

# **POLI 5P81**

## **Research and Research Methods**

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Classes: Fridays, 12:00 – 3:00 pm, MCD 403  
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 11:00 – 12:00 noon, PL 347

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The undertaking of good research and the production of new knowledge is essential to the advancement of political science and its sub-disciplines. This course provides an advanced introduction to the conduct of political research, designed to help students become better researchers, knowledge producers, and knowledge consumers. It touches on all major aspects of research design, culminating in the creation of research designs for student MRPs. It offers a predominantly positivist (i.e., scientific) approach to political research, covering some of the most common qualitative and quantitative research tools used in political science.

### **COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Develop a research design for investigating political research questions
- Critically evaluate others' research designs for investigating political research questions
- Critically evaluate (proposed) causal relationships
- Develop sound concepts, identify variables, and undertake variable measurement
- Identify and utilize a variety of case selection strategies
- Identify and utilize a variety of data collection and analysis techniques
- Identify and manage ethical issues in research with human subjects
- Write a comprehensive and critical literature review
- Design an effective poster to present their research

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

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|--|-----|
| • Seminar Participation  | 25% |
| • Seminar Leadership   | 15% |
| • MRP Literature Review (due February 26)                        | 15% |
| • CORE Research Ethics Training (due February 16)                | 5%  |
| • MRP Proposal Poster Presentation – Preliminary (due April 6/9) | 10% |
| • MRP Proposal Poster Presentation – Final (April-TBA)           | 20% |
| • MRP Proposal Poster – Final (April-TBA)                        | 10% |

**\*\* Please note that the last date for withdrawal without academic penalty from this course is March 9, 2018. Students will have received notification of at least 15% of their final grade by March 2, 2018.**

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

- Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady & David Collier (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. (Hard copies are available for purchase from the bookstore; also available as a free e-book through the course Sakai page).
- B. Timothy Heinmiller, *Water Policy Reform in Southern Alberta: An Advocacy Coalition Approach*. University of Toronto Press, 2016. (Hard copies are available for purchase from the bookstore; a single hard copy is also available on the library reserve).
- All other required readings are available electronically through the course Sakai page.

## **COURSE COMMUNICATIONS**

Students with questions or concerns related to the course should first consult the course syllabus and the course Sakai page and the various resources contained therein. After consulting these resources, students are encouraged to contact the course instructor. Emailed questions will normally be answered within 24 hours of receipt during weekdays, and within 48 hours of receipt on weekends.

## **SEMINARS**

### ***SEMINAR PARTICIPATION***

This is a seminar-based course, so attendance and participation in the weekly seminars is extremely important. Students need to be aware that seminar participation is not synonymous with seminar attendance: your attendance at seminars is the minimum expectation and attendance alone will not ensure you a good seminar participation grade. Students are expected to come well prepared for seminars by completing the weekly readings and reflecting upon issues and questions that will stimulate discussion. Students are expected to be active participants, making weekly contributions to seminar discussions. Students are also expected to engage their discussions in a respectful manner, feeling free to explore and debate a variety of issues and ideas, but never resorting to personal slights or attacks.

### ***SEMINAR LEADERSHIP***

Each student is required to lead or co-lead at least one seminar as part of this course. Seminar leaders should strive to find common or important concepts, themes, issues, problems and/or challenges outlined in the readings and lead discussion on them. Seminar leaders have considerable discretion in how they lead and structure seminar discussions and may utilize presentations, debates, simulations, and other techniques where they feel they would be effective. As the instructor will also be involved in stimulating and leading seminar discussions, seminar leaders are encouraged to consult with the instructor in advance in order to coordinate their efforts.

## **TCPS2 CORE TRAINING**

The *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (or TCPS2, for short) is the governing document for ethical research in Canada. In order to familiarize new researchers with TCPS2 requirements, a Course on Research Ethics (or CORE) has been created online. At Brock University, all graduate students applying for research ethics approval must complete CORE training prior to their application. Similarly, all students in this class are required to complete CORE training prior to the due date specified above. All modules of CORE training must be completed in order to meet this requirement. When you have completed the CORE training, keep an electronic copy of your CORE training certificate, and upload it to the Assignments section of the course Sakai page in order to receive 5 percent of your final course grade. To access CORE

training go to: <https://tcps2core.ca/welcome>. You will need to create a CORE account prior to completing the training. Completion of CORE training takes approximately three hours.

## **MRP LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of the literature review is to allow students to familiarize themselves with the existing literature pertaining to their chosen MRP topic, to critically analyze this literature, and to discuss how their research will make a contribution to this literature. A brief, point-form version of the literature review will appear in each student's MRP proposal poster. All literature reviews should contain a brief description of the research topic being investigated, as well as a thorough analysis of the relevant literature on the topic. Analyses should strive to synthesize the relevant literature by identifying the prevalent theoretical/analytical approaches in the literature, by identifying the methodologies utilized in the literature, by identifying common or important findings in the literature, and by identifying apparent gaps or shortcomings in the literature. Based on this analysis, students should then discuss what potential contributions their research might make to the established literature. All literature reviews should be no more than 5 pages in length (double-spaced), and should be referenced using the APA parenthetical referencing format. Completed literature reviews should be submitted electronically, through the Assignments section of the course Sakai site, on the assigned due date.

## **MRP/THESIS PROPOSAL POSTERS**

The MRP/thesis proposal poster serves two purposes. First, all graduate students in political science are required to do a proposal for their MRP/thesis research, and the proposal poster meets this requirement. Second, it is increasingly common for young scholars at scholarly conferences to present their research in poster format, so this assignment will provide students with these skills. The proposal poster requires students to think through the various elements of research design for their MRP/thesis projects, and to present their research designs in a clear and succinct manner. Students will also be required to explain their research design to colleagues, to respond to questions about their research design, and to revise their research design, if necessary.

There are three steps – each of them graded – in the poster development process.

1. Students will develop a draft poster and present it to their colleagues in class, during weeks 11 and 12. This is a PowerPoint presentation of the draft poster; the draft posters are not printed. Each student will have 10 minutes to present their poster and 10 minutes to field questions about their poster. These time limits will be strictly enforced. The draft poster presentation is intended to provide students with feedback on their research design (and poster) and they can use this feedback to make revisions, as appropriate.
2. Students will present their final posters during a poster presentation session scheduled during the exam period. This will be a formal poster session: the posters will be printed and displayed, and students will be expected to present their research design and answer any questions about it.
3. At the conclusion of the poster session, students will submit their posters to the instructor for grading.

The posters themselves will be developed using PowerPoint and will be approximately 36 inches (tall) by 48 inches (wide). Students will receive guidance on how to design a research poster during the help session in week 10.

In terms of content, posters should address the aspects of research design relevant to each project, as listed below. The main sections in this list (numbered) are mandatory; the sub-sections in this list (lettered) are only suggested:

1. Background
  - a. Context
  - b. Research problem
  - c. Social significance
2. Research Question

- a. Sub-questions
- 3. Hypothesis
  - a. Ontology
  - b. Purpose: descriptive, explanatory, or normative?
- 4. Literature Review
- 5. Method of Investigation
  - a. Concepts, variables, operationalization
  - b. Case selection
  - c. Strategy for investigating causality
  - d. Data sources
  - e. Data collection
  - f. Data analysis
- 6. Ethical Considerations

### ***STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT***

Academic misconduct is a serious offence. The principle of academic integrity, particularly of doing one's own work, documenting properly (including use of quotation marks, appropriate paraphrasing and referencing/citation), collaborating appropriately, and avoiding misrepresentation, is a core principle in university study. Students should consult Section XVII, "Academic Misconduct", in the "Academic Regulations and University Policies" entry in the Graduate Calendar, available at <http://www.brocku.ca/webcal> to view a fuller description of prohibited actions, and the procedures and penalties.

Because academic integrity is vital to the well-being of the university community, Brock University takes academic misconduct very seriously. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, which involves presenting the words and ideas of another person as if they were your own, and other forms of cheating, such as using crib notes during a test or fabricating data for a lab assignment. The penalties for academic misconduct can be very severe. A grade of zero may be given for the assignment or even for the course, and a second offense may result in suspension from the University.

### ***POLICY ON ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSIONS AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS***

Since all assignments for this course are to be submitted electronically – through the course Sakai site – **they are due to be uploaded by midnight on the specified due dates** (see above for the specific dates). **Late assignments will be penalized 5 percent per day** until they are submitted. No assignments will be accepted two weeks after the due date. It is expected that all **assignments will be submitted in Microsoft 'Word' or 'Excel'** format. If this constitutes a problem, please inform the instructor.

Extensions of due dates are granted only in circumstances that are beyond the student's control, such as health problems that are supported by a medical certificate, or other, clearly equivalent situations. **Time management problems are not grounds for extensions.** You are strongly urged to avoid these penalties by beginning to work on essays early in the term; by setting your own target dates for completion that are several days before the due date; and by carefully budgeting your time.

### ***POLICY ON RETURNING MARKED ASSIGNMENTS***

Marked assignments will normally be returned electronically – via email – to students' Brock email accounts. Comments and corrections will be inserted into the graded papers using the 'Track Changes' function with final comments and the overall grade appearing at the end of the paper.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

- ❖ Week 1 (January 12) – Class Introduction; Epistemology and Ontology
  - Required Reading:

- Bevir, “Meta-Methodology: Clearing the Underbrush,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.
- ❖ Week 2 (January 19) – Causality
- Required Reading:
    - “Hypotheses and Variables in Social Research,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHnHIot88Rc>
    - “How Ice Cream Kills! Correlation vs. Causation,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMUQSMFGBDo>
    - Brady, “Causation and Explanation in Social Science,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Read only p. 217-249.
    - Heinmiller, *Water Policy Reform in Southern Alberta*, chapter 1-3.
- ❖ Week 3 (January 26) – Research Designs: Qualitative, Quantitative, Multi-Method, and Experimental
- Required Reading:
    - “An Introduction to Linear Regression Analysis,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPG4NjIkCjc>
    - Mahoney & Terrie, “Comparative-Historical Analysis in Contemporary Political Science,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.
    - Fearon & Laitin, “Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.
    - Morton & Williams, “Experimentation in Political Science,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.
    - Heinmiller, *Water Policy Reform in Southern Alberta*, chapters 1-3.
  - Recommended Reading:
    - Freedman, “On Types of Scientific Enquiry: The Role of Qualitative Reasoning,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*
    - Brady and Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2004.
    - Goertz & Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. Princeton University Press, 2013.
- ❖ Week 4 (February 2) – Case Selection
- Required Reading:
    - Gerring, *Case Study Research – Principles and Practices*, chapters 1-3.
    - Gerring, “Case Selection for Case-Study Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative Techniques,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.
  - Recommended Reading:
    - Rihoux, “Case-oriented Configurational Research: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), Fuzzy Sets, and Related Techniques,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.
    - Gerring, *Case Study Research – Principles and Practices*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
    - George & Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. MIT Press, 2005.
    - Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. University of California Press, 1987.

- ❖ Week 5 (February 9) – Concepts and Measurement
  - Required Reading:
    - “Levels of Measurement,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klgFMJppfcY>
    - Sartori, “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics,” *American Political Science Review* 64(4): 1033-1053.
    - Collier, LaPorte, & Seawright, “Typologies: Forming Concepts and Creating Categorical Variables,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.
    - Ragin, “Measurement versus Calibration: A Set-theoretic Approach,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.
    - Heinmiller, *Water Policy Reform in Southern Alberta*, chapters 4-5.
  - Recommended Reading:
    - Goertz, “Concepts, Theories, and Numbers: A Checklist for Constructing, Evaluating, and Using Concepts or Quantitative Measures,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.
  
- ❖ Week 6 (February 16) – Research Ethics
  - Required Reading:
    - Complete the “TCPS 2: Core Tutorial”
    - Haggerty, “Ethics Creep: Governing Social Science Research in the Name of Ethics,” *Qualitative Sociology* 27(4): 391-414.
  - Recommended Reading:
    - Van den Hoonaard, *Walking the Tightrope: Ethical Issues for Qualitative Researchers*, University of Toronto Press, 2001.
    - Porter, “Research Ethics Governance and Political Science in Canada,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* July 2008: 495-499.
  
- ❖ Reading Week (February 19-23)
  
- ❖ Week 7 (March 2) – Data Collection and Analysis: Process Tracing
  - Required Reading:
    - Bennett, “Process Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.
    - Rathbun, “Interviewing and Qualitative Field Methods: Pragmatism and Practicalities,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.
    - Heinmiller, *Water Policy Reform in Southern Alberta*, chapters 6-8.
  - Recommended Reading:
    - Beach & Pederson, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*, University of Michigan, 2013.
    - Gerring, *Case Study Research – Principles and Practices*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
    - George & Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. MIT Press, 2005.
  
- ❖ Week 8 (March 9) – Data Collection and Analysis: Content Analysis
  - Required Reading:
    - Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*, chapters 1, 4, 5, 7 & 10.
    - Heinmiller, *Water Policy Reform in Southern Alberta*, chapter 4 & appendix.
  - Recommended Reading:

- Krippendorff, *Content Analysis – An Introduction to its Methodology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Sage Publications, 2013.
- ❖ Week 9 (March 16) – Data Collection and Analysis: Social Network Analysis
  - Required Reading:
    - Hanneman, *Introduction to Social Network Methods*, chapters 1-5.
    - Heinmiller & Pirak, “Advocacy Coalitions in Ontario Land Use Policy,” *Review of Policy Research*, 34(2): 168-185.
- ❖ Week 10 (March 23) – Tutorial on Research Posters
  - Required Reading:
    - No required reading this week.
- ❖ Good Friday (March 30)
- ❖ Week 11 (April 6) – MRP Proposal Presentations
  - Required Reading:
    - No required reading this week.
- ❖ Week 12 (April 9) – MRP Proposal Presentations
  - Required Reading:
    - No required reading this week.
- ❖ MRP Proposal Poster Session (April-TBA)
  - Upload final poster to Sakai within 24 hours of the conclusion of the poster session

### **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

As part of Brock University's commitment to a respectful work and learning environment, the University will make every reasonable effort to accommodate all members of the university community with disabilities. If you require academic accommodations related to a documented disability to participate in this course, you are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services in the Student Development Centre (4th floor Schmon Tower, ex. 3240). You are also encouraged to discuss any accommodations with the instructor well in advance of due dates and scheduled assessments.

### **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION DUE TO RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS**

Brock University acknowledges the pluralistic nature of the undergraduate and graduate communities such that accommodations will be made for students who, by reason of religious obligation, must miss an examination, test, assignment deadline, laboratory or other compulsory academic event. Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious obligation should make a formal, written request to their instructor(s) for alternative dates and/or means of satisfying requirements.

### **MEDICAL EXEMPTION POLICY**

The University will accommodate students whose studies become interrupted, or who may be unable to complete academic work, due to an incapacitating medical condition. In these situations, the student must complete the Brock University Student Medical Certificate or [Brock University Student Health Services Medical Certificate](#) (or in case of a concussion, the Brock University Student Health Services Medical Concussion Certificate) and include any relevant medical documentation to support his/her request for academic accommodation based on medical grounds. The University may, at its discretion, request more detailed documentation in certain cases.

## **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY NOTICE**

All slides, presentations, handouts, tests, exams, and other course materials created by the instructor in this course are the intellectual property of the instructor. A student who publicly posts or sells an instructor's work, without the instructor's express consent, may be charged with misconduct under Brock's Academic Integrity Policy and/or Code of Conduct, and may also face adverse legal consequences for infringement of intellectual property rights.