

PS 5001-101
SCOPE & METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
Fall 2010

Instructors Information

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Course Content and Objectives

Through a combination of readings, commentary, and discussions, this course introduces students to the key approaches and methods in political science. We have designed the class with three objectives in mind. The first is to increase your knowledge of approaches and methods in political science. The second goal is to debate and deliberate over theoretical and methodological aspects of political science. The final objective is to familiarize you with research design and the development of a research agenda in political science.

This class is designed to promote the following MA Learning Outcomes:

- (1) Students will demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts within political science;
- (2) Students will demonstrate an understanding of classic and contemporary scholarship within their political science;
- (3) Students will demonstrate an understanding of the major theoretical orientations within political science and how they aid in understanding historical and contemporary political issues, and;
- (4) Students will demonstrate an ability to clearly and effectively communicate their mastery of concepts and issues within the field of political science.

Assigned Readings

- *The Double Helix*. James D. Watson
- *Theory and Methods in Political Science 3rd Edition* Edited by David Marsh and Gerry Stoker.
- Additional required readings will be assigned during the semester and posted on our AsULearn class web site.

Grades/Assignments

Weekly Readings Assignment

Each week a set of questions related to the week's readings will be placed on our AsULearn class web site. You must post your own answers to the posted questions by 10:00am on Monday. Submissions after 10:00 am will not be permitted. You should bring a copy of your responses to class as a reference during our class discussion. Your responses will be graded: (A) satisfactory, (B), unsatisfactory (C). The weekly reading assignments count for 30% of your overall grade.

Methods Projects

Student will make short in-class presentations as well as written reports on a series of political science methods. Students will be divided into different groups. Each group will submit a single report and make a single presentation (though all group members should participate in at least one presentation).

Project#1 – Survey Methods

Project #2 – Interview Methods

Project #3 – Case Study Methods

Project #4 – Experiments Methods

Students will be assigned to their groups with specific instructions. The average of your methods projects will count for 25% of your final grade.

Literature Review

Another 30% of your final grade will be determined by a literature review due on December 13, 2010 at 6:00 pm (day and time of final). The paper should be typed and between 18-20 pages in length. The literature under review should concern a research question in political science that you find intriguing/ interesting. In class we will discuss in greater detail how to write a literature review. On December 13th you will make a short presentation (no more than five minutes) about your findings in the literature review.

Participation

The final 15% of your grade will be based on class attendance and participation. This is a seminar class. *Learning takes place through the exchange of ideas within the classroom as well as reading assigned material.* As a learning experience, the seminar will depend heavily on the quality of class participation and student interaction. It is essential that members of the seminar attend all sessions, participate actively in classroom discussions, and complete all required readings prior to class. **In this graduate seminar, passive participation (“just being there”) will not suffice for a passing grade in participation.** We will randomly select students to comment on the readings, others' assessment of it, and their own critique. Students are expected to respond to the questions posed by their colleagues as well as by the professors.

Summary of Assignments

Weekly Readings Assignment	=	30% (thru out the semester)
Methods Projects	=	25% (as assigned)
Lit Review & Presentation	=	30% (12/13/10)
Participation	=	15% (thru out the semester)
Total	=	100%

GRADE SCALE

95-100 = A	77-79 = C+
90-94 = A-	74-76 = C
87-89 = B+	70-73 = C-
84-86 = B	Below 70 = F
80-83 = B-	

Cheating/Plagiarism Policies

We will abide by the University's Academic Integrity Code. Cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers or otherwise engaging in academic dishonesty will, at a minimum, lead to a grade of "F" for this course and possible expulsion (depending on the severity of the violation).

Late Assignments

We will not accept late assignments.

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TOPICS & READINGS

Readings are to be completed prior to class. Your reading assignments must be submitted to the professors by **10:00 am the day of class.**

Week #1 - Ardoin & Scherlen

Aug 30 **Review of Syllabus; Review of Class**

Week #2

Sept 6 **NO CLASS** (Labor Day Holiday)

Week #3 - Ardoin & Scherlen

Sept 13 **Engaging in Research**

Readings:

(1) The Double Helix

Week #4 - Ardoin & Scherlen

Sept 20 **Political Science – An Overview**

Readings:

(1) March and Stoker, Introduction (pgs, 1-12)

(2) Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner, “American Political Science : The Discipline's State and the State of the Discipline” (in Political Science : The State of the Discipline. Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner, editors)

(3) Review the major political science journals. Identify some the most common areas of research in your area for the last two years. Select and read an article that you find interesting.

Week #5 - Ardoin

Sept 27 **Theory & Approaches I**

Readings:

(1) March and Stoker, Introduction to Part I (pgs, 15-22)

(2) March and Stoker, Chapter 1 Behavioral Analysis

(3) March and Stoker, Chapter 2 Rational Choice

(4) Classic Reading in Behavioral Analysis

(5) Classic Reading in Rational Choice

Week #6 - Ardoin

Oct 4 **Theory & Approaches II**

Readings:

(1) March and Stoker, Chapter 3 The Institutional Approach

(2) March and Stoker, Chapter 4 Constructivism and Interpretive Theory

(3) Classic Reading in Institutional Approach

(4) Classic Reading in Constructivism/Interpretive Theory

Week #7 - Scherlen

Oct 11 **Theory & Approaches III**

Reading:

- (1) March and Stoker, Chapter 5 Political Psychology
- (2) March and Stoker, Chapter 6 Feminism
- (3) Classic Reading in Political Psychology
- (4) Classic Reading in Feminism

Week #8 - Scherlen

Oct 18 **Theory & Approaches IV**

Reading:

- (1) March and Stoker, Chapter 7 Marxism
- (2) March and Stoker, Chapter 8 Normative Theory
- (3) Classic Reading in Marxism
- (4) Classic Reading in Normative Theory

Week #9 - Scherlen

Oct 25 **Methods & Design I**

Reading:

- (1) March and Stoker, Chapter 9 Ontology & Epistemology in PS
- (2) March and Stoker, Chapter 10 Meta-Theoretical Issues
- (3) March and Stoker, Chapter 11 The Challenge of Research Design

Week #10 - Ardoin

Nov 1 **Methods & Design II**

Reading:

- (1) March and Stoker, Chapter 12 Qualitative Approaches
- (2) March and Stoker, Chapter 13 Quantitative Approaches

Week #11 - Scherlen

Nov 8 **Methods & Design III**

Reading:

- (1) March and Stoker, Chapter 14 The Comparative Method
- (2) March and Stoker, Chapter 15 The Experimental Method

Week #12 - Ardoin

Nov 15 **Relevance of Political Science**

Reading:

- (1) March and Stoker, Chapter 16 The Relevance of Political Science
- (2) Patricia Cohen, "Field Study: Just How Relevant Is Political Science?" New York Times, October 20, 2009

Methods Presentations

Week #13 – Ardoin

Nov 22

Research Design I

Reading:

- (1) Chapter 3 Understanding the Research Process (in Research Methods for Political Science: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches by David E. McNabb, 2010)
- (2) Chapter 4 Selecting a Research Design and Choosing a Research Topic (in Research Methods for Political Science: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches by David E. McNabb, 2010)
- (3) Chapter 1 Selection of a Research Design (in Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed methods Approaches by John W. Creswell, 2009)

Methods Presentations

Week #14 - Scherlen

Nov 29

Research Design II

Reading:

- (1) Chapter 1 The Literature Review Process: Getting Started (in The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success by Lawrence A. Machi and Brenda T. McEvoy, 2009)
- (2) Chapter 5 Analyzing Quantitative Research Literature (in Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences)
- (3) Chapter 6 Analyzing Qualitative Research Literature (in Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences)
- (4) Chapter 8 Synthesizing Literature Prior to Writing a Review (in Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences)

Methods Presentations

Week #15 - Ardoin and Scherlen

Dec 6

Conclusion - Political Science – Scope & Methods

Methods Presentations

Final Exam Period
Monday, December 13th at 6:00 pm
Literature Review Due
In-Class Presentations