

POLS 2104

Introduction to Research Methods in Political Science

(Spring 2021, January 31st-May 28th)

Instructor: Amr Adly

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Class: Online

Class times: Sunday and Wednesday, 2:00-3:15 pm

Office Hours: Flexible, by appointment

Course description

This course introduces students to the basic logic and methods of political science research. It discusses the idea behind empirical social sciences in general and political science in particular. It offers a detailed take on how to develop a research design that includes the formulation of a proper puzzle or question, the critical positioning of oneself within extant literature, the development of concepts and their operationalization and measurement and the testing of hypotheses. The course provides an extensive coverage of the diversity of research methods, qualitative and quantitative and mixes of the two.

Course objectives

The ultimate goal of this course is the students' acquisition of necessary skills and tools to write proper political science research as well as to read and evaluate it. As introductory as it is, students should understand what political science is about, how theorization and generalization are possible and which methods are used to realize this mission. The course also aims at familiarizing students at this stage with the great variety of methods and methodological traditions that exist in political science that sometimes converge but diverge on many other occasions. It will hence be a hands-on course where students will get to practice the skills and tools they acquire and to test the concepts they learn in class through assignments, quizzes, class discussions and activities and a final proposal.

Requirements and assessment

- This is an online course.
- We will meet on zoom on Sunday and Wednesday every week between 2:00 and 3:15 pm.
 - You are allowed to join up to five minutes of the beginning of the zoom session. Otherwise, you won't be counted as present.

- *Switch on your camera throughout the whole session. Otherwise, you won't be counted as present.*
- You are expected to attend and participate in classes. Attendance will NOT be graded. However, as per university rules, if you miss more than three weeks of classes, for whatever reason, you will receive an F in the course. It is your responsibility to make sure that you are marked present for the day or withdraw from the course if you have too many absences.
- In certain classes, the class will be split in two groups in order to ensure the greatest interaction possible. The first half of the list on banner will appear between 2:00 and 2:35 pm, while the other half will appear between 2:35 and 3:15 pm. My assistant will send you the list of each group and a reminder of which classes will be split.
- All readings on the syllabus are required to complete the course.
- There will be a total of Five assignments throughout the course. The exact dates of giving and submitting assignments are as follows:

Assignment number	Date assigning essay	Date of Submission
Assignment One	February 13 th	February 20 th , no later than 7am
Assignment Two	February 23 rd	March 4 th , no later than 7am
Assignment Three	March 10 th	March 19 th , no later than 7am
Assignment Four	April 8 th	April 15 th , no later than 7am
Assignment Five	April 29 th	May 15 th , no later than 7am

- **Assignments submitted later than the set deadline WILL NEIHER BE ACCEPTED NOR GRADED. No excuses, including computer collapse or loss of files, so keep a backup.**
- There will be a midterm and a final exam.
- You will also be required to submit a research proposal towards the end of the course. The idea behind the proposal is to apply the skills, tools and methods students will have acquired through the course. The proposal should be around 3000

words. More detailed information about the structure of the assignment will be communicated in due course.

- As you develop your proposal, each of you will be required to present the topic of their research, the main question, argument, concepts and variables and the methods likely to be used. You will receive feedback on it from myself and your colleagues. The dates of your presentation will be communicated in due course.

- **Assessment will be as follows:**

Participation:	10 per cent
Assignments (a total of 5)	25 per cent (5 each)
Midterm exam	15 per cent
Final exam	15 per cent
Research proposal	25 per cent
Presentation	10 per cent

- The grade cut-offs will be as follows: A (94 and above), A- (90-93), B+(87-89), B (84-86), B- (80-83), C+ (77-79), C (74-76), C- (70-73), D+ (61-69), D (50-60).

Classes

Class 1 (Sunday, January 31st): Introduction

Classes 2 and 3: Basics of social research

Class 2 (Wednesday, February 3rd)

Babbie, Earl R. (2007) “Basics of Social Research”, Chapter one

Class 3 (Sunday, February 7th)

Berg, Bruce L. (2001) “Ethical issues” in Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences: 61-78

Classes 4 to 10: Research Design

Class 4 (Wednesday, February 10th)

De Vaus, David (2001) “What is research design?” The context of design” in Research Design in Social Research: 1-16

Class 5 (Sunday, February 14th): Research Paradigms

Babbie, Earl R. (2007) “Paradigm, Theory and Research” in “Basics of Social Research”, Chapter Two 31-43

Class 6 (Wednesday, February 17th): Conceptualization and Operationalization

Babbie, Earl R. (2007) “Conceptualization, Operationalization and Measurement” in “Basics of Social Research”, Chapter Five 128-146

Class 7 (Sunday, February 21st): Exercise reading on conceptualization and operationalization

Dahl, Robert, A. (1971), “Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition”:1-18

Class 8 (Wednesday, February 24th): Class activity on question/puzzle formation and reviewing assignment one.

Class 9 (Sunday, February 28th): Variables, operationalization and measurement

Masoud, Tarek (2018), “Not Ready for Democracy: Modernization, Pluralism and the Arab Spring in Revisiting the Arab Uprisings.

Class 10 (Wednesday, March 3rd): Literature review

Neuman, W. Lawrence (2007) “Reviewing the Scholarly Literature and Planning a study” in

Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches: 69-82

Class 11 (Sunday, March 7th): Class activity on concept formation and reviewing assignment two.

Class 12 (Wednesday, March 10th): Comparative research

Teune, H., & Przeworski, A. (1970). *The logic of comparative social inquiry*. New York: Wiley-Interscience.

Midterm exam, March 10th

Classes 13-18: Qualitative methods

Class 13 (Sunday, March 14th): The logic of qualitative inquiry

Kalof, Linda, Amy Dan and Thomas Dietz (2008) “Basic Logic of Qualitative Inquiry” in *Essentials of Social Research*: 78-102

Class 14 (Wednesday, March 17th): Field research, surveys and questionnaires

Neuman, W. Lawrence (2007) “Field research” in *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, chapter 11

Class 15 (Sunday, March 21st): Class activity and reviewing assignment three.

Class 16 (Wednesday, March 24th): Ethnography

Goldbart, Juliet and Husler, David (2005) “ethnography” in *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, edited by Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin, Chapter one

Class 17 (Sunday, March 28th): Interviews and focus groups

Bloor, Michael, and Fiona Wood (2006) “Focus Groups” in *Keywords in Qualitative Methods: A vocabulary of research concepts*, p. 88-92 and;

Leech, B. L. (2002). Interview methods in political science. *PS: political science & politics*, 35(4), 663-664.

Class 18 (Wednesday, March 31st): Process tracing

Beach, Derek, and Rasmus Brun Pedersen (2019) “Process-tracing methods: Foundations and guidelines”, Chapters 1 and 2

Classes 19 to 24: Quantitative methods

Class 19 (Wednesday, April 7th): The logic of quantitative methods

Kalof, Linda, Amy Dan and Thomas Dietz (2008) “Basic Logic of Quantitative Inquiry” in *Essentials of Social Research*: 59-77

Class 20 (Sunday, April 11th): Sampling and probability (1)

Babbie, Earl R. (2010) “The Logic of Sampling” in *The Practice of Social Research*, P.179-196 (book pages)

Class 21 (Wednesday, April 14th): Sampling and probability (2)

Babbie, Earl R. (2010) “The Logic of Sampling” in *The Practice of Social Research*, P.196-213 (book pages)

Class 22 (Sunday, April 18th): Exercise on quantitative analysis

Boix, Carles and Stokes, Susan (2003), “Endogenous Democratization”, *World Politics* 55 (July 2003), 517–49

Class 23 (Wednesday, April 21st): Survey research and Questionnaires

Guthrie, Gerard (2010) “Questionnaires” in *Basic Research Methods: An Entry to Social Science Research*: 129-138

Spring Break (April 25th-May 2nd)

Class 24 (Wednesday, May 5th): Indexes, scales and typologies

Babbie, Earl R. (2007) “Introduction to social research”, Chapter 6

Class 25 (Sunday, May 9th): Social experiments

Babbie, Earl R. (2007) “Social Experiments in Introduction to social research, Chapter Seven

Classes 26 and 27: Mixed methods

Class 26 (Sunday, May 16th):

Elliott, Jane (2005) “Telling Better Stories? Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Research” in *Using Narrative in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*: 171-188

Class 27 (Wednesday, May 19th): Discussion on hypothesis formation and a general review