POLITICAL RESEARCH GOALS AND STRATEGIES - PSCI 480  
Fall 2020  
Monday 3:00 - 5:20, LA 344  
Draft Syllabus

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Political Science addresses a wide range of questions and employs a variety of research methodologies, including many used in other social sciences. In this course, we explore the questions raised and methods used in the main subfields of political science: Comparative, Theory, International Relations, and American politics. Because the fundamental questions and methodological issues are common to the four subfields, and to social science more generally, we will begin by briefly examining basic issues in the philosophy of science, including the ways in which political science is and is not “scientific.” In the second part of the course, we will study how political scientists seek methodological rigor in their research, exploring the meaning and analysis of causation, the fundamentals of research design, the formation of concepts and hypotheses, common measurement problems, and case selection and sampling issues.

In the final part of the course, we examine the methodologies characteristic of work in the four main subfields of political science, such as ordinary language analysis in Theory; case studies and qualitative comparative analysis in Comparative; strategic-interaction modeling, in IR; and institutional analysis and survey research in American politics. The goals of the course are for you to understand the range of research approaches used to study political phenomena, learn how to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of political research using these approaches, and to use these tools to develop a methodologically sound research design of your own.

READINGS

Most of the course readings are available on Moodle. The readings for each week are listed in the “Course Topics and Readings” section below. I may change some readings to reflect political events and the interests of students in the class, or if I find a better reading on a topic. The rest of the readings will be in the one required basic textbook for this course, *The Craft of Political Research, 10th edition* (2017) by W. Phillips Shively. The book is available from the UM Bookstore, and online. Be sure to get the 10th edition; previous editions don’t contain some important changes.

GRADES AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each week there will be a set of readings broadly covering that week’s topic, often of divergent perspectives and levels. The assigned readings are varied, sometimes complex and theoretical, so you are expected to do all the readings and be prepared to discuss them each week. Being prepared will contribute to your understanding of the material and success in the course. Participation in class discussions will be 10% of the course grade.
In selected weeks, students will write a 3-4 page (double-spaced) analysis of the week’s readings. This analysis can be an overview comparing a single theme in several readings for that week, an intensive comparison of two or more of the readings, or an analysis of the week’s readings that relates them to relevant readings from previous weeks. These weekly analyses are due by 1:00 pm the day class meets (Monday) to christopher.muste@umontana.edu. They will provide one source of topics for our class discussions. Papers turned in between 1:00-2:00 will receive half credit, and papers not turned in by 2:00 will receive no credit unless cleared with me via email by 10 am.

There are eleven weeks with possible reading analyses. All students must do reading analyses for the first two weeks, the readings for August 31 and September 14 (9/7 is Labor Day) in the “Course Topics & Readings” section of this syllabus. After September 14, undergraduate students will choose two more weeks in which to do reading analyses of the remaining nine weeks, selected largely by you based on your interests. Graduate students will choose four more weeks to do reading analyses. This will be a total of four reading analyses for undergrads, each worth 7.5% of the grade, for a total of 30%. For grad students, each of the six reading analyses will be worth 5% of the grade, also totaling 30%.

Note: At least half of your remaining Reading Analysis weeks must be done by October **21st** (midterm).

As noted above, participating in class discussion is an important part of learning complex and unfamiliar material. Intelligent and frequent participation in class discussion is 10% of the overall course grade.

There will be a midterm exam at the end of the second section of the course, which will cover the readings and discussions up to that time. The midterm exam is worth 30% of the course grade.

The other requirement for this course is to prepare a research design for a research project you plan to carry out, based on your interests in political and social science. The research design must incorporate a research question, literature review, theory(ies), hypotheses, a comprehensive plan of the research process and the research strategies and methods that will be used to carry out the plan, and preliminary search for and possible analysis of some evidence or data. A draft plan describing the main components of your research design will be due in late October, and the first draft of your research design will be due in November. We will discuss the strengths and problems in the research design and potential solutions throughout the semester. The final version of the research design paper is due Monday, November 23rd of finals week, when we will meet to discuss all the projects. The research design is worth 30% of the course grade.

**GRADES:** Grades will be calculated according to the following percentages:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A−</td>
<td>90-92.9</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.9</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.9</td>
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<td>B−</td>
<td>80-82.9</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>70-72.9</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69.9</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63-66.9</td>
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<td>D−</td>
<td>60-62.9</td>
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Participation in discussion: 10%
Reading Analyses: 30%
Midterm exam: 30%
Final paper: 30% of course grade

**PSCI 400:** Due to the extensive writing in this course, the course satisfies the PSC 400 Writing requirement for Poli Sci majors. If you want PSCI 400 credit for this course, please email me. You can sign up for 1 credit of PSCI 400 even if you have already taken PSCI 400 in another course.
ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM:
All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to academic penalties by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. You must be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, online at http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/community-standards/default.php

The University of Montana Student Conduct Code prohibits plagiarism, which is “representing another person’s words, ideas, data, or materials as one’s own” and other forms of academic misconduct. These are serious academic violations that can result in penalties up to suspension or expulsion from the University.

I take academic honesty very seriously, and do my utmost to prevent, uncover, and penalize any form of dishonesty. Read Section V, “Academic Conduct” on pp. 5-12 of the Student Conduct Code above. Please contact me with any questions or concerns about academic honesty.

CLASS COURTESY:
In order to have a pleasant and effective learning environment in a class this size, and both on Zoom and in person, we need to observe a few basic courtesies. Please arrive in class on time; arriving late or leaving early disrupts the class. **Turn off all cell phones and all other electronic devices before class begins – except for using your computer in class to take notes.** On Zoom, please mute your audio unless you are talking to the class, then please “ unmute” yourself so we can hear you! Please do not read any non-course material, eat during class, or use text messaging, web browsers, or similar communications. You may take class notes using a computer but do not use it for other purposes. If you have a question or comment about the material, please raise your hand instead of discussing it with your neighbor. **We all benefit when we remember we’re in the room together to learn.**

DROP POLICY AND INCOMPLETES:
You can drop on Cyberbear through September 9, and from September 10 to October 21 (5 pm) using a drop form signed by me and your advisor. From October 22 - November 18 (5 pm), you must go through the more difficult “late drop” petition process. I will sign late drop petitions until November 15, and after that only if necessitated by accident, illness, or family/personal emergency as stated on the Drop form here: http://www.umt.edu/registrar/PDF/Course-Drop-Form.pdf Incompletes will only be permitted when all the conditions set forth in the official University policy are met – this policy and other official UM academic policies are at https://catalog.umt.edu/academics/policies-procedures

DSS STUDENTS:
Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations on exams, papers, notes or other course requirements should contact me, and must provide me with a copy of, your DSS letter of accommodations as soon as you can. The DSS office is in Lommasson Center 154, their website is https://www.umt.edu/disability-services/.

E-MAIL AND MOODLE:
Every UM student has an official UM e-mail account, and students registered for this course have a Moodle course account. I’ll use your official UM e-mail for important announcements, and course readings and grades will be on Moodle. Instructions for your UM e-mail and Moodle accounts are: https://umt.teamdynamix.com/ TDClient/Home/ Moodle and Cyberbear both send my e-mails to your official UM e-mail account, so you should check it frequently. If you use another e-mail account, go into CyberBear or go to IT Central to have your official UM e-mail forwarded to your preferred e-mail account, and check that account frequently.

GRADUATE STUDENTS - Graduate students taking this course must complete the “graduate increment” consisting of graduate-level readings for each course topic as specified by the instructor, six reading analyses (instead of the four for undergraduates), and complete a more extensive 20-25 page paper consisting of a research design with a well-defined research question, theory, hypothesis, literature review, plus some data collection and analysis, with the paper synthesizing the five components.
COURSE TOPICS AND READINGS

NOTE: “*GS” designates readings only required of Graduate Students

PART I: POLITICAL SCIENCE AS A SCIENCE?

August 24  Introduction - research methods and course requirements

August 31  Who’s Right? What’s Important? Is Social Science a Science? Analyzing Research Claims

Note: this first set of readings repays close attention and thought. They raise a number of important issues and questions, and are the basis for your first reading analysis short paper. We will analyze these articles intensively in class, so bring a copy of these readings to class.


*GS = for Grad Students:


September 7  LABOR DAY - NO CLASS

September 14  Natural Science and Social Science: Causation, Interpretation, and Alternatives


PART II: METHODOLOGICAL COMPONENTS – PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

September 21  
Natural Science and Social Science: Causation, Interpretation, and Alternatives


September 28  
Developing Research Questions, Concepts, and Hypotheses
Review: Hoover & Donovan, "Strategies" and "Refinements"

October 5  
Problems in Measuring Political Phenomena: Reliability and Validity
review: Hoover & Donovan, “The Elements of Science” pp. 16-29 only; "Strategies" pp. 46-56 only; and "Refinements" pp. 77-80 only.

New Readings:

October 5 continued on next page...
October 5 (continued) Problems in Measuring Political Phenomena: Reliability and Validity

More New Readings:

Supplemental Readings:
If you’re confused at this point about theories, concepts, and hypotheses, this should be helpful (if long):


October 12 Sampling in Quantitative and Qualitative Research

These two are general readings about case selection and sampling

These readings apply the ideas about good case selection and sampling to political research.


October 19 MIDTERM EXAM - TENTATIVE DATE

Plus - Library & Archival Research, and Data Collection & Analysis: Part I Workshop and Readings TBD
October 26  

Library & Archival Research, Data Collection II; and Research Design, Analysis and Writing in Political Science

* Draft Research Design Proposals are due at 1:00 pm


UM Library Website: Under “Research Tools” read first four links starting with “Library Catalog.” Under “Subject Guides” read “Popular or Scholarly?” “Successful Researching and Writing” (the first six topics therein), “Techniques for Refining and Focusing Searches,” and “Evaluating Web Pages” (under “Internet”).


Research design, analysis, writing:


UM Library Website: Under “Research Tools” click on “Subject Guides” (in the left margin) and read “Successful Researching and Writing.”

November 2  Research Design Proposal Discussion

* Final Research Design Proposals are due at 1:00 pm (not papers, just the proposals)

We will have a roundtable discussion of the Research Design Proposals, to refine and focus the proposals. Readings will be assigned based on common issues and approaches in students’ proposals.

November 2 READINGS: NEXT PAGE
PART III: SUBFIELD RESEARCH EXAMPLES

November 2 American Politics: Quantitative Analysis, Survey Research & Other Methods


Read two of the following articles; your selection should be guided by your substantive and methodological interests.


Kingdon, John W. 1977. “Models of Legislative Voting.” Journal of Politics 39: 563-595. This is an analysis of competing models of Congressional voting and methods used to evaluate the models. [supplemental: Shepsle and Weingast on “Positive Theories of Legislative Institutions” in Legislative Studies Quarterly 1994.]


Hochschild, Jennifer. 1981. “Why There is No Socialism in the United States” (part) and “Alternative Patterns of Belief, (part) in What’s Fair? American Beliefs About Distributive Justice, pp. 17-26 and 228-237. This is an example of in-depth, small-N research using in-person interviews.

Gilens, Martin. “The News Media and the Racialization of Poverty.” Chapter 5 in Why Americans Hate Welfare, pp. 102-132. This is a content analysis of news media.

Schafer, Mark and Stephen G. Walker. 2002. “U.S. Presidents as Conflict Managers: The Operational Codes of George Bush and Bill Clinton.” Chapter 4 in Political Leadership for the New Century: Lessons from the Study of Personality and Behavior among American Leaders, Feldman and Valenty, eds., pp. 51-63. This is a content analysis of leaders’ speech patterns and their impact on foreign policy decisions. NOTE: available only online as an “E-book” through the Mansfield Library catalog.
November 9

Comparative Politics: Case Studies, Least-similar/Most-similar, QCA, Single State Studies, and More


Read two of the following seven articles; your selection should be guided by your substantive and methodological interests.

Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen. 1989. “China and India.” In Dreze and Sen, Hunger and Public Action. This is an example of a small-N comparison examining the factors involved in the development of two countries - is it a most-different or most-similar design?

Skocpol, Theda. 1979. “Explaining Social Revolutions: Alternatives to Existing Theories” and “Causes of Social Revolutions in France, Russia and China.” Chapter 1 in States and Social Revolutions, pp. 3-43. Classic small-n study, selecting for the same value on the dependent variable.


Steinmo, Sven. 1989. “Political Institutions and Tax Policy in the United States, Sweden, and Britain.” World Politics 41: 500-535. Another small-N comparison - is it a most-different or most-similar design? Compare this to...

Steinmo, Sven and Caroline J. Tolbert. 1998. “Do Institutions Really Matter?: Taxation in Industrialized Democracies.” Comparative Political Studies 31:2 (April) 165-87. Steinmo here increases the number of cases, providing an interesting comparison to his 1989 article, above.


November 16:  International Relations: Variety in Methods of Analysis


Read three of the following articles; your selection should be guided by your substantive and methodological interests.

**review** Schafer, Mark and Stephen G. Walker. 2002. “U.S. Presidents as Conflict Managers: The Operational Codes of George Bush and Bill Clinton.” Chapter 4 in Political Leadership for the New Century: Lessons from the Study of Personality and Behavior Among American Leaders, Feldman and Valenty, eds., pp. 51-63. This is a content analysis of leaders’ speech patterns and their impact on foreign policy decisions. NOTE: available only online as an “E-book” through the Mansfield Library catalog.


Holsti, Ole R. 2001. “Politicization of the United States Military: Crisis or Tempest in a Teapot?” International Journal 57: 1-18. Holsti uses data from surveys of civilian and military leaders as well as the public to explore the potential for division among these groups.


*This is a clear overview of recent developments in political theory, organized in terms of the topics that political theorists are investigating.*

*A strong view that categorizes the various ways that political theory has been studied, and how students can use the categories to understand theory better.*

*Focuses specifically on democracy and its role in theory.*

*An excerpt from one of the most widely cited and respected books on political theory from the last 50 years, analyzes the idea of representation, using a method called “ordinary language analysis.”*

*An introduction to another influential book, this one an attempt to see if it’s possible to develop an idea of justice that people with different interests and from different cultures would agree on.*

Optional Readings:

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**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23**

**FINAL RESEARCH DESIGN PAPERS DUE IN CLASS**

**Summary Discussion of Final Research Designs & Methods**
We will take this last class during finals week to discuss the research designs, identify their strengths and options for potential modifications, improvements, and extensions.