



Lakehead
UNIVERSITY

POLI 4110 Research Methodology (Winter 2024)

Tuesdays 2:30-5 pm

Instructor: Dr. Catherine Mathie

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Office Hours: Wednesday noon - 2 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. You will also gain information and practice (through the course assignments) in key aspects of research design, planning and analysis that will help you to 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 studying 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 in the Content section. All students are expected to print out these readings or else use an e-reader or similar device to download them such that they can be read carefully prior to our seminars and consulted throughout our class discussions without disrupting your access to our zoom seminar.

Grading:

Assignment 1: 15%

Assignment 2: 10%

Paper: 30%

Final Exam: 25%

Participation: 20%

Assignment 1: Assignment 1 is a written assignment in which you will apply concepts discussed in our January 16th class session. The assignment will be due on January 27th at 11:59 pm. Instructions will be provided on d2l on January 12th.

Papers: For your 7-9 page term paper in this course, you will select and write about an example of scholarly research (chosen from a list of works to be provided to students on Feb. 6), explaining and evaluating the research presented in this work and the method used by the author(s) to perform this research, and situating the approach of the author(s) within the major methodological debates we are studying in the class. Detailed instructions for the essay will be provided on d2l along with the list of works to choose from. Your papers will be due on April 8th at 11:59 pm. Late assignments will see a grade deduction of 2% per day. Extensions for reasonable grounds may be approved well in advance of the due date, but not afterwards.

Assignment 2: Assignment 2 is a brief presentation to the class on the scholarly work that you have chosen to discuss in your term paper. Your due date will depend on your selected paper topic: presentations will be scheduled to occur in class between Feb. 27 & March 26 during the class period in which we discuss the type of research performed by your selected author(s). Your presentation will address how the research project you are analysing exemplifies this type of research as well as insights you have gained about this type of research from the research project. Detailed instructions for this presentation will be provided on Feb. 6 along with the paper assignment.

Class Participation: All students are expected to:

1. Read assigned material carefully.
2. **Have working Zoom cameras and turn them on throughout the entirety of our class sessions.**
3. Be prepared to discuss the readings and answer questions about them over Zoom.
4. Have printed or digital copies (on an alternate device) of the readings with them during the Zoom seminar.
5. 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.

Generative AI Use Prohibited: Generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI or GenAI) is a category of AI systems capable of generating text, images, or other media in response to prompts. These systems include ChatGPT and its variants Bing (built by OpenAI) and Bard (built by Google) among several others. Other Generative AI models include artificial intelligence art systems such as Stable Diffusion, Midjourney, and DALL-E.

Any use of GenAI systems to produce assignments for this course is not permitted. All work submitted for evaluation in this course must be the student's original work. The submission of any work containing AI generated content will be considered a violation of academic integrity (“Use of Unauthorized Materials”).

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 may be adjusted as necessary at my discretion.

Jan 9 Introduction to Course & Syllabus

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

Jan 16 Asking Good Research Questions 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/>

- Day & Koivu, "Finding the Question: A Puzzle-based Approach to the Logic of Discovery." Journal of Political Science Education, 2019.

January 23 Is there a Science of Politics? Theoretical Foundations to Modern Political Science

- Mill, Selections from "Book VI: On the Logic of the Moral Sciences," *A System of Logic*, 1843.
- Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History." The Journal of Philosophy, 1942.
- Weber, Selections from "Objectivity of the Sociological and Social-Political Knowledge," 1904.

January 30 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," The American Political Science Review, 1961.
- Riker, "The Political Psychology of Rational Choice Theory," Political Psychology, 1993.

February 6 Interpretivist Critiques of the Behavioural Approach

- Almond & Genco, "Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics," World Politics, 1977.

- Yanow, “Interpretive Political Science: What Makes This Not a Subfield of Qualitative Methods.” *Qualitative Methods*, 2003.

February 13 Defenses of Political Theory and Normative Judgments in Political Science

- Taylor, "Neutrality in Political Science," *Philosophy and the Human Species*, 1985.
- Ball, "Political Theory and Political Science: Can This Marriage Be Saved?," *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 2007.
- Grant, “Political Theory, Political Science, and Politics,” *Political Theory*, 2002.

February 20 NO CLASS - Winter Study Break

February 27 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*, 2019.
- Introductory video on Correlation and Regression Analysis
- Best & McDonald, "Models in Political Science: Forms and Purposes," from *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science*, 2019.

March 5 Game Theory Within Quantitative Methods

- Introductory video on The Prisoner’s Dilemma
- Gates & Humes, "Modeling with Games," from *Games, Information, and Politics*, 2017.
- Acemoglu and Wolitzky, “Cycles of Conflict: An Economic Model,” *American Economic Review*, 2014.

March 12 Key Qualitative Methods

- Bayard de Volo and Schatz, “From the Inside Out: Ethnographic Methods in Political Research,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 2004.

- Ercan & Marsh, "Qualitative Methods in Political Science," from *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science*, 2019.
- Joe Soss, "Talking Our Way to Meaningful Explanations: A Practice-Centered Approach to In-Depth Interviews for Interpretive Research," from *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*, 2014.

March 19 Case Study Research

- Seha & Muller-Rommel, "Case Study Analysis," from *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science*, 2019.
- Gerring, "What is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" *APSR*, 2004.
- Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method." *APSR*, 1971.

March 26 Practical Difficulties in Social Science

- Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get," *Political Analysis*, 1990.
- Hubbell, "False Starts, Suspicious Interviewees and Nearly Impossible Tasks: Some Reflections of the Difficulty of Conducting Field Research Abroad," *The Qualitative Report*, 2003.
- Heider, "The Rashomon Effect: When Ethnographers Disagree," *American Anthropological Association*, 1988.

April 2 Ethical Questions Raised by Social Research

- Wood, "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones." *Qualitative Sociology*, 2006.
- Malejacq & Mukhopadhyay, "The 'Tribal Politics' of Field Research: A Reflection on Power and Partiality in 21st-Century Warzones," *Perspectives on Politics*, 2016.
- Kovach, Chapter 1 of *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, 2021.