



Lakehead
UNIVERSITY

POLI 4110 Research Methodology (Fall 2022)
Fridays 2:30-5 pm

Instructor: Dr. Catherine Mathie

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Office Hours: Wednesday 11:30 am - 1:30 pm, or by appointment, via Zoom.

Course Description

In this seminar in the research methodology of political science, you will be introduced to a range of methodological approaches that are accepted and commonly employed today in political science research. You will read about and discuss the objectives, strengths and limitations of these different approaches, and the theoretical underpinnings that differentiate them, especially the fact/value distinction that serves as a major dividing line between quantitative/behavioural methods and qualitative/interpretive methods within the field of political science. Close attention to the methodological tensions and tradeoffs that shape the field of political science research will place you in a better position to evaluate the claims and evidence that political scientists present. The course will also provide you with information and practice (through written assignments) in key aspects of research design and planning intended to help you develop greater research and writing skills.

Your participation in class discussions in this seminar is essential as we read, reflect on and apply the theories we are learning together. Of course, since the class is being offered over Zoom, some necessary adjustments may be made as we go along to the format of seminar sessions in order to make it possible for everyone to get the most out of it; I appreciate your flexibility.

Course Requirements

Required Texts:

For this course, we will not be using a textbook. All of the required readings are listed in the Course outline and will be found in reading packages or links provided on the course website. You are expected to read, take notes, and prepare for discussion of each reading by the date for which it is assigned.

Grading:

Paper: 25%

Assignments: 20% = 10% each

Final Exam: 40%

Participation: 15%

Papers: For your 8-10 page term paper in this course, you will select and write about an example of scholarly research (chosen from a list of articles to be provided to students on October 28), explaining and evaluating the research presented in this article and discussing the approach of its author as it pertains to the major methodological debates we have studied in the class. Your papers will be due on November 30th at 11:59 pm. Late assignments will see a grade deduction of 2% per day. Extensions may be requested in advance of the due date, but not afterwards.

Assignments: Assignments are more practical, less formal and shorter written work in which you will apply practices that we have learned in the course to subjects of political inquiry that interest to you. The 1st is due October 2nd at 11:59 pm. The 2nd is due October 23rd at 11:59 pm.

Class Participation: All students are expected to:

- 1) Read assigned material carefully.
- 2) Be prepared to discuss or answer questions about the readings over Zoom.
- 3) Have hard copies of the readings (or copies displayed on an alternate device) with them during the Zoom seminar.
- 4) Avoid: (a) excessive absences from or lateness to our seminars; (b) being or appearing inattentive to seminars; (c) engaging in conversations with others outside of the Zoom seminar during class time.

Participation marks are not free:

- Consistently meeting these expectations will earn a mark in the B range (70-79%).
- Consistently meeting these expectations AND regularly participating thoughtfully in our discussions will be required for a mark in the A range (80-100%).
- Failure to follow even one of the expectations may result in an extremely low grade.

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty is expected of all Lakehead University students. It should go without saying that cheating, collusion, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to make themselves fully familiar with Lakehead's policies in this area. Although all these policies will be enforced in full, it is worth emphasizing the following:

PLAGIARISM INVOLVES PRESENTING ANOTHER'S WORK, IDEAS, THEORIES, OR INTERPRETATION AS ONE'S OWN.

To avoid plagiarism, always:

- 1) Put quotation marks around any words taken from sources.
- 2) Paraphrase material completely; do not simply rearrange words from a source or change them using a thesaurus, etc.
- 3) Whether it is being quoted or paraphrased in your work, always give accurate and complete citations for all material that comes from another source.
- 4) Avoid borrowing entire arguments or ideas from another writer. Your arguments should be original to you.

Academic Accommodations: Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities/medical conditions. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities/medical conditions to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability/medical condition and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, please email sas@lakeheadu.ca or visit <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>.

Course Outline

NOTE: Readings and schedule will be adjusted as necessary at my discretion. Of course, Zoom discussions pose special challenges, so as we proceed with the seminar, I may find it necessary to make some changes to the structure of class discussions. I greatly appreciate your flexibility and understanding.

Sept 9 Introduction to Course & Syllabus

- To read in class for brief discussion: Robert Keohane, "Political Science as a Vocation."

Sept 16 Theoretical Sources of Political Science as "Science":

- Mill, Selections from "Book VI: On the Logic of the Moral Sciences," *A System of Logic*.
- Weber, Selections from "Objectivity of the Sociological and Social-Political Knowledge."

September 23 Defining A Good Research Project in Political Science

- Kirshner, "Alfred Hitchcock and the Art of Research." PS: Political Science and Politics, 1996.
- Nelson, "The Research Question." Political Science Guide.com

<https://politicalscienceguide.com/what-is-research/the-research-question-2/>

• Gustafson and Hagström, "What is the point? Teaching graduate students how to construct political science research puzzles." European Political Science, 2017.

- Gerring, "What Makes A Concept Good?"

September 30 - NO CLASS: Lakehead observes National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

October 7 Towards Value-Free and Quantitative Political Science: the Behavioural Approach

- Dahl, "The Behavioural Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest."
- Riker, "The Political Psychology of Rational Choice Theory."

October 10-14 - NO CLASS: Fall Study Week

October 21 Interpretivist Critiques of the Behavioural Approach

- Almond & Genco, "Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics."
- Yanow, "Interpretive Political Science."

October 28 Defending Normative Political Science

- MacIntyre, "Is a Science of Comparative Politics Possible?"
- Taylor, "Neutrality in Political Science"
- Ball, "Political Theory and Political Science: Can This Marriage Be Saved?"

November 4 Fundamentals of Quantitative Political Science

- van Holsteyn & Irwin, "Studying Voting Behaviour," from *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science*
- Butt, Widdop and Winstone, "The Role of High-Quality Surveys in Political Science Research," from *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science*
- Introductory video on Regression Analysis
- Best & McDonald, "Models in Political Science: Forms and Purposes," from *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science*

November 11 Key Quantitative Methods: Rational Choice and Game Theory

- Fiorina, "Formal Models in Political Science."
- Introductory video on Game Theory
- Gates & Humes, "Modeling with Games," from *Games, Information, and Politics*
- Acemoglu and Wolitzky, "Cycles of Conflict: An Economic Model."

November 18 Key Qualitative Methods

- Bayard de Volo and Schatz, "From the Inside Out: Ethnographic Methods in Political Research."
- Ercan & Marsh, "Qualitative Methods in Political Science," from *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science*.
- Joe Soss, "Talking Our Way to Meaningful Explanations: A Practice-Centered Approach to In-Depth Interviews for Interpretive Research."

November 25 Case Studies

- Seha & Muller-Rommel, "Case Study Analysis," from from *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science*.
- Gerring, "What is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" APSR, May 2004.
- Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." APSR, Sept. 1971.

December 2 Ethical Questions Raised by Social Research

- Wood, "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones." *Qualitative Sociology*. June 2006.
- Malejacq & Mukhopadhyay, "The 'Tribal Politics' of Field Research: A Reflection on Power and Partiality in 21st-Century Warzones," *Perspectives on Politics*, Dec. 2016.
- Kovach, Chapter 1 of *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*