

Contemporary Political Research, POSC 6101, Fall 2016, Sec. 701, M 4:00-6:40 p.m.
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Our knowledge is a little island in a great ocean of nonknowledge.
— Isaac Singer

Method without substance may be sterile, but substance without method is only fortuitously substantial.
— V.O. Key, Jr. (1958 APSA Presidential Address)

Overview. This course is designed to give you an introduction to the various approaches to the study of political science. Because so many topics are covered, you are unlikely to leave this class an expert in any one of them. But, you will leave better able to understand research articles or books you read in your other political science courses. I hope you will also have a better idea about the value of understanding and employing multiple methods in a research project and a confidence in your own ability to begin to use primary source data in your own research. To start, we will consider questions such as "What is science?" and "How can political science be more scientific?" since they will shape our discussions of data collection and analysis. The second par

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

- * = Reading on D2L; ** = Reading available at the listed website;
*** = Get as .pdf via Memorial Library electronic journal subscription

Part I: Political Science?

Week 1 (Aug. 29): Introductory session: Science and social science.

Readings:

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, (2016), ch. 1 (pp. 1-6 only) and ch. 2 (pp. 46-58 only).
- *Karl Popper, 1934/1968. (New York: Harper & Row), chs. 1-2, 10.
- *Thomas S. Kuhn, , 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962/1970), pp. 23-65, 160-210.
- *Marsh and Furlong, "A Skin Not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science," in Marsh and Stoker, eds., (2002), pp. 17-41.
- *Martin A. Schwartz, "The Importance of Stupidity in Scientific Research," 121: 1771.
- ****Heather Z. Lyons, Denise H. Bike et al., "Qualitative Research as Social Justice Practice with Culturally Diverse Populations,"** 5, no. 2 (2013): 10-25, available at: http://www.psysr.org/jsacp/Lyons-Etal-V5N2-13_10-25.pdf
- ***Donna M. Mertens, "Transformative Mixed Methods Research," 16, no. 6 (2010): 469-474.
- *Alan D. Sokal, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," 46/47 (Spring-Summer 1996): 217-252 (skim this article).
- *Alan D. Sokal, "Transgressing the Boundaries: An Afterword," 43, no 4 (Fall 1996): 93-99.
- In-class videos: "What is Ontology?," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FN2zwqE_Qo0; "Introduction to Epistemology," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3lcbRNQR4c>.

Question for consideration: In what ways does political science differ from the natural sciences? Is political science a science?

Question for consideration: Far from a single and coherent discipline, political science has been called " a

Question for consideration: Why should the sources for your literature review come primarily from books and academic journals rather than the internet?

Question for consideration: Kevin Smith's article lays out a number of things to look for when evaluating a research study about school choice. Can we apply these criteria to our critique of any research work?

Question for consideration: Based on their review of the literature, what are the strengths and weaknesses of Barrington and Silver's case to the NSF about the need for a new project on Russian-speaking ethnic minorities?

Week 6 (Oct. 3): From research questions to hypotheses: Traditional and formal approaches.

Readings:

Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, ch. 4 (pp. 109-121 only).

Pollock, ch. 3 (pp. 48-58 only).

*Rogers M. Smith, "Identities, Interests, and the Future of Political Science," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 2 (June 2004): 301-312.

**Philippe C. Schmitter, "The Nature and Future of Comparative Politics," *Journal of Democracy* 1, no. 1 (2009): 33-61 (pp. 33-49 only). Available at: <http://www.eui.eu/Documents/DepartmentsCentres/SPS/Profiles/Schmitter/NatureAndFutureofCPEPSR2009.pdf>

*Anthony Downs, *Democracy and Economic Growth*, chs. 3, 14, and 16.

*D. H. Judson, "Human Migration Decision Making: A Formal Model," *Journal of Political Economy* 35 (1990): 281-189.

*Lowell Barrington, "Examining Rival Theories of Demographic Influences on Political Support: The Power of Regional, Ethnic, and Linguistic Divisions in Ukraine," *Journal of Democracy* 41, no. 4 (2002): 455-491. Read pp. 455-471 only.

*Bronston T. Mayes

Question for consideration: Think of a political science example of "conceptual stretching."

Question for consideration: Why is it difficult to make the transition from the idea of a variable to its operationalization? Is this harder in political science than other disciplines? Why or why not?

Part III: Gathering Data.

Week 8 (Oct. 17): The "experimental ideal" for collecting causal inference data.

Readings:

Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, ch. 6.

Pollock, ch. 4.

*Lundervold and Belwood, "The Best Kept Secret in Counseling,"
(1st edition, 2001), pp. 78-90.

*Rose McDermott, "Experimental Methods in Political Science," *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 5 (2002): 31-61.

*Andrew Barrett and Lowell Barrington, "Newspaper Photographs and Voter Evaluations of Political Candidates," *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 10, no. 4 (2005): 98-113.

In-class videos: "Milgram Experiment Proves We Blindly Obey Authority," video available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DxSKTSoA_E;

Question for consideration: I call experiments an "ideal" approach in the title for this week above. Why? What issues/concerns related to experiments might call into question the labeling of them as "ideal"?

Question for consideration: The Lundervold and Belwood reading on counseling research discusses the concept of an experiment based on a single case. Is this a valid form of experimentation?

Question for consideration: What are the strengths and, more interesting, the weaknesses of the Barrett and Barrington experiment?

Week 9 (Oct. 24): Participant and nonparticipant observation.

FIRST PRESENTATIONS ON PROGRESS TO DATE ON THE FINAL PAPER, AT THE START OF CLASS.

Readings:

Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, ch. 8.

*Jennifer H. Elder, "Videotaped Behavioral Observations," *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, pp. 106-110.

Question for consideration: What can case studies tell us and what can they not tell us? Given your answer to the first question, are case studies something th

