How do political scientists investigate puzzles and defend their conclusions? This course illuminates this question by examining approaches that researchers use to understand political events and processes. In doing so, the course provides students with skills—such as the ability to evaluate and conduct research—that are helpful to completing senior capstone projects and succeeding in a variety of careers. Students will learn and apply key techniques, including inductive and deductive reasoning, hypothesis construction, operationalization of concepts, measurement, sampling and probability, causal inference, and the logic of controls. They will use these techniques to develop a research question, conduct a literature review, and craft a research proposal. By the end of the semester undergraduates and graduate students will have a proposal that can be used as the foundation for the senior project and the dissertation prospectus, respectively. This proposal can also serve as part of a grant application, particularly for those interested in original data collection.

Course Materials

Books and Articles: The books Political Science Research Methods and Case Study Research are available for purchase at the bookstore and on reserve at Kelvin Smith Library. Other course materials are available on Blackboard under Course Documents, unless otherwise noted with the citations. Political Science Research Methods provides basic descriptions of the techniques we will be using in class and some examples of their application. Chapters from other methodological texts, such as Case Study Research, will augment these descriptions, and articles from the mass media and publications by the instructor and other researchers will provide examples of applying these techniques. Paper or electronic copies of readings should be brought to class the days they are assigned. Graduate students should also read The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Designing Social Inquiry, and Varieties of Social Explanations, available from Kelvin Smith Library or Ohiolink.

News: Students are strongly encouraged to follow national and world news in part because awareness of political events and trends can help students develop research questions. These sources offer high quality coverage:

- The New York Times provides free access to 20 articles per month at http://www.nytimes.com/ Additional articles can be read through LexisNexis Academic, on Kelvin Smith Library’s Database web page, under Research Tools.
- The Economist is available through Kelvin Smith Library’s Electronic Journals, under Research Tools. For a subscription, see https://www.economistsubscriptions.com/ecom26/global/index.php
- National Public Radio (WCPN 90.3 FM) broadcasts brief news updates at the top of the hour and news analyses throughout the day on programs like Morning Edition, Talk of the Nation, All Things Considered, and Marketplace. See http://www.wcpn.org for the schedule and podcasts.

Blackboard: Students will post their assignments, described later, on Blackboard. To post, save the assignment as a Word file called <<First Name-Assignment>>, go to the course Blackboard site, choose Assignments, select appropriate folder, Build Content, and then File, and download file. Help is available online through Blackboard.
Course Requirements

**Project:** Students will work on their own projects during the semester so that they can practice using techniques they learn and so that they will be better prepared to begin a senior capstone project or dissertation. The project consists of the following assignments. To turn in each assignment, including visuals from the presentation, post the file on Blackboard before the start of class on the day it is due. **Bring a paper or an electronic copy (and laptop) with you to class as we will often work on them.**

**Research Topic** (September 6) Students should write a one-paragraph description of a political research topic that they may want to study during this semester and in the future. Proposing more than one is fine, but each should be described in its own paragraph. To develop a topic, students should draw on their knowledge of national and world affairs from the media, think about their interests, and review their notes and readings from previous classes. These courses may include those outside of the discipline, such as history or psychology, as other fields also bring to light political concerns. Research does not need to be conducted to select a topic. Grading of topic descriptions will be based on the detail provided and the quality of writing.

**Research Question** (September 8) Students should write one political science research question, based on their research interests and their reading of reviews of the field, subfield, and research topics. Students should be interested enough in the question to make it the focus of their projects for this course. Students will be able to adapt it over the next few weeks.

**Literature Review** (September 15)—The literature review should explain how answering the research question will contribute to existing knowledge in the field, should include a works cited, and should be four to five double-spaced pages long. Grading will be based on the extent to which the review makes a compelling case that answering the research question will contribute to the field, represents progress conducting research on the question, is well written, and meets those additional criteria identified in advance by the class.

**Experimental Design** (October 11)—In approximately three double-spaced pages, each student should state his or her research question and then propose a laboratory or field experiment by which it could be investigated. In explaining the experiment, the student should identify variables, measures, and a hypothesis. The experiment must be ethical. Grading will be based on the extent to which the description effectively applies this design approach, represents progress in thinking about the research project, and is well written.

**Case Study Design** (October 20)—In approximately three double-spaced pages, each student should state his or her research question and then propose a case study design by which it could be investigated. In explaining the case study, the student should identify the case(s), variables, measures, and a hypothesis. Grading will be based on the extent to which the description effectively applies this design approach, represents progress in thinking about the research project, and is well written.

**Large-N Cross-Case Design** (November 3)—In approximately three double-spaced pages, each student should state his or her research question and then propose a large-N cross-case study by which it could be investigated. In explaining the large-N cross case study, the student should identify the variables, measures, and a hypothesis, the sample, and the survey type. Grading will be based on the extent to which the description effectively applies this design approach, represents progress in thinking about the research project, and is well written.

**First Version of Proposal** (November 22)—Students should submit an eleven to twelve-page double-spaced research proposal. The first page should include the title and an abstract. The remaining pages should include a statement of the research question, an explanation of why
the question is theoretically and empirically important, a description of how the question will be investigated using two of the three design approaches, a discussion of data collection, and a description of how human subjects will be protected, and a single-spaced works cited. All proposals should draw on the literature reviews and design descriptions already written, and in selecting two designs students should consider which would be more feasible for a senior capstone project or dissertation. Grading will be based on the extent to which the proposal makes a compelling case for the research question and the designs, is well written, and meets those additional criteria identified in advance by the class.

**Presentation of Work in Progress** (November 29 or December 1 or December 6) Each student will provide a four-minute oral overview of his/her proposal, keeping in mind that classmates will have read it in advance. The presentation should include visuals, and students should be prepared to respond to questions. Grading will be based on the extent to which the presentation makes a compelling case for the research question and the designs and is clear and engaging.

**Final Proposal** (December 12) For the final proposal, students should follow the instructions for the first version and incorporate useful suggestions from classmates and the instructor so that its quality improves. Grading will be based on the extent to which the proposal makes a compelling case for the research question and the designs, is an improvement upon the first version, and is well written.

All written work should be carefully structured and grammatically correct. To avoid plagiarism, students should review “Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Recognize and Avoid It,” distributed in class. Cases of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be investigated by university judicial bodies. For formatting citations, see *The Chicago Manual of Style* (under Z253.C57 at Kelvin Reference), www.dartmouth.edu/~sources/, or a similar guide. Either footnotes or parenthetical citations may be used.

**Participation:** The focus of each class will be on discussion. Students are expected to actively participate in discussion and exercises, and to thoughtfully complete evaluations of their classmates’ work. Readings should be completed by the day they are listed on the syllabus. Students are encouraged to take notes on the readings in order to be prepared to integrate and critique the materials in class. Paper or electronic copies of readings should be brought to class the days they are assigned. Each student will provide written and oral comments on three or four classmates’ literature reviews, experimental designs, case study designs, and large-n designs and on ten or 11 classmates’ first versions of proposals. Students will complete evaluation forms by the deadlines listed in the following Course Schedule and Readings. Grading of comments will be based on the detail provided in the written evaluations. Because participation is critical to understanding the material, students are expected to attend all classes. Except under extraordinary circumstances, absenteeism will negatively affect students’ final grades.

Class participation, attendance, and evaluation of classmates’ work will constitute 15 percent of the course grade, the research topic description and research question will together count for five percent, the final proposal for 20 percent, and each of the other six assignments as 10 percent. Students will lose a half a grade on any assignment for each day it is late. Not completing an assignment will negatively affect a student’s final grade.
Course Schedule and Readings

I. Introduction to Research Methods and Course—Is Political Science a science?

August 30

September 1  NO CLASS: READ ahead for September 6 and 8.

II. Question Development—What makes for an effective research question?

September 6


READ: Political Science Research Methods, 60-65, 183-184

Graduate students should also read Thomas S. Kuhn. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

DUE: Research Topic

III. Literature Review—How will my research contribute to existing knowledge?

September 8

READ: Political Science Research Methods, 182-208


Reviews of the field, subfield, and research topics that are relevant to your own research question and that are included in the sources below. Unless otherwise noted, the following reviews are available in hardcopy on reserve at Kelvin Smith circulation desk. The instructor will suggest for each student additional reviews or places to search for them by email.


The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy eds. Barry R. Weingast and Donald Wittman (New York: Oxford, 2006). This handbook is broader than the name implies.


Annual Review of Political Science. Obtain through Kelvin Smith Library’s e-Journal portal, connecting with VPN software if you are off campus. Search for journal title first. It is worth examining the table of contents for the last two decades.

World Politics, a comparative politics and international relations journal, most issues have a review article at the end that examines the state of research on a particular topic. Obtain through Kelvin Smith Library’s e-Journal portal, connecting with VPN software if you are off campus. Search for journal title first. This journal has a search engine and reviewing the tables of contents back through the 1990s may also be helpful.

Perspectives on Politics, a disciplinary journal, most issues have a review essay that examines the state of research on a particular topic. Obtain through Kelvin Smith Library’s e-Journal portal, connecting with VPN software if you are off campus. Search for journal title first. This journal has a search engine and reviewing the table of contents back through 2003, when it began, may also be helpful.

Review of International Political Economy, a journal focused on international political economy, most issues have a review essay that examines the state of research of a particular topic. Obtain through Kelvin Smith Library’s e-Journal portal, connecting with VPN software if you are off campus. Search for journal title first. This journal has a search engine and reviewing the tables of contents back through the 1994, when it began, may also be helpful.

DUE: Research Question
IV. Reasoning—How do I draw conclusions?

September 13

READ: Continue reading scholarly works related to your research question.

*Political Science Research Methods*, 42-44


September 15 NO CLASS

DUE: Literature Review

September 20—Literature Review Workshop

READ: Designated Classmates’ Literature Reviews

DUE: Comments on Designated Classmates’ Literature Reviews

V. Hypothesis Construction—How do I make my ideas testable?

September 22

READ: *Political Science Research Methods*, 65-87

September 27 NO CLASS

READ: Read ahead for October 4 and 6.

To begin to prepare for writing the three designs 1) continue reading scholarly works related to your research question, giving thought to how you could explore your question in an *experiment*; collect and review materials to help you consider 2) which *small number of cases* would be most useful to examine and 3) what data are available or could be collected to explore your research question through a *large number of cases*.

September 29 NO CLASS

READ: See reading for September 27.
VI. Operationalization—How do I create variables and measure them?

October 4

READ: Political Science Research Methods, 88-121
McMann, Economic and Democracy, 44-49, 56-68.
Continue reading scholarly works related to your research question, giving thought to how you could explore your question in an experiment.

VII. Research Design—Experiments

October 6

READ: Political Science Research Methods, 122, 127-146

October 11

DUE: Experimental Design

October 13—Experimental Design Workshop

READ: Designated Classmates’ Experimental Designs
Begin reading for October 18.
Collect and review materials that will help you determine what data are available or could be collected to study your research question and consider which cases would be most useful to examine.

DUE: Comments on Designated Classmates’ Experimental Designs
VIII. Research Design—Case Study

October 18

READ: John Gerring. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Read 19-29, 37-63, 86-91; sections on typical, crucial, most-similar, and most different cases, 91-97, 115-122, 131-139, and 139-144, and select two other techniques of case-selection from Table 5.1 on page 89 that may be useful to your research question and read the sections about those, appearing between pages 97 and 131. Note: Only skim Gerring’s descriptions of quantitative techniques for case selection at the end.


Graduate students should read all of *Case Study Research*.

October 20

DUE: Case Study Design

October 25 NO CLASS

October 27—Case Study Design Workshop

READ: Designated Classmates’ Case Study Designs

Begin reading for November 1.

Collect and review materials that will help you determine what data are available or could be collected to explore your research questions through a large number of cases.

DUE: Comments on Designated Classmates’ Case Study Designs

IX. Research Design—Large-N Cross-Case Studies

November 1

READ: *Political Science Research Methods*, 147-148, 155-165, 175, 209-242, 297-319


November 3

DUE: Large-N Cross-Case Design

November 8—Large-N Cross-Case Study Design Workshop

READ: Designated Classmates’ Large-N Cross-Case Designs

DUE: Comments on Designated Classmates’ Large-N Designs
X. Research Design—Multimethods and Formal Modeling

November 10

READ:  Kelly M. McMann. “Market Reform as a Stimulus to Particularistic Politics.” *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 7 (2009).


*Political Science Research Methods*, 166-171.


XI. Data Collection—How can I obtain data?

November 15

READ:  *Political Science Research Methods*, 243-296, 319-350

XII. Protection of Human Subjects—How can I ensure no one is harmed?

November 17

READ:  *Case Western Reserve University Social/Behavioral Science Institutional Review Board Guidebook*. Read pages 14 and 15. Skim pages 17-47 and 57-64 and others you identify as important from the table of contents to determine 1) under what conditions would your project be subject to IRB review? 2) what type of review? 3) what precautions would the IRB require you to take to protect human subjects?

November 22

DUE:  First Version of Proposal

November 24  NO CLASS
XIII. Proposal Completion—Workshops and Consultations

**November 29 UNTIL 1 PM—Workshop**
- **READ:** Designated Classmates’ First Versions of Proposals
- **DUE:** Comments on Designated Classmates’ First Versions of Proposals
- **DUE (designated students):** Presentation of Work in Progress

**December 1 UNTIL 1 PM—Workshop**
- **READ:** Designated Classmates’ First Versions of Proposals
- **DUE:** Comments on Designated Classmates’ First Versions of Proposals
- **DUE (designated students):** Presentation of Work in Progress

**December 6 UNTIL 1 PM—Workshop**
- **READ:** Designated Classmates’ First Versions of Proposals
- **DUE:** Comments on Designated Classmates’ First Versions of Proposals
- **DUE (designated students):** Presentation of Work in Progress

**December 8—Consultation with Instructor**
Students will select a time slot during this class period, another time this day, or during office hours on December 6 to meet with the instructor. Meetings will take place in Mather House 218.

**December 12**
- **DUE:** Final Proposal posted by 1:15 pm, Monday, December 12