Introduction to Political Inquiry (PAIR 1005)

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Lecture 1: Monday 1pm - 2pm (Building 54, Room 4011)
Lecture 2: Thursday 3pm - 4pm (SUSU Cinema)
Seminar/Tutorial: Friday 1pm - 2pm (Avenue 65/1133)

Contact and feedback hours:
Monday 4–5pm
Thursday 4–5pm
Or by appointment: j.mp/schedule_meeting

This module introduces the basic concepts and practices for evaluating and making inferences in social and political research. Students will be equipped with the vocabulary and basic logical framework required to critically assess and eventually produce academic social science research. This module serves as the basis for a subsequent module on research methods (PAIR 2004).

Summary of teaching and learning strategies

Focused, directed readings which students complete before each session will provide the core material around which each session will be organized. Each session will include a lecture providing a general overview of the main points which will be followed by discussion questions in response to which students will exercise their command of the material. These teaching and learning methods will achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the module by providing a focused, consistent, and supportive environment where students engage with the material in multiple ways (through reading, audible/visual lectures, and through their own speaking).

Aims and learning outcomes

Having successfully completed the module, students will:

- Students will gain an understanding of the types of research questions which can be asked of political phenomena (knowledge and understanding; subject specific intellectual).
- Students will learn the inherent problems and dilemmas of drawing inferences from data (knowledge and understanding; transferable and generic).
- Students will gain the working vocabulary required to think and speak about the quality and limitations of previous research (knowledge and understanding; transferable and generic).
- Students will gain a working knowledge of how to develop a research strategy given a research question (knowledge and understanding; transferable and generic).

Assessment

1. In-class questions throughout the semester, worth 10% of final mark.
2. Students will submit a research design proposal at mid-semester (500 words) worth 40% of the overall module mark.
3. Students will submit a short research paper (1500 words) at the end of semester worth 50% of the module mark.

Re-sits

By set coursework assignment(s). 2 x 1,000 word essays = 50% per assignment.

Texts

Barakso, Maryann, Daniel M. Sabet, Brian Schaffner. 2013. *Understanding Political Science Research Methods.* New York: Routledge.

- E-book via library

Kellstedt, Paul M., Guy D. Whitten. 2013.*The Fundamentals of Political Science Research.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baglione, Lisa A. 2016. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Schedule

Week 1. Introductory Sessions

- Lecture 1: Introducing the module
- Lecture 2: Introducing each other
- Seminar 1

Week 2. Academic Research

- Lecture 3: Induction into the scholarly community
  - “Introduction” in BSS
- Lecture 4: The scientific study of politics
  - “The Scientific Study of Politics” in KW
- Seminar 2: Conversation with staff

Week 3. Building Blocks

- Lecture 5: The Challenge of Inference
  - “The Challenge of Inference,” in BSS
- Lecture 6: Hypotheses, Laws, Theories
  - “Hypotheses, Laws, and Theories: A User’s Guide” in Van Evera
- Seminar 3

Week 4. Descriptive Inference

- Lecture 7: Data types, units, levels of analysis
  - “The Challenge of Descriptive Inference” in BSS
- Lecture 8: Probability, sampling, error
  - “The Challenge of Descriptive Inference” in BSS
- Seminar 4

Week 5. Causal Inference

- Lecture 9: Developing a Causal Theory
  - “The Art of Theory Building” in KW
- Lecture 10: The Fundamental Problem of Causal Inference
  - “Evaluating Causal Theories” in KW
- Seminar 5

Week 6. Research Design

- Lecture 11: Types of Research Design
  - “Research Design” in KW
- Lecture 12: Beginning an Academic Research Project
  - “So You Have to Write a Research Paper,” in Baglione
  - “Getting Started,” in Baglione
- Seminar 6: Developing your research proposal

Week 7. Experimental Designs

- Lecture 13: Experiments
  - “Experiments” in BSS
- Lecture 14: Conducting Experiments
  - Tutorial for creating an experiment on SurveyGizmo
  - Tutorial for creating an experiment on Qualtrics (via Harvard Decision Science Lab)
  - “How to link your Qualtrics survey to Amazon Mechanical Turk” by Brent H. Curdy
- Seminar 7: Running our own experiment

Week 8. Large-N Observational

- Lecture 15: Using statistics to test causal relationships
  - “Large-N Observational Studies” in BSS
- Lecture 16: Practical statistical tools
  - Scatterplots with lines and error bars
  - Bar plots
- Seminar 8: Plot.ly demonstration/workshop

Week 9. Small-N Observational

- Lecture 17: Using case selection to test causal hypotheses
  - “Small-N Observational Studies” in BSS
- Lecture 18: Interviews for Case Studies
  - 5 scholarly articles on interviewing, selected by Dr. Chu
- Seminar 9

Week 10. Writing a Research Paper (I)

- Lecture 19: Political philosophy as method
- Lecture 20: Finding a niche (the literature review)
- Seminar 10: Making an annotated bibliography

Week 11. Writing a Research Paper (II)

- Lecture 21: Presenting your theory
  - “Effectively Distilling Your Argument” in Baglione
- Lecture 22: Planning & writing your research design
  - “Making Your Plan and Protecting Yourself from Criticism” in Baglione
- Seminar 11: The basic skeleton for most types of research papers
  - Document for outlining a research paper