

Political Science 2NN3 Politics by Design

Fall 2022

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Lectures: Available on Avenue
Live Sessions: Tuesdays 4:30-5:20pm,
CNH 104

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Course Description

Political Science has many uses: It increases our academic knowledge of political institutions. It provides insights to policymakers who address political problems. It allows all of us to participate in the political process in an intelligent and effective way.

Note, though, that calling this field of study Political **Science** raises significant questions. What is it that makes a political analysis scientific? Is a science of politics even possible? **How** do we uncover, explain, and understand the patterns that striate the political world?

This course explores some of the techniques that we can use to design a “scientific” study of politics. You will learn how to construct good research questions, how to operationalize variables, how to gather primary data, and how to test cause-effect hypotheses about the political world.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Generate original research questions.
- Develop and test a viable research hypothesis.
- Gather primary data using a variety of different methods.
- Recognize the advantages and limitations of different types of research methods.

Required Materials and Texts

- Halperin, Sandra, and Heath, Oliver, *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*, Third Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. This book is available from the [McMaster University Campus Store](#) in both physical and electronic forms.
- Additional articles, book chapters, and on-line resources are available (at no cost) on Avenue to Learn via embedded links in the relevant Modules.

Class Format

This course will run in a blended format that includes **both** online and in-person components.

a). Pre-recorded lectures are available for viewing on Avenue to Learn. These lectures (organized into 12 modules) cover some of the theoretical and practical issues associated with carrying out primary research.

b). We will meet as a class **in-person** once per week (Tuesdays 4:30-5:20pm in CNH 104). These in-person sessions (non-recorded) are **optional**. They provide an in-person opportunity for the class as a whole to ask any questions about lectures, tutorials, or assignments.

c). Tutorials will be held **in-person** on the McMaster University campus. Tutorials offer a structured opportunity to practice some of the research skills that are covered in lecture. They also provide guidance on course assignments. A detailed week-by-week overview of the tutorials can be found in the Course Guide posted on Avenue.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Tutorial Participation – 20%
2. Research Proposal Part I: Literature Review Matrix – 10%: Monday October 3, 11:30pm.
3. Research Proposal Part II: Literature Review – 25%: Friday October 28, 11:30pm.
4. Research Proposal Part III: The Complete Proposal – 35%: Thursday December 8, 11:30pm.
5. Module Quizzes – 10%

Course Evaluation – Details

Tutorial Participation – 20%

A theoretical understanding of research methods (their strengths, weaknesses, and relationship to one another) is important. That said, being able to use research methods **in practice** is what makes a Political Scientist a Political Scientist.

That brings us to your tutorials: Tutorials emphasize the hands-on application of the methods that we cover in lecture. They provide an opportunity to develop your skill in **doing** Political Science.

Participation in tutorials accounts for 20% of your course grade. The participation grade breaks down into the following elements:

A). General Participation – 5%. This component assesses your general contribution to tutorial discussions. Remember, attendance is not synonymous with participation. To achieve a high grade on this component, you should actively, regularly, and intelligently contribute to the tutorial conversation.

B). Group Tutorial Assignments – 15%. Each tutorial (approximately 25 students) will be divided into smaller groups. Each of these smaller groups will have approximately 5 students. The smaller student groups will work on 3 Assignments during the semester. Each of the 3 Assignments is worth 5% of the course grade (15% in total).

Please note: While each group will submit a **collective** solution for each Assignment, your grade on each Assignment will be adjusted according to your **individual** contribution to the group effort. Your TA will make the individual adjustment based upon a self/peer assessment that you will submit for **each** Assignment.

A detailed week-by-week overview of your tutorials (including the self/peer assessment form) is contained in the Course Guide posted on Avenue.

Assignment 1 is due the week of October 31 – November 4 at the beginning of your Tutorial.

Assignment 2 is due the week of November 14-18 at the beginning of your Tutorial.

Assignment 3 is due the week of November 28 - December 2 at the beginning of your Tutorial.

Research Proposal Part I: Literature Review Matrix - 10%, Monday October 3, 11:30pm.

To set the context for this project: To this point, most of your assignments in the social sciences have been synthetic and derivative – answering other people’s questions (usually your instructor’s) on the basis of other people’s research (usually peer-reviewed secondary literature). The focus of this course, by contrast, is **original primary-source** research – developing your own questions and learning how to collect the primary evidence that can answer those questions.

Getting back to the assigned Research Proposal: Every student is responsible for writing a multi-part Research Proposal.

First and foremost, you need a research question – a question that has space for doing original research. Your question can cover any topic that fits within the general parameters of Political Science. That said:

- It must be possible to answer your research question with **empirical evidence** (i.e., stay away from overtly normative questions (e.g. Should war be illegal?))
- Avoid questions that require you to predict the future (e.g. Is war between China and the United States inevitable?)
- Avoid questions whose answer does not require you to gather primary-evidence **from scratch** (i.e. avoid asking questions that can be answered by simply gathering statistics from an existing source (e.g. is there a relationship between economic development (measured as GDP) and level of democracy (as measured by Freedom House)). Rather, the answer should require you to either **ask** people (interviews or surveys), **observe** people (participant observation), or **interrogate archives** (the news media, policy documents, twitter, etc.).
- Useful techniques for finding an appropriate research question can be found in Lecture 3a and in the Course Guide (both of which are on Avenue).

Your research question will form the basis for your Research Proposal. The Proposal will be constructed in several stages:

Part I of the Research Proposal is a **Literature Review Matrix**. The matrix (covering at least 8 peer-reviewed academic sources) will:

- A). Outline and justify your research question.
- B). Provide you with the raw material for your Literature Review.

A Sample Literature Review Matrix template can be downloaded from the “Start Here” folder on Avenue.

Research Proposal Part II: Literature Review - 25%, Friday October 28, 11:30pm.

Part II of the research proposal is a 7-8 page academic **Literature Review**. Your literature review should draw upon a **minimum** of 8 peer-reviewed sources.

Please note that a literature review is not the same as an annotated bibliography – it requires much more than a simple summary of a few articles. A literature review is a critical summary of the existing literature on a given topic – including strengths, weakness, and gaps in the literature. Please review Module 3, the Course Guide, and the relevant rubrics on Avenue before you begin this assignment! In addition, consider reading published literature reviews that are related to your topic of interest.

By the time you have finished your literature review you should have a refined and situated final research question – A question that will open space for making a unique contribution to our understanding of a particular political problem. It is this research question that will guide the rest of your Research Proposal.

Research Proposal Part III: The Complete Proposal: 35%, Thursday December 8, 11:30pm.

In the final part of the term assignment, you will write a complete Research Proposal.

You now have a good research question that is situated in a specific academic conversation (see Part II). **How** will you answer that question? In the Research Proposal you will draw a road map for answering your question.

Your proposal should contain several integrated sections:

- 1). An **Introduction** to your research question.
- 2). A **Literature Review** that describes our existing academic knowledge, and that outlines the potential contribution of your proposed research to that knowledge (i.e. incorporate/revise your literature review from Part II).
- 3). Your **Hypothesis** (expected findings) and a justification of that hypothesis.
- 4). Your **Research Design and Data-gathering strategy**
This section will require you to (**amongst other things!**) select and explore **one** of the data gathering methods that could be used to complete your research

study (e.g. survey, interview, participant observation, archival study/content analysis, etc.). How/why will you use this data-gathering strategy?

To be clear: You **will not** actually be conducting an interview, survey, or ethnographic study for this assignment - but how would you do so if time permitted? Consider the strengths of the method; the limitations of the method; the pitfalls that you might face – and how you would overcome them.

To complete this portion of the proposal successfully, you **must** do some research on the method itself. Start with the textbook and its recommended end-of-chapter readings - and do some independent research yourself (your bibliography should contain a **minimum** of 5 method-related academic sources).

5). A reflection on the potential **Ethical Issues** associated with carrying out your study, and the steps that you will take to protect the rights of your research participants.

6). A section that explores/acknowledges the **Limitations** of your study.

Your final Research Proposal should be between 15-16 pages in length (bearing in mind that your literature review is included in this page total).

Further detail about this assignment can be found in the Course Guide, the Rubrics, and the lectures in Module 3.

Module Quizzes 10%

This course has 12 modules. At the end of each module, you will find a multiple-choice quiz. Each quiz has 10 questions and a 20-minute time limit. Each quiz is worth the same amount - however, I will only include your top 10 quiz scores in your final grade (i.e., your lowest 2 quiz scores will be dropped).

A quiz will only become available **after** you have watched the relevant lecture videos in the Module.

Module quizzes will be available beginning on the relevant Module start date (Monday, in most cases) at 12:00pm (noon). You must **complete** the quiz by the relevant Module end date (Friday) at 12:00pm (noon). Module start and end dates are listed in the Weekly Course Schedule below.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Module 1 (September 6-9)

Introduction

Why a course in methods may be the most important course of your degree.

Readings:
H&H Ch. 1

Module 2 (September 12-16)

**Can we make Political Science scientific?
Questions of Ontology, Epistemology, and Methodology**

Readings:
H&H Ch. 2-3

Module 3 (September 19-23)

How do we do original research? Techniques for finding a good research question. Constructing a Literature Review. Writing a good Research Proposal.

Readings:
H&H Ch. 4

Module 4 (September 26-30)

How do you measure the social and political world? Conceptualizing, operationalizing, and measuring your variables: Establishing how you will “see” social scientific concepts (democracy, development, fake news, power, bias, etc.).

Readings:
H&H Ch. 5, 7

Geissel, Brigitte, et al., “Measuring the quality of democracy,” *International Political Science Review*, 37, 5, 2016

Module 5 (October 3-7)

Research Designs: Structuring your study to support your conclusions. Reflections on cause and effect.

Readings:
H&H Ch. 6 (pp159-175), 9, 10

Reading Week (October 10-14) – No class or tutorials

Module 6 (October 17-21)

Experiments

Can an experimental design offer useful answers to political questions?

Readings:

H&H Ch. 8

Niven, David, "A Field Experiment on the Effects of Negative Campaign Mail on Voter Turnout in a Municipal Election," *Political Research Quarterly*, 59, 2, 2006, pp203-210

Module 7 (October 24-28)

Ethics in Research

Can doing research be unethical? How do we conduct ethical Political Science?

Readings:

H&H Ch. 6, pp175-181

Module 8 (October 31 – November 4)

Sampling strategies

How to select representative pieces of a much larger puzzle.

Readings:

Neuman, W. Lawrence, and Robson, Karen, *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Fourth Canadian Edition, Don Mills: Pearson, 2016, Ch. 7, pp131-159

Module 9 (November 7-11)

Surveys

How to write the right questions the right way.

Readings:

H&H Ch. 11

Van der Linden C., and Savoie, J., "Does Collective Interest or Self-Interest Motivate Mask Usage as a Preventive Measure Against COVID-19?" *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 53, 2020, pp391-397

Module 10 (November 14-18)

Interviews and Focus Groups

How to ask the right questions the right way.

Readings:
H&H Ch. 12

Mosley, Layna, "‘Just Talk To People?’ Interviews in Contemporary Political Science," in Layna Mosley, ed., *Interview Research in Political Science*, Cornell University Press, 2013

Module 11 (November 21-25)

Participant Observation, fieldwork/ethnography

Observing politics in the centre of the action.

Readings:
H&H Ch. 13

Cohn, Carol, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals," *Signs*, 12, 4, 1987, pp687-718

Module 12 (November 28 – December 2)

Unobtrusive methods: Gathering data after the fact: Archival analysis.

Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis

Readings:
H&H Ch. 14

Corrigall-Brown, Catherine, and Wilkes, Rima, "Picturing Protest: The Visual Framing of Collective Action by First Nations in Canada," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 56, 2, 2012, pp223-243

Proposal Questions (December 5-8)

We will not be covering new content during this week. Instead, I will be in my [Zoom office](#) on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 11:30am - 1:30pm to answer any proposal-related questions.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments and tests

This course will use tests and assignments to assess your comprehension of the course material. All tests and assignments (excluding group tutorial projects) should be answered individually. All tests and assignments (including group tutorial projects) should be answered in your own words. Do not simply “cut and paste” material out of the lectures, lecture summaries, course readings, or other sources: Doing so does not demonstrate **your** understanding of the course content.

Course assignments should be submitted to the appropriate Assignment box in Avenue by the designated due date. Written assignments should be submitted as a Word document or pdf.

If, for any reason, you cannot access the correct Assignment box before the assignment due date, please email the assignment to your TA in the specified time frame.

Late Assignments

Late assignments may be subject to a 2% per day grade deduction (including weekends). For example, an assignment that has been graded as 80% will be reduced to 78% if it is received one day late, 76% if two days late, etc.

Please note: Quizzes must be submitted in the designated time frame.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

The expectation for this course is that all components (including participation) will be completed.

All requests for extensions (excluding SAS requests) should be submitted through the [MSAF process](#).

In the event of an approved extension for your Research Proposal (Part I, II, or III), the assignment will be due **three days** from the original due date (inclusive of weekends).

Course Software and Technology

This course incorporates and utilizes several technological platforms:

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Zoom

In order to access my Zoom office, students will require access to [Zoom](#). Students should register for a free account (and download the relevant software) through [McMaster's zoom website](#). Please note: To access my office you must first log-in to your McMaster Zoom account.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

University Policies

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.