Lakehead University
Department of Political Science

Political Science 4110 FA
Research Methodology
Fall 2010

Time: Wed. 2.30 – 5:30pm;
Place: RB 3024

Instructor: Zubairu Wai
Office: RB 2041
Office Hours: Wed.11:00am – 1:00pm
Email: zubawai@lakeheadu.ca

Course Descriptions
What is research methodology? How are research methods related to the practice and politics of knowledge production in the social sciences and humanities? What are the diverse ways in which knowledge and research can be approached? In this course, we will examine various methodological approaches to social science inquiry. The course seeks to acquaint students with the necessary tools for crafting and undertaking social science research. We will ask how different theories and politics of knowing and being shape the kind of research we engage in, and how different social scientists think about knowledge production and how that ultimately reflects the methods that they employ. We will explore the conditions of knowledge production, the methodological diverseness of social scientific practice, the assumptions underpinning the various epistemological positions and methodological approaches, and the implications of deploying specific research methods. Students will engage in various exercises geared towards familiarising them with the practices, techniques and ethics of research and knowledge production. The course will be part lecture and part seminar, based on student’s presentations, class discussions, group work and individual assignments.

Requirements and Evaluation
Students are required to regularly attend classes, do the assigned readings before coming to class, do at least one class presentations as assigned per week and take part in class discussions; complete a five-page (double-spaced) critical reflection paper, engage in a group work and submit a 8 – 10 page (double-spaced, fonts 12) research proposal. All written work must be submitted on time.

The final grade will be calculated in the following manner:

Presentation: 20%
Critical Review: 20%
Group Work: 25%
Research proposal: 35%
Note:
The critical review essay is a five-page double-spaced [12 point fonts] essay that critically engages with one of the major paradigms in the social sciences. The group work is a quantitative research project and the final paper is a full length research proposal based on qualitative research techniques and methods.

Required text:
Robert C. Bishop, Philosophy of the social Sciences: An Introduction (New York: Continuum, 2007)

Norman Blaikie, Designing Social Research (Cambridge: Polity, 2010)


W. Lawrence Neuman, Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative [sixth Edition] (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2008)


[The required books are available in the bookstore or can be purchased online at Amazon.com. Copies have also been placed on reserve in the library. You can also find journal articles both in the library and online through the library system]

Lakehead Policy on Academic Dishonesty
Students are expected to uphold the academic honour code at all times and are advised to thoroughly familiarise themselves with the university policy on Academic dishonesty, especially in relationship, but not limited to plagiarism, cheating, impersonation etc. Violation of this policy can lead to very serious consequences.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Sept. 15): Introduction to the Course

Part I: - Some Basic Problems of Knowledge

Week 2 (Sept. 22): Science and Social Inquiry

Readings
W. Lawrence Neuman, Social Research Methods, Chapters 1 & 2

Robert C. Bishop, Philosophy of the social Sciences: An Introduction (New York: Continuum, 2007) Chapters 1 & 2; 15 & 16

Alan Chalmers, Science and its Fabrication (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990) Chapters 1 – 4

[September 24 is the Final Date of Registration]

**Week 3 (Sept 29): Ontology and Epistemology in Social Science Research**

Readings


Peter Hall, “Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research,” chapter 11 from James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003)


**Week 4 (Oct. 6): Theory, Methodology and Modes of Inquiry**

Readings

W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods*, Chapters 3 & 4


Week 5 (Oct. 13): Power, Knowledge and Social Inquiry
Readings

Linda T. Smith, Decolonising Methodologies; Introduction; Chapters 1, 2 & 3


V.Y. Mudimbe, “Discourse of Power and the Knowledge of Otherness” in his The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge (London and Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press and James Currey, 1988)


Part II: - Methods and Research Design

a. Quantitative Methods

Week 6 (Oct. 20): Quantitative Research Design
Reading
W. Lawrence Neuman, Social Research Methods, Chapters 6, 7 & 8


Norman Blaikie, Designing Social Research (Cambridge: Polity, 2010) Chapters 1, 2, 3
[Note: Critical review paper is due]

Week 7 (Oct. 27): Quantitative Methods: Surveys, Sampling and Statistical Analysis
Reading
W. Lawrence Neuman, Social Research Methods, Chapters 9, 10, 11, 12
[Additional readings will be provided]

Norman Blaikie, Designing Social Research (Cambridge: Polity, 2010) Chapters 5, 6, 7

b. Qualitative Methods

Week 8 (Nov. 3): Qualitative Research Design
Reading

W. Lawrence Neuman, Social Research Methods, Chapters 6, 7 & 8

Norman Blaikie, Designing Social Research (Cambridge: Polity, 2010) Chapters 1, 2, 3


[November 5 is the Final Date for Withdrawal (Without Academic Penalty)]

Week 9 (Nov. 10): Qualitative Method: Historical and Comparative Approach; Marxist [Historical Materialist] conceptions
Reading
W. Lawrence Neuman, Social Research Methods, Chapters 14 & 15


Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 22 (April, 1980); pp. 174-197


[Note: Group assignment due in class]

**Week 10 (Nov. 17): Qualitative Method: Field Research and Ethnography**

Reading

W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods*, Chapters 13 & 15


Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture”, in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-32


James P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (Wadsworth, 1997)

**Week 11 (Nov. 24): Qualitative Method: Aboriginal Concerns and Research Agendas**

Reading
Linda T. Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*; chapters 6 through 10

**Week 12 (Dec. 1): Qualitative Method: Deconstruction; Discourse Analysis: Archaeology and Genealogy**

Reading


David Howarth, Aletta Norval, Yannis Stavrakakis, eds., *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis* (Manchester, 2000), introduction


Aubrey Neal, “Promise and Practice of Deconstruction” *Canadian Journal of History* Vol. 30, April 1995, pp. 49 – 76,


[Note: Final paper – Research Proposal - due at the end of class]

(December 8 – 18: Examination Period. There will be no final exam for this course)