



POL242Y1Y (L5101 Thursday Section)

Research Methods for Specialists

This hands-on course aims to help Political Science specialists and other interested students to use some of the research methods common in the discipline.

Class: Thursday 1800-2000 (6-8pm)

Location: Sydney Smith 2108

Lab: Sydney Smith 561

Tutorials: Sign up during first weeks

Location: Sydney Smith seminar rooms,
lab 561

Instructor: Iain Wilson

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TA: Anthony Sealey

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Office hours: Thursdays 3-4pm, meet in
3rd floor lounge

Core Text:

Berdahl, Loreen and Keith Archer. 2015. *Explorations, Conducting Empirical Research in Canadian Political Science*, 3rd Edition (Don Mills: Oxford University Press)

The core text will be available at the bookstore and there should be used copies available on Amazon. Other essential readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Suggested supplements:

There are several other books you might find helpful, although there is no need to buy copies unless you particularly want to own them for some reason. Bryman, Alan, Edward Bell and James Teevan. 2012. *Social Research Methods*, 3rd Canadian Edition (Don Mills: Oxford University Press) was runner-up for core text and goes into more depth on qualitative methods than *Explorations*. I will be putting short extracts on Blackboard. Peter Burnham, Karen Gilland Lutz, Wyn Grant and Zig Layton-Henry's *Research Methods in Politics* from

the Palgrave Political Analysis series is a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods. If you find our coverage of statistics hard to follow, Derek Rowntree's *Statistics Without Tears* is great for explaining the underlying concepts in everyday language. Andy Field's *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS* is a quirky guide to statistical theory which goes into a lot more depth than the core text and walks through the analysis on the SPSS programme. It is worth reading the third or fourth edition, and bear in mind that two key chapters will be available on Blackboard.

Attendance

We appreciate that you have lives outside of class and sometimes things happen unexpectedly. However, unlike some politics courses, much of the material in POL242 is sequential: if you don't understand probability, for example, you will never fully understand regression. We welcome you to consult us in our office hours and to borrow notes for someone if you have to miss class, but these are not adequate substitutes. We want to give you an incentive to come along on crucial weeks and reward effort. To achieve that I am allocating a small portion of the marks available on the course to participation in seminar groups and in-class quizzes. Please attend scheduled classes and seminars unless you have a very good reason for being absent.

If you cannot come to class please send me (or your TA) an email with a brief explanation. Put "Absence", and only "Absence", in the subject line. If the explanation is reasonable we will give class average for that day. The standard of explanation needed for missing class is much lower than for other assessments, and we do not need supporting evidence or to know the details – simply let us know that you are unwell or have a family emergency. Generally we want to see an email before end of class if possible, unless you are too sick to send an email.

University Turnitin Statement

"Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site."

Schedule (subject to change at our discretion):

Week One 17/9/15: Why should you care about research methods?

Requirements: Please come to class having thought about how you would study the possibility of there being purple unicorns on campus, and whether students believe that there are purple unicorns on campus.

Essential Reading: Watch the video 'Healthcare Triage #3' 'Sugar doesn't make kids hyper', available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkr9YsmrPAI&list=UUabaQPYxxKepWUsEVQMT4Kw&index=63>

Week Two 24/9/15: Ethics influence research

Essential: *Explorations* Ch6 (available on Blackboard)

Fuji, Lee Ann (2012) 'Research Ethics 101' *PS: Political Science* 45(4) pp717-23

Suggested: Bryman *et al* Ch11

Week Three 1/10/15: Cause and effect and paradigms

Essential: *Explorations* Ch1, 2, 3

Suggested: Bryman *et al* Ch2, 3, 8

Week Four 8/10/15: Asking questions, not just waiting your turn to talk

Essential: Bryman Ch5 and *Explorations* Ch4, 5

Week Five 15/10/15: Talking isn't the only way to communicate

Essential: *Explorations* Ch9 and watch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGH2tYuXf0s>

Suggested: Bryman Ch10

Week Six 22/10/15: Surveys, or being locked up in a prison of deduction

Essential: *Explorations* Ch10 and Loftus, Elizabeth and Wesley Marburger. 1983. 'Since the eruption of Mt. St. Helens, has anyone beaten you up?' *Memory and Cognition* 11(2) pp114-20

Suggested: Bryman Ch4

Week Seven 29/10/15: Text meets brain

Essential: *Explorations* Ch12, 13

Week Eight 5/11/15: Levels of measurement and descriptive statistics

Including standard deviation

Essential: *Explorations* 97-102 and Ch14 to p271

Bryman Ch13 to p242

Week Nine 12/11/15: Probabilistic relationships and the point of statistics

Essential: *Explorations* Ch8 and Bryman p242-55

Week Ten 19/11/15: Simple inferences

Essential Reading: *Explorations* Ch15 to 294

Suggested: Statistics without Tears

Week Eleven 26/11/15: Triangulation, Q&A

Essential: Bryman *et al* Ch15

Week Twelve 3/12/15: **Class test in lab (weighted 20%)**

Enjoy the break!

Week Thirteen 14/1/16: The Normal distribution

Essential: *Explorations* Ch14

Week Fourteen 21/1/16: The logic of parametric tests

Essential: *Explorations* Ch15 especially from p295

Rowntree, Derek. 1981. *Statistics without tears*. London: Penguin Ch6 and 7 to p116

Research proposal part 1 due in class (weighted 10%)

Week Fifteen 28/1/16: Ranking and Statistical vs Experimental Control

Essential: *Explorations* Ch16

Week Sixteen 4/2/16: Linear regression

Essential: *Explorations* Ch17 to p347 and Andy Field, *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS*, extracts on Blackboard

Week Seventeen 11/2/16: Multiple regression and control in practice

Essential: *Explorations* Ch17 p348 to end, Andy Field, *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS*, extracts on Blackboard, and skim <http://www.economist.com/content/big-mac-index>

Reading Week, no class 18/2/16

Week Eighteen 25/2/16: What to do if you violate regression assumptions

Essential: *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS*, extracts on Blackboard

Research proposal part 2 due in class (weighted 30%)

Week Nineteen 3/3/16: Logistic regression

Sweet, Stephen and Karen Grace-Martin (2012) *Data Analysis with SPSS*, Boston: Pearson, Chapters 7 and 8 (extracts).

Week Twenty 10/3/16: Bad Statistics and the law

Goldacre, Ben (2010) *Bad Science*, Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, Chapter 14

Week Twenty-one 17/3/16: A very simple introduction to Bayes' theorem

Essential: McGrayne, Sharon. 2011. *Theory That Would Not Die*. New Haven: Yale University Press Ch1, Ch2 to p21 and pp30-33 (available online through UofT catalogue) and watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QI2jEJ-6e-Y>

Week Twenty-two 24/3/16: Indicators of success and the politics of research

Vann, M. 2003. 'Of Rats, Rice and Race: The Great Hanoi Rat Massacre, An Episode in French Colonial History' *French Colonial History* 4 pp191-203

Week Twenty-three 31/3/16: The 2015 Statistics Games, Q&A

Essential: Skim the readings on data analysis from the whole course

Week Twenty-four 7/4/16: **Class test in lab (weighted 25%)**

Course Grading Rules

Marks for this course are allocated as follows:

Participation/quizzes 15%

Research Proposal Part One 10%

Research Proposal Part Two 30%

Test One: Qualitative data and simple statistics 20%

Test Two: Inferential statistics 25%

Written assignments should be submitted on paper at the start of class on the due date, so that we have a paper copy by quarter past twelve/six. You also need to submit an electronic copy through Blackboard before class. Ideally, of course, we would like you to submit work comfortably before the deadline.

Deadlines

If you miss an assignment deadline without good reason, we will still accept work up to twelve calendar days late without a good excuse, but we will reduce your mark by 4% (of the notional maximum) for each calendar day the work is late. Late assignments can be submitted to the office and must be marked with the date. Please be aware that Saturday, Sunday and public holidays are calendar days, even though the office will be closed.

If you believe you have medical or personal circumstances which mean no reasonable person could expect you to submit your assignment on time, please submit a copy of a document which supports this. If the evidence is acceptable, we will remove any late penalties which have been imposed. Please get evidence to me as soon as possible. A properly completed University illness form (<http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca>) stating that you could not complete assignments on the relevant dates will always be acceptable, as will evidence of the death of an immediate family member. Otherwise, you should work on the assumption that you risk a late penalty unless we tell you otherwise in writing.

Instructions

Class tests

There will be two class tests in this course, one at the end of each semester. You need to be able to interpret some data using techniques we have discussed in class and explain key concepts. The tests may cover any material covered up to that point.

We strongly encourage you to memorise the information you need to complete the tests, as from extensive experience relying on notes harms performance. However, we will allow you to bring in one (A4/letter) sheet of handwritten notes if you wish.

These tests will be using the Sydney Smith computers, including SPSS. If you have a disability-related issue with working on standard-issue PCs, please let us know well in advance.

Research Proposal

The main take-home assessment on this course is a research proposal. You will also need to complete an introductory outline a few weeks before the main proposal is due. Although you do not need to actually conduct research for this exercise, you need to come up with an empirical research question and a strategy for answering which would convince me to fund your (hypothetical) research. This exercise has two parts:

Part One (700 words \pm 10%)

- Identifying an empirical question about politics which you could plausibly answer given a maximum \$5000 budget and 200 hours of your own time (while you may hire assistants, you will need to pay them \$15 per hour if they are unskilled and \$40 per hour if they bring special skills)
- Briefly explaining the state of existing research
- Convincing us that this question is important enough for me to spend my money on your research
- Listing methods you plan to use

Part Two (2500 words \pm 10%)

- Elaborating on the research methods you would use and how they answer the question
- Providing an extensive and convincing justification for your choice of methods, based on the material we have covered in the course
- Providing draft survey forms, interview scripts, etc.
- Explaining how you will code responses and how you will analyse your results
- Describing and justifying how you allocate your resources
- Providing us with criteria for success: how will I know if you performed your research well?

We will be discussing this exercise in more detail in class.

In this course, a 2500-word assignment means you should aim to turn in a paper of approximately 2500 words but the word count can fall in the 2250 to 2750 range without being penalised. If a paper exceeds 2750 words we will deduct 1% for every 20 words, or part thereof, over the limit. Please mark the word count on your paper.

Participation/quizzes

The remaining marks will reward consistent attendance and participation in tutorials, including occasional quizzes on the material covered in the readings. Keep up to date with the course material and do not be tempted to leave everything to the last minute!