

## Political Science Research

POLI 99, Winter 2019

MWF 10:30 – 11:35am

Casa Italiana 8

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Office Hours:  
Thursday 1-4pm  
and by appointment

This course provides an introduction to the methods political scientists use to conduct research and prepares you for upper-division coursework in political science. It will help you develop tools to understand, critically evaluate, and perform empirical political science research. By the end of the course, you should:

- Be familiar with both qualitative and quantitative methods commonly used in political science, including the subdisciplines of American politics, comparative politics, international relations, political theory, and public policy.
- Know how to be a critical consumer of political science research from the scholarly literature, including: identifying the “puzzle” or research question, hypotheses, and the author’s choice of variables; describing and critiquing the methods and data; assessing the extent to which the findings support the hypotheses; and noting shortcomings and proposing improvements for future research.
- Gain experience developing your own research interests into a research question; conducting a literature review; formulating a testable hypothesis; and proposing thoughtful operationalization of variables.

### **This course fulfills the Social Science Requirement in the Core Curriculum**

Goals: Scientific Inquiry, Complexity, Critical Thinking, Mathematical & Quantitative Reasoning  
Students who have completed Social Science will achieve the following objectives:

- Apply deductive and inductive reasoning to analyze social science topics. (Scientific Inquiry, Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning) *Addressed by exams, workshops and written assignments.*
- Evaluate evidence used to validate theories, hypotheses, or predictions. (Scientific Inquiry, Critical Thinking, Complexity) *Addressed by exams and literature review.*
- Appreciate that theories and data analysis often admit multiple interpretations and will be able to evaluate the relative merits of alternative perspectives. (Critical Thinking, Complexity) *Addressed by exams, literature review, and workshops and discussions.*

**Required text:** Howard, Christopher. 2017. *Thinking Like a Political Scientist*. University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 9780226327549.

All other reading assignments are available on the course website.

## **Course requirements:**

### 1. Attendance (5% of final grade)

I will take attendance at the beginning of every class. Please notify me in advance if you will miss class because of religious observance, participation in university-sponsored events, or other university-approved reasons for absence. I will calculate this grade as the percentage of classes that you attended, excluding excused absences. I will overlook one unexcused absence.

### 2. Participation (10%)

The course is designed to be hands on, so your participation is essential. At least one day each week is reserved for active learning exercises such as directed writing, methodological demonstrations, peer review, analyzing texts and generating data. Please take advantage of these activities. They are an opportunity to practice applying the methodological concepts we discuss!

I will evaluate participation based on frequency, thoughtfulness, and courteousness. Please note that I define participation broadly to include my interaction with students during class, at office hours, and by email. I strongly encourage everyone to come to my office hours at least once during the quarter.

### 3. Research question (10%)

This short writing assignment should state a research question that interests you, explain why you care about it, and outline the real-world stakes by describing the range of outcomes that could occur. It is an opportunity for me to learn about your interests and for you to learn about my grading style early in the course. It will build on the first workshop.

### 4. List of sources (10%)

The second writing assignment compiles a list of twenty scholarly articles that address your research question and organizes them into meaningful “schools of thought” that support competing answers. The assignment builds on the research question and compiles the raw material for the literature review to follow.

5. Theory and hypothesis (5%)

In this assignment, you should create an arrow diagram that depicts a causal relationship between independent and dependent variables. Guided by this diagram, you should formulate a hypothesis that describes the relationship between the variables that you expect to see in the real world if your theory is true. This assignment builds on your list of sources and generates a figure visualizing the answer to your research question which you will include in your literature review.

6. Literature review (25%)

The final writing assignment provides a broad overview of the scholarly literature with respect to your research question. A literature review can introduce an uninformed reader to the cutting-edge of current research while at the same time highlighting what scholars still don't understand. This assignment culminates a series of in-class activities and written assignments, so by the time you submit it you will have had multiple opportunities for revision. It is due on March 8, but you will need to complete a first draft by March 1 for the peer review workshop.

7. Midterm (15%)

A midterm exam will ask questions focused on application of the concepts covered in the course. The question format will include matching, multiple choice and short answer, among other types of questions. Some questions will ask you to read and analyze a short excerpt from a scholarly or popular article and analyze it from a methodological point of view. I will administer the exam during class; it will take the entire period.

8. Final exam (20%)

The comprehensive final exam will have the same format as the midterm.

## **Course policies:**

### Electronic devices

Laptop computers are powerful tools for learning if used appropriately. However, I reserve the right to ask students to put them away if I believe that they are distracting students from classroom activities. Smart phones, by contrast, have less functionality for typing and research, and more potential for distraction. Please leave them at home.

### Late assignments

Students, like faculty, juggle many responsibilities, which is why it's so important to meet your deadlines! Nevertheless, I am willing to negotiate extensions, but you must approach me before the assignment is due, not after. Otherwise, late work will incur penalties worth one-sixth of a letter grade per day (e.g. the grade is reduced from a B+ to a B after two days).

### Academic integrity

The Academic Integrity pledge is an expression of the University's commitment to fostering an understanding of – and commitment to – a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states:

*I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code.*

Students are expected to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class. For more information about Santa Clara University's academic integrity pledge and resources about ensuring academic integrity in your work, see [www.scu.edu/academic-integrity/](http://www.scu.edu/academic-integrity/).

### Accommodation for students with disabilities

If you have a documented disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours within the first two weeks of class. The full university policy is available at [www.scu.edu/disabilities](http://www.scu.edu/disabilities).

### Accommodations for pregnant and parenting students

Santa Clara University provides reasonable accommodations to students who are pregnant, have recently experienced childbirth, and/or have medical needs related to childbirth. Pregnant and parenting students can often arrange accommodations by working directly with their instructors, supervisors, or departments, or by requesting accommodations through Disability Resources.

### Discrimination and sexual misconduct (Title IX)

Santa Clara University upholds a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, or stalking, I encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please consult the University's [Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) or contact [Belinda Guthrie](#). Reports may be submitted online through the [Office of Student Life](#) or anonymously through [EthicsPoint](#)

### In-class recordings

The University has a new policy prohibiting in-class recordings “without the knowledge and consent of all recorded parties,” except in cases of approved disability accommodations. The full policy is in the [Student Conduct Code](#) (p. 13).

**Course schedule**  
(Subject to change)

**Week 1: Introduction**

- Monday, January 7** Introductions
- Wednesday, January 9** Workshop 1: Generating research topics
- Baglione, Lisa. 2012. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Sage, Chapter 2.
- Friday, January 11** Lecture 1: The scientific method
- Lave, Charles and James March. 1993. *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, pp. 2-7, 10-20.

**Week 2: Research questions**

- Monday, January 14** Workshop 2: Writing a research question
- Howard, Introduction.
- Wednesday, January 16** Lecture 2: Elements of a literature review
- Howard, Chapter 1.
  - Ross, Michael. 1999. "The Political Economy of the Resource Curse," *World Politics*, pp. 297-299.
- Friday, January 18** **Research question due**  
Library visit (tentative)
- Baglione, Ch. 3.

**Week 3: Finding and reading literature ("Who cares?")**

- Monday, January 21** MLK Day; no class
- Wednesday, January 23** Guest lecture: Dr. Peter Minowitz
- Reading TBA
- Friday, January 25** Workshop 3: Reading scholarly literature  
*Please bring a hard copy of a scholarly article*
- Laubepin, Frederique. 2013. "How to Read (and Understand) a Social Science Journal Article," Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.

**Week 4: Concepts and measures ("What happened?")**

- Monday, January 28** Workshop 4a: Schools of thought
- Wednesday, January 30** Lecture 4: Conceptualization and measurement
- Howard, Chapter 2.
  - Saylor, Ryan. 2014. *State Building in Boom Times*, pp. 14-16, 43-44.
- Friday, February 1** **List of sources due**  
Workshop 4b: Defining slippery concepts
- Gladwell, Malcolm. 2011. "The Order of Things," *The New Yorker*, February 14.

**Week 5: Explanation (“Why?”)**

- Monday, February 4** Workshop 5: Visualizing cause and effect
- Sorkin, Andrew Ross. 2018. “From Trump to Trade, the Financial Crisis Still Resonates 10 Years Later,” *New York Times*, September 10.
- Wednesday, February 6** Lecture 5: Explanatory models
- Howard, Chapter 3.
  - Pepinsky, Thomas. 2009. “Economic Crises and the Breakdown of Authoritarian Regimes,” p. 14-15.
- Friday, February 8** **Midterm exam**

**Week 6: Research design**

- Monday, February 11** Lecture 6: Logic of comparison
- Howard, Chapter 4.
- Wednesday, February 13** Guest lecture: Dr. Jane Curry
- Reading TBA
- Friday, February 15** Workshop 6: Comparing cases
- Posner, Daniel. 2004. “The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi,” *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 529-546.

**Week 7**

- Monday, February 18** Presidents’ Day; no class
- Wednesday, February 20** Guest lecture: Dr. Anne Baker
- Reading TBA
- Friday, February 22** Workshop 7: Theory and hypotheses

**Week 8: Case selection**

- Monday, February 25** Lecture 8: Case selection
- Howard, Chapter 5
- Wednesday, February 27** Workshop 8: Selecting cases
- Reading TBA
- Friday, March 1** **Peer review**

***Week 9: Data***

**Monday, March 4**

Workshop 9a: Creating scatterplots

*Meet in library*

- Howard, pp. 169-174, 193-195.
- Babbie, pp. 344-350.

**Wednesday, March 6**

Workshop 9b: Interviews

- Howard, Chapter 6.
- Babbie, pp. 296-303, 316-328.

**Friday, March 8**

**Literature review due**

***Week 10: Fieldwork***

**Monday, March 11**

Lecture 10: Fieldwork: ethics and logistics

- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2012. "Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 45(4):717-723.

**Wednesday, March 13**

Workshop 10: Designing research

**Friday, March 15**

Exam review

***Final exam***

**Monday, March 18**

**9:10am – 12:10pm**