

Department of Political Science, University of Cincinnati  
POL 700: Nature of Political Inquiry  
Tuesdays, 2:00–4:50, 423C Rieveschl Hall  
Autumn Quarter 2011

## **SCOPE AND METHODS OF INQUIRY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

### **Instructor:**

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### **Office Hours:**

Tues., Thurs. 11 am - 12 pm,  
or by appointment.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will acquaint students with the principles, techniques, and problems involved in conducting political science research, and will provide an overview of political science as a discipline. The course is designed to be the first in the graduate-level methodology sequence, preceding the proseminar in research design (POL 750). The prerequisite for the course is graduate student status in political science.

Among the questions we will consider are the following: What are the principal analytical approaches in the social and behavioral sciences? What are the strengths and weaknesses of various research methods? Which approaches are most beneficial in generating knowledge about the social and political world? Is it possible to conduct “scientific” research about politics? To what extent is political science a “science” of politics? What should be the goals of political inquiry? On what criteria should political and social research be evaluated? How has the discipline of political science evolved, and how is it currently structured? How might disciplinary structures facilitate or inhibit the growth of knowledge? What are the current debates within political science about the proper nature of the discipline?

While there may be a lecture component for certain topics, the course will be structured primarily as a reading seminar, with students expected to participate extensively in class discussion. Because the course is scheduled to meet only once per week, it will be especially important to come to class having done the assigned readings, and having prepared to discuss the material. In addition to classroom-based instruction, we will also use a class web site created on the university’s Blackboard system. This site will contain a class schedule, links to readings, electronic copies of course documents, and links to helpful Internet resources.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

Students are expected to attend class, complete the required reading assignments, and participate in class discussion. Grades will be based on class participation (25%), short

writing assignments (10%), a take-home midterm exam (30%), and a take-home final exam (35%).

To enhance class discussion, students will submit brief questions and reflections on the readings in advance of each class meeting using the Blackboard site. Further details about the expectations for these writing assignments will be provided in class.

The take-home midterm exam is scheduled for distribution in class on October 25, and will be due the following week. The take-home final exam will be distributed in class on November 29, and will be due on Thursday, December 8 at 5:00 PM.

The class participation grade will be determined by the instructor's assessment of the quality of a student's participation in class discussions and activities. As part of this assessment, a record of class attendance will be kept.

### **READINGS:**

There are two required texts:

- 1) Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava, and David Nachmias. 2007. *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Worth.
- 2) Kuhn, Thomas S. 1996. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The books can be purchased on-line from Internet booksellers. (I believe earlier versions of the books—the 6<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> editions, respectively—should still work, but I have not systematically compared the different versions for content.)

3) There will be numerous required readings in addition to the readings from the text. Whenever possible, electronic versions of the readings will be accessible through links on the Blackboard web site. Readings not available in electronic format will be distributed in class.

### **POLICIES AND CAVEATS:**

- If you are having difficulty with the class, please do not hesitate to talk to me. I am happy to meet with you during office hours or to set up an appointment. E-mail is usually the best way to reach me ([Stephen.Mockabee@uc.edu](mailto:Stephen.Mockabee@uc.edu)).
  - When sending me an e-mail, please remember to sign your full name. This will insure a prompt response. (Occasionally I receive messages from free e-mail services like hotmail or yahoo with no identifying information. For example, I may not know the identity of "bearcatfan06" etc.)
- If you have a disability that affects your performance in class, please tell me at the beginning of the quarter and I will do my best to help. For advice and assistance you

may contact the university's disability services office, located in 210 University Pavilion (phone: 556-6823; e-mail: [disabisv@ucmail.uc.edu](mailto:disabisv@ucmail.uc.edu)).

- Failure to submit an exam without prior permission of the instructor may result in a zero on that exam. Make-ups will only be arranged in extreme cases, so please be sure to let me know if you won't be able to meet the scheduled deadline.
- Unless otherwise indicated, all homework is due at the beginning of class. At the discretion of the instructor, late homework may be penalized by up to twenty-five percent (25%) per day. Assignments submitted more than three (3) calendar days after the due date will likely result in a zero for that assignment (except when an excuse is approved by the instructor).
- It is each student's responsibility to know and comply with the University's Student Code of Conduct. The Code describes behavior expected of all University of Cincinnati students and defines behavior considered misconduct, including cheating, plagiarism, and classroom disruption. The possible sanctions and penalties for misconduct are also outlined in this document. Copies may be obtained from your college office or on-line at <http://www.uc.edu/Trustees/Rules/RuleDetail.asp?ID=184>
  - All of the work you submit in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. More information about plagiarism can be found online by clicking <http://www.libraries.uc.edu/instruction/students/plagiarism.html>
  - All cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices should be turned off during class.
- This syllabus is subject to change.

## **COURSE OUTLINE:**

This is a general guide to the subjects that will be covered, and is organized by topic rather than by date. Specific reading assignments will be announced regularly in class. Please ask if you are unsure about where we are heading in the course, or about what the reading assignments are at any point. Full references are provided at the end of the syllabus.

### **I. Introduction and Overview: The Philosophy of Social Science**

#### **A. Course Introduction**

#### **B. The Scientific Approach and Interpretive Critiques**

Required:

Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, chapter 1

Rosenberg, pp. 1-5; pp. 184-190

Neuman, chapter 4

Popper, "Unity of Method in the Natural and Social Sciences"

Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture"

Recommended (optional):

Converse, “Generalization and the Social Psychology of ‘Other Worlds’”  
Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”

Further reading:

Hollis, *The Philosophy of Social Science* (especially chapters 3, 4)

Fay, *Social Theory and Political Practice*

Taylor, “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man”

### **C. Science and Political Science**

King, Koehane, & Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, pp. 1-12

Almond & Genco, “Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics”

Isaak, *Scope and Methods of Political Science*, chapters 2, 4

Riker, “Political Science and Rational Choice”

Selections from Weisberg, *Political Science: The Science of Politics*

### **D. The Growth of Scientific Knowledge**

Required:

Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, chapters I-III; VI-IX; XIII

Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes”

Campbell, “Science’s Social System of Validity-Enhancing Collective Belief

Change and the Problems of the Social Sciences”

## **II. The Structure of Political Science as a Discipline**

### **A. Schools of Thought in Political Science**

Required:

Katznelson & Milner, “American Political Science: The Discipline’s State...”

Almond, “Separate Tables: Schools and Sects in Political Science”

Eckstein, “A Comment on Positive Theory”

Gibbons, “Response to Almond and Eckstein”

Monroe et al., “The Nature of Contemporary Political Science”

### **B. Current Intra-Disciplinary Debates in Political Science**

Required:

Symposium in *PS* on “Perestroika” movement.

## **III. Methods of Political Science Research**

### **A. Conceptual Foundations of Research: Operationalization and Measurement**

Required:

Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, chapters 2-3, 7

### **B. Experiments, Quasi-Experiments, and Correlational Designs**

Required: Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, chapters 5-6.

Further Reading:

Campbell & Stanley, *Quasi-Experimentation*

### **C. Survey Research**

Required:

Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, chapters 10, 11

Further Reading:

Weisberg, Krosnick, & Bowen, *Introduction to Survey Research...*

Fowler, *Survey Research Methods*

### **D. Rational Choice and Formal Models**

Required:

Schrodt, "Mathematical Modeling"

Elster, chapters 2-4

Riker, "Political Science and Rational Choice" (re-read)

Simon, "Human Nature in Politics..."

Further Reading:

Morrow, *Game Theory for Political Scientists*

Ordeshook, *A Political Theory Primer*

### **E. Observation**

Required:

Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, chapters 9, 12

Fenno, *Homestyle*, methodological appendix

### **F. Case Studies**

Required:

Bahry, "Crossing Borders: The Practice of Comparative Research"

Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get"

Campbell, "'Degrees of Freedom' and the Case Study"

## **IV. Evaluating Political and Social Research**

### **A. Standards of Documentation and Reporting**

Required:

Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, Appendix B

### **B. The Ethics of Social Research**

Required:

Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, chapter 4.

### **C. What Is "Good" Research?**

Required:

Symposium: The Public Value of Political Research, *PS* 33:7-64

Stark, "Why Political Scientists Aren't Public Intellectuals"

Rochon, "Robert D. Putnam: For a Meaningful Political Science"

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

The following is a schedule indicating when we will cover the topics outlined on the syllabus. Please note that this schedule is subject to change. Updates will be announced at each class meeting and via email.

**9/27:** Course Introduction; Background on the philosophy of science

**10/4:** The scientific approach in social science, and its critics.

**10/11:** The scientific approach in political science.

**10/18:** The growth of scientific knowledge; background on disciplinary history of political science.

**10/25:** Schools of thought and intra-disciplinary conflicts in political science. Operationalization and measurement. *Take-home Midterm Exam distributed*

**11/1:** Finish measurement; discuss assessing causality through research designs (experiments, quasi-experiments, non-experimental designs); survey research.

**11/8:** Rational choice and formal models.

**11/15:** Qualitative methods—observation and case studies.

**11/22:** Finish qualitative methods; discuss research ethics.

**11/29:** Standards for evaluating research. Tie up any loose ends. Summary and conclusions. *Take-home Final Exam distributed.*

**12/8:** *Take-home Final Exam due electronically at 5:00 PM.*

## REFERENCES:

- Almond, Gabriel A. 1988. "Separate Tables: Schools and Sects in Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 21:4(Autumn), 828-842.  
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- Campbell, Donald T. 1975. "'Degrees of Freedom' and the Case Study." *Comparative Political Studies* 8:2(July), 178-93.
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- Converse, Philip E. 1986. "Generalization and the Social Psychology of 'Other Worlds'" In *Metatheory in Social Science*, ed. Donald Fiske and Richard Shweder, pp. 42-60. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Eckstein, Harry. 1989. "A Comment on Positive Theory." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 22:1(March), 77.  
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- Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava, and David Nachmias. 2000. *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Worth.
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Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Gibbons, Michael T. 1990. "Political Science, Disciplinary History and Theoretical Pluralism: A Response to Almond and Eckstein." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 23:1(March), 44-46.

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Hollis, Martin. 1994. *The Philosophy of Social Science: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Isaak, Alan C. 1985. *Scope and Methods of Political Science*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Chicago: Dorsey Press.

Katznelson, Ira, and Helen V. Milner. 2002. "American Political Science: The Discipline's State and the State of the Discipline." In *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, ed. Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner. New York: W.W. Norton.

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

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Lakatos, Imre. 1965. "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes." In *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Popper, Karl. 1960. "Unity of Method in the Natural and Social Sciences" Reprinted in *Philosophical Problems of the Social Sciences*, ed. David Braybrooke, pp. 32-41. New York: Macmillan, 1965.

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Taylor, Charles. 1985. "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man." In *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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