methods: Bivariate Analysis	M.V. Hood & G.W. Neeley, "Packin' in the hood?: Examining assumptions of concealed-handgun research," <i>Social Science Quarterly</i> 81(2) (June 2000): 523-537; & E.D. Mansfield & Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," <i>International Security</i> 20(1) (1995): 5-38
9-Feb	<b>Guest Speaker: Wendy Wong</b>	TBA- International Relations
16-Feb	<i>Reading Week</i>	
23-Feb	Meetings	Creswell, Ch 6-10, KKV 5
2-Mar	Meetings	
9-Mar	What to Study, what to avoid	Creswell, Ch 6-7, KKV 5
16-Mar	Quantitative research training	Paper Due
23-Mar		
30-Mar	TBA	Quantitative Analysis Due