

**University of Toronto
Department of Political Science**

**POL2503H1F
Thinking Through Research Design
Fall 2016**

**Wednesday 10-12
UC 255**

Instructor: Professor Neil Nevitte
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Introduction:

This course is designed for M.A. students. It provides an introduction to the logic of research design and an overview of a range of research strategies commonly used in quantitative and qualitative research. No formal background in research methods or research design is required. The course aims to familiarize students with the strengths and weaknesses of different research designs, and to help students to evaluate research findings based on empirical research.

Course Format:

The format of the course is one two-hour seminar per week. Each session begins by reviewing the issues and questions raised in the assigned readings. Discussion then turns to consider the practical research implications of those issues and questions.

There is no term paper for this course. Instead, students are expected to make in-class presentations, to participate in a take-home project, an in-class project, and to write a take-home test. Additional readings will be assigned for in-class presentations. Students are also expected to actively participate in class discussions.

Course Requirements:

Take-home project (<i>due October 19</i>)	20%
In-class project (<i>November 16</i>)	30%
Take-home test (<i>due November 30</i>)	30%
Presentation and class participation	20%

Course Readings and Texts:

Required

1. King, G., Keohane, R., & Verba, S. (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
2. POL2503H Course Reading Pack

Recommended

- 1a. Brady, H., & Collier, D. (Eds.). (2004). *Rethinking Social Inquiry*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- 2a. Neuman, W. (2006). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (6th ed.). Toronto: Allyn and Bacon.

OR

- 1b. Babbie, E. (2003). *The Practice of Social Research* (10th ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth.
- 2b. Firebaugh, G. (2008). *Seven Rules for Social Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

The Course Reading Pack and textbooks can be purchased at:

U of T Bookstore
Koffler Centre, 214 College Street
(NW corner of St. George and College)

The course textbooks will also be available on Course Reserves (Short Term Loan) at Robarts Library.

SYLLABUS

Readings included in the Course Reading Pack are marked below with a ©.

Week 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

September 14

Recommended Reading:

Neuman text, Chapters 1 and 2

OR

Babbie text, Chapters 1 and 23

Week 2 RESEARCH DESIGN: THEORY AND PRACTICE

September 21

Required Reading:

King, Keohane & Verba text, pp. 3-28.

© Dunning, Thad. (2008). "Improving Causal Inference: Strengths and Limitations of Natural Experiments." *Political Research Quarterly* 61: 282-293.

King, G., Keohane, R., & Verba, S. (2004). "The Importance of Research Design." In H. Brady & D. Collier (Eds.), *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (pp. 181-192). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Recommended Reading:

Neuman text, Chapters 3 and 4.

Firebaugh text, pages 1-18.

Week 3 EXPERIMENTAL AND QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS

September 28

Required Reading:

King, Keohane & Verba text, 199-207.

© Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1966). *Experimental and Quasi-experimental Designs for Research* (pp. 1-16). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

© Gray, G. & Guppy, N. (1999). *Successful Surveys: Research methods and Practice* (pp. 51-61). Toronto: Harcourt Brace.

Eggers, A. & Hainmueller. (2009). "MPs for Sale? Returns to Office in British Post War Politics." *American Political Science Review*, 103(4):513-33.

Recommended Reading:

Neuman text, Chapters 6 and 8

OR

Babbie text, Chapter 4

Collier, D., Mahoney, J., & Seawright, J. (2004). "Claiming Too Much: Warnings about Selection Bias." In H. Brady & D. Collier (Eds.), *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (pp. 85-102). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Week 4

VARIABLES, HYPOTHESES, INFERENCES AND THINKING CAUSALLY IN QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

October 5

Required Reading:

King, Keohane & Verba, Chapters 2 and 3.

© Przeworski, A. & Teune, H. (1970). *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (pp. 17-30). New York: Wiley.

© Levitt, S. (2004). "Understanding Why Crime Fell in the 1990s." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 18, 163-190.

Recommended Reading:

Firebaugh text, pages 36-57; 120-129.

Collier, D. & Mahone, J. (1993). "Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 87, 845-855.

Nachmias, D. & Nachmias, C. (1976). *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (4th ed.). London: Arnold, Chapters 2 and 3.

List, C. and Spiekerman, K. (2013). "Methodological Individualism and Holism in Political Science: A Reconciliation." *American Political Science Review*, 107(4):629-43.

Week 5

SINGLE CASES AND COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

*** take-home project distributed**

October 12

Required Reading:

© Eckstein, H. (1975). "Case Study and Theory in Political Science." In F. I. Greenstein & N. W. Polsby (Eds.), *Handbook of Political Science Volume 7: Strategies of Inquiry* (pp. 96-132). Don Mills: Addison Wesley.

© Lijphart, A. (1971). "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." *American Political Science Review*, 65, 682-693.

© Munck, G. L. (2004). "Tools for Qualitative Research." In H. Brady & D. Collier (Eds.), *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (pp. 105-121). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

© Gerring, J. (2004). "What Is A Case Study and What Is It Good For?" *American Political Science Review*, 98, 341-354.

© Geddes, B. (1990). "How The Cases You Choose Affect The Answers You Get." *Political Analysis*, 2, 131-150.

© Sambanis, N. (2004). "Using Case Studies to Expand Economic Models of Civil War." *Perspectives on Politics* 2, 259-279.

Slater, D & Ziblatt, D. (2013). "The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Case Comparison." *Comparative Political Studies*, 46(10):1301-1327.

Recommended Reading:

Collier, D. (1993). "The Comparative Method." In A. W. Finifter (Ed.), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, Washington: American Political Science Association.

Week 6

October 19

DO RESEARCH DESIGN ASSUMPTIONS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

*** take-home project due**

Required Reading:

- © Campbell, D. T. & Ross, H. L. (1970). "The Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding: Time-series Data in Quasi-experimental Analysis." In E. R. Tufts (Ed.), *The Quantitative Analysis of Social Problems* (pp. 110-125), Reading: Addison Wesley.
- © Leeper, M S. (1991). "The Impact of Prejudice on Female Candidates: An Experimental Look at Voter Preference. *American Politics Research*, 19, 242-261.

Week 7

October 26

MEASUREMENT: RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Required Reading:

- © Przeworski, A. & Teune, H. (1970). *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (pp.91-112). New York: Wiley.
- © Wilcox, C. (1991). "The Causes and Consequences of Feminist Consciousness Among West European Women." *Comparative Political Studies*, 23, 519-545.
- © Levitt, S. & Dubner, S. (2005). "What Makes a Perfect Parent." In S. Levitte (Ed.), *Freakonomics* (pp. 147-178). New York: William Morrow.

Recommended Reading:

Neuman text, Chapter 7

OR

Babbie text, Chapter 5.

Cameron, D. (1975). "The Expansion of the Public Economy: A Comparative Analysis." *American Political Science Review*, 72, 1243-1261.

Firebaugh text, pages 64-83.

Week 8

November 2

GATHERING DATA AND ETHICS IN RESEARCH

Required Reading:

Neuman text, Chapter 17

Neuman text, Chapters 11, 14, 15, and 16

OR

Babbie text, Chapters 6, 10,11, 16.

Babbie text, Chapter 3

Recommended Reading:

Nachmias, D. & Nachmias, C. (1976). *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (4th ed). London: Arnold. Chapters 9, 12 and 13.

Gilfiores, J. & Alonso, C. (1995). "Using Focus Groups in Education Research." *Evaluation Review*, 19, 84-101.

Hoppe, M. J. et al. (1995). "Using Focus Groups to Discuss Sensitive Projects with Children." *Evaluation Review*, 19: 102-114.

Nadeau, R. et al. (1998). "Trained Versus Untrained Coders." Presented at the *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*, Boston.

Week 9 **THE CHALLENGE OF CROSS-NATIONAL RESEARCH: WHAT TO AVOID**

November 9

Required Reading:

King, Keohane and Verba text, Chapter 5.6

- © Martz, J. D. (1994). "Comparing Similar Countries: Problems of Conceptualization and Comparability in Latin America." In M. Dogan and Ali Kazancigil (Eds.), *Comparing Nations: Concepts, Strategies, Substance* (pp. 239-259). Oxford: Blackwell.
- © Verba, S., Nie, N., & Kim, J. (1980). *Participation and Political Equality* (pp. 23-45). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- © Mahoney, J. (2007). "Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics." *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(2), 122-144.

Week 10 **IN-CLASS PROJECT: LOOKING AT INDICATORS**

November 16

Week 11 **COUNTERFACTUAL THINKING AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

*** take-home test distributed**

November 23

Required Reading:

- © Tetlock, P. E., & Belkin, A. (1996). "Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives." In P. E. Tetlock & A. Belkin (Eds.), *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics* (pp. 3-38). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- © Russett, B. (1996). "Counterfactuals About War and Its Absence." In P. E. Tetlock & A. Belkin (Eds.), *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics* (pp. 171-186). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- © Review Symposium. (1995). "The Qualitative-Quantitative Disputation." *American Political Science Review*, 89, 454-481.
- © Sekhon, J. S. (2004). "Quality Meets Quantity: Case Studies, Conditional Probability, and Counterfactuals." *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(2), 281-293.
- © Rogowski, R. (2004). "How Inference in the Social (but not the Physical) Sciences Neglects Theoretical Anomaly." In H. Brady & D. Collier (Eds.), *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (pp. 75-83). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Recommended Reading:

Collier, D., Brady, H., & Seawright, J. (2004). "Critiques, Responses and Trade-Offs: Drawing Together the Debate." In H. Brady & D. Collier (Eds.), *Rethinking Social Inquiry* (pp. 195-227). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Week 12 *** TAKE HOME TEST DUE**

November 30