COURSE SYLLABUS

Political Science 6350: Logic, Methodology and Scope of Political Science
2:30-5:15 p.m., Wednesday, Fall Semester, 2010

Contact Information
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Course Information
The general objective of this course is to present students with a rigorous approach to the guidelines, design, conduct, evaluation, and communication of state-of-the-science research in Political Science and related areas of academic inquiry. The specific objectives of the course are to help students learn to:

- describe and assess the logic of Political Science research in particular and of scientific research in general - that is, the state of an area of inquiry in terms of current contributions and future directions;
- describe and assess the scope of Political Science research - that is, the failures or successes of Political Science research programs in terms of making knowledge gains;
- describe, assess, and apply the methodologies of Political Science research - that is, the design, conduct, evaluation, and communication of research, in terms of the identification of interesting and important (and researchable) questions, the development of credible answers in terms of appropriate methodologies and strategies, and the communication and evaluation of research results.

Required Books


Calendar
August 25. An Introduction to The Course.

September 1-22. The Logic, Scope and Value of Political Science Research.
September 1 - No class meeting - Professor research presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C. - Logic, Scope and Value of Political Science Essay and In-Class Presentation due September 8.

September 8. Science (Logic, Scope and Value) of Political Science Essay and In-Class Presentation based on the following readings:

**Required Reading**

**PS: Political Science & Politics**

Polsby, ed., *Annual Review of Political Science* – Any 1 of the following 4 sets:
- Geddes, Barbara, “What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?,” v. 2: pp. 115-144.
- Treisman, Daniel, “What Have We Learned About the Causes of Corruption from Ten Years of Cross-National Empirical Research?,” v. 10: pp. 211-244.

OR

OR

OR

September 15-22. (Some) Philosophy of Science.

**Required Reading**
Polsby, ed. *Annual Review of Political Science*:

**Recommended Reading**


**September 29- November 24. The Methodology of Political Science Research.**
*September 29-October 6.* Criteria for Identifying An Interesting and Important (and Researchable) Question.

*Required Reading*

*October 13.* First In-Class Exercise on Hypotheses, Concepts and Variables.


*Required Reading*
Johnson and Reynolds, *Political Science Research Methods*, chs. 4, 7.

*October 27.* Second In-Class Exercise on Measurement and Sampling.

*October 27-November 3.* Research Tools: Experimental and Non-Experimental Designs.

*Required Reading*
Johnson and Reynolds, *Political Science Research Methods*, ch. 5.

Polsby, ed., *Annual Review of Political Science*:
- Bennett, Andrew and Colin Elmen, “Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods,” v. 9: 503-27.

*November 10.* Third In-Class Exercise on Experimental and Non-Experimental Designs.

*November 10-17.* Research Tools: Direct and Indirect Observation and Content and Document Analysis Designs.

*Required Reading*

*November 24.* Fourth In-Class Exercise on Direct and Indirect Observation and on Content and Document Analysis Designs.

*November 24-December 1.* Research Tools: Survey Research.

*Required Reading*
Johnson and Reynolds, *Political Science Research Methods*, ch. 10.

*PS: Political Science & Politics*: 
The 2009-10 British Election Study. Available at http://bes2009-10.org

December 1. Research Design Papers Due and Presented.

Grading Criteria and Assignments
Class participation = 20%; Science of Political Science Essay = 20%; 4 In-Class Written Exercises @ 10%; Research Design Paper = 20%.
A+: 95-100%; A-: 90-94; B+: 83-89; B: 77-82; B-: 70-76; C+: 65-69; C: 60-64; F: Below 60%.

Class Participation: Regular attendance; Assigned reading prior to the class meeting when it will be discussed; Class presentations based on assigned readings; Constructive and frequent contributions to seminar discussions.

Science (Logic, Scope and Value) of Political Science) Essay: A double-spaced, typed, 3-page essay that: (1) describes the key points made by Johnson and Reynolds, chs. 1-2, and by PS articles paired with your selection of one of four sets of Required Reading, as follows:
Paired with:
OR

OR
(B) Munger, Michael C., “Political Science and Fundamental Research,” AND Ostrom, Elinor, “The Danger of Self-Evident Truths.”
Paired with:
OR

(2) based on the readings in (1) above, suggests one topic that can be studied scientifically and another topic that might not be studied scientifically;
(3) based on (1) and (2) above, discusses why.
Essays and In-Class Presentations due September 8. Students are expected to comply with this date.
4 In-Class Written Exercises: Each of the four exercises is in-class, is open-text/open-note, and consists of 3-5 straightforward, written exercises that are based on the Johnson and Reynolds chapters announced above, and are done within the first 30-40 minutes of each class date as announced above (that is, October 13, October 27, November 10, and November 24). The fifth exercise is a brief (5-6 minute) oral presentation of your research design paper, scheduled for December 1. All students are expected to comply with these dates – no makeups will be given.

Research Design Paper: A double-spaced, typed, 8-page paper that:

- states and interesting and important research question, and justifies why it is so (1 page);
- reviews a selection of relevant research literature (see Johnson and Reynolds, ch. 6) that includes scholarly chapters in edited volumes (such as *Annual Review of Political Science*) and/or in scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals in either a chronological (date-of-publication) order or a knowledge-production (set-of-ideas) form (3 pages);
- articulates an empirically testable hypothesis, identifies its independent and dependent variables, precisely defines the core concepts associated with these variables, and discusses what several indicators or measures of these variables would be (2 pages);
- discusses appropriate sampling considerations as well as appropriate research design (methodologies of data collection) needed to test the hypothesis and to try to provide an answer to the research question (2 pages).
- lists endnotes and references in appropriate form.

Due December 1 – All students are expected to comply with this date.

**Note**

In addition to the above, students are expected to:

- know that this syllabus, including calendar/timelines, is subject to change at the discretion of the Professor;
- access and read related policy material at http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies