

Point Loma Nazarene University
Department of History and Political Science
Political Science 270: Scope and Methods



Instructor: Dr. Lindsey Lupo

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Fall 2013

Course Time: MWF 12:15-1:20pm

Course website: eclass.pointloma.edu

Class Location: FSB 102

"Political science is the study of politics through the procedures of science." – Robert O. Keohane

"Those who plow social science fields seek general truths. We look for general, or at least widespread, patterns of behavior; we seek general causes and effects. And yet we all know that everything, everywhere, is different... Can one find universals across nations or regions or cultures, or is each place different?" – Sidney Verba

Course Description:

This course is designed to engage students in the process of studying politics, helping them to discover how knowledge about politics is created. Is political science a "science" as we understand the word? How do we know what we know about the political world? If we are truly interested in solving social problems and making the world better, how do we find answers? Which research method is best for each type of question? What are the practical problems involved in conducting research? We will seek to answer these and other questions in this course. The overarching goals are to prepare students to be critical consumers of research and better prepared to conduct research of their own.

Course Format and Expectations:

This course will meet three times per week. Over the semester, we will cover the theoretical motivations driving most political research, the structure and design of inquiry, general areas of research, and numerous analytic techniques common to the social sciences. In-class discussion and exercises will draw on the readings and require students to apply this knowledge. Therefore it is crucial that students complete all assigned readings before class and more importantly, do everything they can to be in-class each day.

Because this class is small and because it focuses on an area often unfamiliar to new social scientists, it will at times operate in a seminar format. During these times, it will be very little of me talking at you and more of you talking to each other. Again, in order for this to be successful, it is imperative that you come to class prepared and having read your assigned reading.

To understand the expectations I have for my students, you must first understand my goals as a teacher. My aim in designing this course is to familiarize you with methodological terminology, techniques, and discourse. You will become budding social scientists, capable of conducting quality social science research.

Specifically, the learning outcomes for the class include the following:

- Students will be able to recognize and employ the vocabulary and concepts used to discuss research methods.
- Students will understand why approaches to the study of politics are controversial and the rationale behind various approaches.
- Students will become familiar with methods of inquiry that are used to generate data in political science.
- Students will be able to recognize and employ basic statistical techniques that are used to analyze data in political science.
- Students will be able to critically read and evaluate primary political science research.
- Students will be able to discuss the value and validity of data and analysis used in specific political science research.
- Students will become comfortable with political science research methods and will propose the utilization of one or more methods for a final research design project.

To be sure, these are ambitious goals. But in my experience students are more than able to achieve them. Indeed, with hard work they often exceed them! As such, the basic expectation I have is that you will work hard in this course. I promise to do the same.

A word to the wise: This class is challenging, but you can do this. The best way to survive in good standing is to be very diligent from the beginning, rather than assuming you can catch up later. Do the reading and assignments, come to every class unless there is absolutely no way to avoid missing (do not come if you are significantly ill), begin your final research design early, *and see me early and often if you have any questions or need any help at all*. This class will push you, but I will offer any help and support I can to make this a positive experience.

Course Readings: All readings are required and are available at the bookstore, library, or on Eclass. Please bring your books to class:

1. Briars, Willnat, Manheim, and Rich (hereafter BWMR). *Empirical Political Analysis: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods*. New York: Pearson Education, Inc, 2011 (8th edition).
2. Van Evera, Stephen. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Assessment Requirements:

Reading questions: We will be doing some challenging reading for this class. I am going to ask you to bring in reading questions intended to help you think about the reading and to give you regular practice with the more difficult concepts. Their purpose and intent is to ensure that you fully understand the reading, and thus to keep you moving toward your final research project.

These reading questions are *due every day that a reading is assigned*, **beginning September 6 through November 15** (after this date, we move onto preparing your final research design). Everyone gets 4

days “off” from doing a reading question (your choice as to when you take a day off). Each reading question is worth one point. Reading questions should be posted on our Eclass site and are due by the start of class. You may also respond to another student’s posted question – in other words, in order to earn a point, you may post an original question or respond to another.

Research Exercises: On five (5) days, you will have a homework assignment due. Some of these will stem from your BWMR text and others will be based on your reading of actual political science journal articles. On one of the days, you will have a research exercise due on an article of your choice. You will be deconstructing and analyzing the research design of this article. All of the research exercise prompts are posted on E-class. The due dates appear in the schedule below.

Midterm Exam: The midterm exam will consist of 20 multiple choice questions and 2 short answer questions. You will not have a choice as to which multiple choice questions you answer but you will have a choice with the short answer questions. A study guide will be provided a few weeks before the exam.

SPSS Analysis Assignment: Democracy & Instability: you will be analyzing the relationship between democratic government and development in states. Employing actual data from a large set of countries, you will evaluate this relationship. A set of “lab” pages provides the structure for your responses. It suggests how to conceptualize “democracy” and “development,” enabling you to generate a hypothesis about their relationship, guiding your construction of quantitative indices for each concept, and then showing you how to use the computer program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to do a simple statistical test of your hypothesized relationship. This assignment will be conducted during class-time on **October 30, November 1, and November 4**. *You must collaborate with one other student on this assignment. You will submit a single assignment, with both names, and will receive the same grade.* If you are going to miss any of these three days, you must let me know ASAP and your assignment will be due *before* October 30.

Final Research Design Paper: For your final project, you will be writing a paper that proposes research – in other words, you’ll be designing the project but not actually completing the research (we’d need another semester to do that!). The final paper prompt will be available on E-class. The last part of this course will be dedicated to student presentations in which each of you presents your research design (perhaps not fully polished at presentation time – that’s okay) to your peers for comments, suggestions, and advice.

Participation and Attendance Policy: I will not grade on attendance itself. However, failure to attend class will result in (a) missed information and fewer opportunities to learn, (b) fewer opportunities to participate and demonstrate knowledge, and therefore (c) a lower grade. Having said that, I will be grading on participation. You will each be expected to contribute to the class discussions and to each other’s research with your comments and suggestions. As your participation, general interest, and respect for your fellow classmates’ work declines, so does your participation grade. I also expect that you will use technology during class time only for academic purposes, as we only have 65 minutes together and my goal is to maximize this learning time. I treat all my students as the adults that they are, thus I expect you to act accordingly. I recognize that you are soon-to-be young working professionals and graduate school students, and to help prepare you for this transition, I expect an academically engaged and professional approach from each of you. At a minimum, this includes arriving on time (or early), engaging in active listening and discussion, not texting, emailing, or using

social media (would you do these things in a business meeting?), and completing all assignments when due.

Final Student Evaluation – PLNU asks students to submit a final course evaluation for the course. The link to this evaluation is emailed to your PLNU account sometime around the 13th or 14th week of the semester. I do not receive the names of students who have submitted the evaluation; however, I do receive an email telling me the percentage of students who have submitted the evaluation. If 90% or more of the class submits an evaluation, everyone in the class will receive 3 extra credit points. If 80-89% of the class submits an evaluation, everyone in the class will receive 2 extra credit points. And if 70-79% of the class submits an evaluation, everyone in the class will receive 1 extra credit point. Less than 70% results in no extra credit points.

**All late assignments/exams (in-class and out of class) will have points deducted unless notification and arrangements are made with me at least 24 hours prior to the assignment's due date. The instructor reserves the right to change the structure of any make-up exam or assignment given. If you have some special circumstance that might affect your ability to meet all the course's expectations – e.g., a sister's graduation, a learning disability, or whatever – come and talk to me immediately. With abundant notice I'll be as accommodating as possible, as long as it does not compromise fairness for all.*

Grading:

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|---|----------------------------|
| Reading Questions | 20 Points (1 Point Each) |
| Midterm Exam | 40 Points |
| Research Exercises # 1-3 | 45 Points (15 Points Each) |
| Research Exercises #4-5 | 40 Points (20 points Each) |
| SPSS Analysis Assignment | 30 Points |
| Research Design Paper | 85 Points |
| Participation | 20 Points |
| TOTAL | 280Points |
| Final Student Evaluation (Link will be emailed to you in the 13 th week) | 0-3 Points Extra Credit |

Schedule - Full citations appear at the end of the syllabus along with URLs if available. A copy of Rochefort is on two hour reserve at the library and the non-text readings are on the course E-Class site:

| | Topic | Reading/Research Assignment |
|--------------|---|---|
| | <i>Foundations of Political Science Research</i> | |
| September 4 | Introduction to the course – welcome! | No reading |
| September 6 | Scientific development | Kuhn, pages 52-65 |
| September 9 | How “scientific” is social science? Overview of the research process | BWMR, chapter 1; Cohen article (bring article to class if possible) |
| September 11 | Trends in Political Science Research | Hoover & Donovan, pgs. 6-12 and pgs. 161-190 |
| September 13 | Theories and Hypotheses Part I Research Exercise #1 Due | BWMR, chapter 2 |
| September 16 | Theories and Hypotheses Part II | Van Evera, pages 7-27; 35-48 |
| September 18 | Foundations of Research – Library Visit | BWMR, chapter 3 |

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| September 20 | The Pluses and Perils of Internet Research; Avoiding Plagiarism | Browse the website www.plagiarism.org |
| September 23 | Operationalization and Measurement | BWMR, pgs. 75-81 and chapter 5; Sanger, Shanker, and Schmitt article |
| September 25 | Preparing to do Research | BWMR, chapter 6 |
| September 27 | Choosing a Research Question Part I Research Exercise #2 Due | UNC "Annotated Bibliography" website (no reading question due today) |
| September 30 | Choosing a Research Question Part II | No reading... BUT, bring to class a potential research question and annotated bibliography for your final research design paper. |
| October 2 | Sampling | BWMR, chapter 7 |
| | <i>Quantitative Methods</i> | |
| October 4 | Survey Research | BWMR, chapter 8; Rochefort, chapter 9 |
| October 7 | Scaling | BWMR, chapter 9 (skip the section on "semantic differentials") |
| October 9 | Content Analysis Research Exercise # 3 Due (can be completed as a pair or individually) | BWMR, chapter 10 |
| October 11 | Comparative Research | BWMR, chapter 12 |
| October 14 | Aggregate Data | BWMR, chapter 11 |
| October 16 | Midterm Exam | No reading |
| October 18 | Data Preparation, Processing, and Description | BWMR, chapters 14-15 |
| October 21 | Statistics I: Univariate Statistics | BWMR, chapter 16; Gould Article |
| October 23 | Statistics II: Bivariate Statistics | BWMR, chapter 17; Rochefort, chapter 11 |
| October 25 | No Class; Fall Break | No reading, BUT be sure to continue thinking about your final research question - is it finalized? Do you have your variables? Are you reading some <i>academic</i> (peer-reviewed, scholarly, high-quality) literature in this field? Now is the time to see me if you have questions or need help. |
| October 28 | Statistics II: Bivariate Statistics (Part II) <i>Mid-Semester Grades Posted on Portal</i> | Fowler article |
| October 30 | SPSS Analysis Assignment Research Exercise #4 Due | No reading |
| November 1 | SPSS Analysis Assignment | No reading |
| November 4 | SPSS Analysis Assignment SPSS Analysis Due | No reading |

| <i>Qualitative Methods</i> | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| November 6 | Introduction to Qualitative Methods By this point, you should have your final research question solidified, your theory formulated, and an idea of how you will operationalize your variables in your final research project. | BWMR, pages 81-87; King, Keohane, and Verba, pgs. 3-12 |
| November 8 | Direct Observation | BWMR, chapter 19 |
| November 11 | Focus Groups | BWMR, chapter 20 |
| November 13 | Case Studies | Van Evera, pages 49-67 |
| November 15 | Elite and Specialized Interviews | BWMR, chapter 21; Rochefort, chapter 5 <i>Last day of submitting a daily reading question</i> |
| <i>Preparing your Research Design</i> | | |
| November 18 | Literature Reviews By this point, you should have your final research question solidified, your theory formulated, your variables operationalized, and your research methods selected for your final research project. <u>You should also be deep into the academic literature that surrounds this topic.</u> | Lawrence piece; Steinberg piece; Article from Rochefort reader that has not yet been assigned (on 2 hour reserve in the library; your choice of which one you want to review and deconstruct for Research Exercise #5) |
| November 20 | Sample Research Reports | BWMR, chapter 22 |
| November 22 | Overview of Concepts | BWMR, chapter 23 |
| November 25 | Writing a Political Science Paper Research Exercise #5 Due Also, please bring in a written copy of your research question and proposed methodology | Van Evera, appendix; UNC "Writing in Political Science" website |
| November 27 | No Class; Happy Thanksgiving! | No reading |
| November 29 | No Class; Happy Thanksgiving! | No reading |
| December 2 | Student research presentations | No reading - work on your research design |
| December 4 | Student research presentations | No reading - work on your research design |
| December 6 | Student research presentations | No reading - work on your research design |
| December 9 | Student research presentations | No reading - work on your research design |

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| December 11 | Student research presentations | No reading – work on your research design |
| December 14 | Student research presentations | No reading – work on your research design |
| December 19 | Final Research Design Paper Due at 12:00pm in my office | z |

Full Citations

Cohen, Patricia. October 20, 2009. "Field Study: Just How Relevant is Political Science?" *New York Times*.

Fowler, James H. July 2008. "The Colbert Bump in Campaign Donations: More Truthful than Truthy." *PS: Political Science and Politics* Volume XLI , Number 3.

Gould, Stephen Jay. June 1985. "The Median Isn't the Message." *Discover*. Available at <http://www.phoenix5.org/articles/GouldMessage.html>.

Hoover, Kenneth and Todd Donovan. 2004. *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking*. Toronto, Canada: Thomson Wadsworth.

Lawrence, Christopher N. October 11, 2011. "Writing a Literature Review in the Social Sciences." Available at http://academia.edu/2911352/Writing_a_Literature_Review_in_the_Social_Sciences.

Rocheftort, David A. 2005. *Quantitative Methods in Practice: Readings in PS*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press..

Sanger, David E., Thom Shanker, and Eric Schmitt. "Obama Offers Ways to Rate Efforts in Afghan Region." *New York Times*, September 17, 2009.

Steinberg, G. "Rhetoric II: Sample Literature Reviews." Available at <http://gsteinbe.intrasun.tcnj.edu/tcnj/rhetoric2/litreviews.htm>.

Course Website and Email: Please check your PLNU email regularly for class announcements. You should also check E-class (eclass.pointloma.edu) for announcements, links, and assignments.

Academic Honesty:

Cheating and plagiarism absolutely violate the ideals and mission of the university, and are grounds for immediately failing the course and disciplinary action by the dean. Please note that the PLNU catalog has updated (as of 2012) the section on academic honesty. The new definition of academic dishonesty includes a broader range of examples, including cheating, plagiarism, falsification, aiding academic dishonesty, and malicious intent. The revision includes updated language about the response from faculty members and an appeal process for students. See the full policy in the undergraduate catalog.

Academic Accommodation:

While all students are expected to meet the minimum standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic accommodations. At

Point Loma Nazarene University, these students are requested to file documentation during the first two weeks of the semester with the Academic Support Center (ASC), located in the Bond Academic Center. This policy assists the University in its commitment to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Section 504 (a) prohibits discrimination against students with special needs and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities. Once the student files documentation, the ASC will contact the student's instructors and provide written recommendations for reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the individual learning needs of the student. Finally, the school does allow for an alternate final exam schedule if you are scheduled for more than three final exams on one day. You are authorized to contact each professor in order to work out an alternate time for one of those examinations. For this course, please contact me at least four weeks prior to the final exam.