

PLS 5001-001
Research in Political Science
Spring 2009

COURSE INSTRUCTORS

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Office Hours:

Hendrickson: Coleman 2325, M: 11-noon, W: 10-noon; F: 10-11 and by appointment
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Wandling: Coleman 2345, M, T, W, R: 1:30-2:30 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces graduate students to the role of graduate level research in political science. In doing so, students will gain a new depth of content knowledge related to research in the various subfields in political science, the relevance of the literature review in advanced scholarship, various methodological approaches used in political science graduate studies including discussions of how to conduct effective case studies, how to conduct interviews, and how to select variables for analysis. We also will assess how research training impacts teaching and scholarship in the field. The course is taught in the seminar format and thus demands active verbal participation in the seminar as well as weekly reaction papers.

Textbook: John W. Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 3rd Edition* (Thousand Oaks; Sage Publications, 2008)

COURSE POLICIES

Any student who plagiarizes or cheats on any assignment or other work in the class will fail the course. Students with disabilities must notify all instructors no later than one week after the student has enrolled in the course in order to make an appropriate accommodation. All late assignments are penalized. Any assignment more than one week late will not be accepted for a grade unless previous accommodations have been made. If you miss a class session you will receive 0 participation points, unless you have a university-approved absence. If you have any questions about these policies, please speak to your professors.

COURSE GRADING

5 Writing Assignments @ 20 points each = 100 points

Participation Grade = 60 points

Final Literature Review Presentation = 30 points

A=90% and above, B=89-80%, C=79-70%, D=69-63%, F=62% and below.

COURSE READINGS AND DISCUSSION ASSIGNMENTS

All readings for this course can be found on-line through Booth Library's periodical listings, in Cresswell's book, or the course e-reserve site through Booth Library. The course password is "rh5001." The password is case sensitive. Other readings may be added during the course.

For each week, with the exception of weeks 1 and 7, all students must submit a critical reaction paper to the assigned readings. This assignment is due at the beginning of class and is considered late if turned in after this time. These papers should not be summaries of the assigned readings, but rather must be analytical reactions and responses to the issues raised in the readings. These papers must be typed, double spaced and must be at least 600 words. All writing assignments must be provided to the instructor (one copy only) in paper copy only. No emailed attachments are accepted. Papers are due at the beginning of class.

Correct grammar and your ability to write professionally will be components of your grade in all writing assignments. To reiterate, we expect that your writing is as professional as possible—such writing is expected at the graduate level. Your participation grade is based on the collective judgment of the course instructors regarding the substantive oral presentations made in the seminar. Please come to class ready to discuss the assigned readings.

Weekly Assignments

Week 1: Monday, January 12: Initial class meeting and course introduction: Introduction to Subfields in political science, including a discussion of "methods" as a growing subfield in the discipline.

Read: Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier and Anand E. Sokhey, "A Dynamic Labor Market: How Political Science is Opening Up to Methodologists and How Methodologists are Opening Up to Political Science," *PS* 40, 1 (2007): 125-127.

Week 2: Monday, January 26: The value in cumulative research: Understanding the goal of cumulative research and the literature review.

Read: John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches 3rd ed.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: 2008): chap. 2, “Review of the Literature,” pages. 23-48.

Jason A. Kirk, “Indian-Americans and the U.S.-India Nuclear Agreement: Consolidation of an Ethnic Lobby,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 4, 3 (2008): 275-300.

Writing Assignment: For this week, please summarize the contents of the literature review presented by Kirk. In short, what are the major themes in the previous literature (prior to his study) that Kirk identifies, and how does Kirk demonstrate the existing gap and debates in this scholarship. Then, provide an evaluation for how well this author has met the standards set forth by Creswell regarding what a literature is supposed to achieve. Please note that we are not asking you to evaluate the merit of Kirk’s findings or his data. Rather, focus on how he structures his literature review.

Week 3: Monday, February 2: Case studies and field research in political science

Read: Alexander George, “Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison,” Paul Gordon Lauren, ed. *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory and Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1979): 43-68

Lawrence M. Mead, “Policy Research: The Field Dimension,” *Policy Studies Journal* (2005) 33: 535-57.

Week 4: Monday, February 9: Interviews and Survey Methods in Political Science Research

Read: Beth L. Leech, “Symposium: Interview Methods in Political Science” Introduction,” *PS* 35, 4 (2002): 663-4; Jeffrey M. Berry, “Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interview,” *ibid*; 679-682; Joel D. Aberbach and Bert A. Rockman, “Interview Methods in Political Science: Conducting and Coding Elite Interview,” *ibid*, 673-676; Kenneth Goldstein, “Getting in the Door: Sampling and Completing Elite Interviews,” *ibid*, 669-72; Sharon Werning Rivera et al. “Interviewing Political Elites: Lessons from Russia,” *ibid*, 683-688.

John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches 3rd ed.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: 2008): chap. 8, “Quantitative Methods: Surveys,” pages 145-154.

Week 5: Monday, February 16: Scholarship, Teaching and Practitioners in Political Science:

Read: Lanethea Mathews-Gardner, Michelle Deardorff, Grant Reeher, William Hudson, MaryAnne Borrelli, and Glen Halva-Neubauer, “Getting a Job at a Teaching Institution—and Then Succeeding: A Q&A with Experienced Teacher-Scholars,” *PS* 41 (2008): 575-78.

Brudney, Kent, “Academic Careers in Community Colleges,” *PS* 34 (2001): 149-153.

Karl G. Trautman, “A Political Scientist Accepts Ambiguity and Loses Control: My Experience inside the Legislative Process,” *PS* 38 2 (2005): 269-272.

Week 6: Monday, February 23: Publishing Research in Political Science. What are the trends in political science publication, and what does the publishing process entail?

Read: Andrew J. Polsky, “Seeing Your Name in Print: Unpacking the Mysteries of the Review Process at Political Science Scholarly Journals,” *PS* 40, 3 (2007): 539-544

Sanford G. Thatcher, “The Future of Scholarly Book Publishing in Political Theory,” *PS* 40, 1 (2007): 129-33.

Week 7: Monday, March 2: Student Literature Review Presentations: For this assignment, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Ideally, this literature review presentation may be from an existing research project you are working on in another class.
2. The presentation should be approximately 3 to 5 minutes; 5 minutes is the absolute maximum amount of time.
3. The literature review should survey, at minimum, between 7 and 10 academic sources, in which you identify key themes in the existing literature.
4. Academic sources are defined as key scholars in the field from either academic journals or an academic book press. Journalistic sources are not appropriate for your literature review, such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The Economist*, *The Nation*, or the *New York Times*. These are journalistic sources. In addition, in most cases, it is best to avoid practitioner journals, such as *Foreign Policy* or *Foreign Affairs*.
5. Your literature review should be updated with current scholars and current literature, which means scholarship published during the last two to five years. We expect that that approximately half (if not more) of your sources should be current, but at the same time, your literature review should not miss key and influential scholars who have shaped the research on the given topic.
6. At the start of your presentation, you must provide three written copies of a bibliography to all course instructors, which includes all scholarship to be addressed in your literature review.
7. Remember that a literature review is not a simple listing of scholars who have done research on a given topic, but rather is a synthesis of the existing research, in which you address any themes in the literature that may be evident.