PSCI 600: Theories and Methods of Political Analysis

Fall, 2015
HH138, 9:30am-12:20pm Mondays

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Office Hours: 10:30am-12:30pm Wednesdays

Contact Policy or Header Notes: Please contact the instructor directly by email.

Teaching Assistants: None

Course Description: This is an introduction to the theoretical scopes and methods of political science at the graduate level. As such, there are two primary purposes in this course, one substantive and one methodological. In the former case, we will discuss some of the key theoretical perspectives, concepts, and frameworks widely utilized today in major fields within political science, such as the state, society, culture, rational choice, institutions, identity/ideology/public opinion. In the latter case, we will look at some of the key methodological issues related to the studies of political science, such as establishing causality, data gathering, measurement problems, research design, hypothesis testing, and some well-known questions associated with selecting qualitative versus quantitative strategies.

Pre-Requisites: None

Course Objectives:
By the end of this course, students should:

- Be able to understand the basic concepts and theories introduced in this course
- Be able to apply these theories in the appropriate empirical context
University Regulations:

Cross-listed course:
Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

Academic Integrity:

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline: http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4: http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70. In addition, consult Faculty of Arts' grievence process: http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/student-grievances-faculty-arts-processes for the Faculty of Arts' grievance processes.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read, Policy 72 - Student Appeals: http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72.

Other sources of information for students:

Academic Integrity website (Arts):
http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html

Academic Integrity Office (uWaterloo): http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/
Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

Note for students with disabilities: The AccessAbility Services (AS) Office, located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.

If you are using Turnitin in your course:

Turnitin.com: Plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) will be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about the arrangements for the use of Turnitin in this course.

Note: students must be given a reasonable option if they do not want to have their assignment screened by Turnitin. See Turnitin: http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/integrity-waterloo-faculty/turnitin-waterloo for more information.

Texts:
You should purchase the following textbook (available from the university’s bookstore).


All other readings will be made available online.

Course Requirements, Expectations, and Standards:

Assignments:

Participation in Discussion (35%)
This is a seminar, and therefore active participation in class discussion is required. For each session, you need to take the initiative in actively contributing to the discussions in order to receive the 35% grades for participation.

Review of Readings (15%)
In total, we have six weeks of core readings on research methodologies. At the end of the semester, you should submit an article reviewing readings for one of these six weeks. After we finish these six sessions, I will assign you to a particular week for your review article. As you will see, for these six weeks we make distinctions between two categories of readings: (1) abstract “methodological arguments” and (2)
“research examples”. Your review article needs to cover one reading from (1) and one reading from (2). The article should be 3 pages (single space) in length.

Guidelines on How to Review Methodological Arguments
You should develop your opinions and responses to the reading. What are questions left unanswered? Are the author’s arguments plausible? Are these methodological suggestions/recommendations empirically feasible? Can the arguments be extended? These are just some examples of questions you might want to think about when reviewing the reading.

Guidelines on How to Review Research Examples
Essentially you are serving as referees for the reading. Focus on the research methodology of the reading. For example, was there a meaningful and significant research question? Was data measurement appropriate? Did the research design adequately test and confirm the theoretical proposition? If you are the editor of a journal, will you accept these publications based on their methodology, and why?

Term Paper (50%)
At the end of term, you should submit a term paper of 10 pages (single space), critically evaluating the book Making Democracy Work by Robert Putnam. In the term paper, you should discuss and evaluate in detail the various methodological strategies adopted by the author. Your discussion must draw extensively on the methodological arguments we learnt throughout the semester. In other words, to make your term paper a success, it is absolutely essential that you follow the seminar discussion closely and participate actively every week. I will specify more details on requirements for this term paper after we finish more than half of the course materials.

Tests & Examinations: None

Schedule:

Part One------Research Methods

September 14  Introduction

September 21  Causality (1)

Methodological Arguments


Research Examples


September 28  Causality (2)  
Methodological Arguments


Research Examples


October 5  Data and Measurement (1)  
Methodological Arguments


Research Examples
October 19 Data and Measurement (2)
Methodological Arguments


Research Examples


October 26 Testing Theory with Data (1)
Methodological Arguments


Mahoney, James and Goertz, Gary. 2006. “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Qualitative and Quantitative Research.” Political Analysis 14: 227-249.


Research Examples


November 2 Testing Theory with Data (2)
Methodological Arguments


Research Examples


Part Two—Key Examples of Causal Mechanisms

November 9 Parties and Elections


November 16 Democratization


November 23 Political Economy


Hall, Peter and David Soskice. 2010. “An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism” (pp. 1-54, stop by subsection “1.8: Dynamics of Adjustment”), in Peter Hall and David Soskice, eds. Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundation of Comparative Advantage. New York: Oxford University Press.
