PSCI 231-001: Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Research in Political Science

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Fall 2020

Monday and Wednesday, 4:00-5:50 PM

Remote (synchronous)

Office hours: `https://jacksantucci.as.me`

1 Overview & goals

"Can I do political science without math and statistics?" Yes, absolutely, and you can do it very well. You may even learn things that math and statistics do not (yet) reveal. What you learn may challenge received wisdom and lead to new theories. In turn, those theories may be testable against "conventional" data later on.

This course introduces key ideas in the field of *qualitative methods*, loosely defined as techniques using small and/or non-numeric sets of facts (e.g., history, interviews). We will look at such methods in the context of *political science*, defined for now as "useful knowledge" about conflict and cooperation in large-scale human communities.

The course has three big sections: (1) what it means to "know" something in political science, (2) how qualitative methods fit into that bigger picture, and (3) what some of these methods are and how they work in practice. For now, qualitative research can be done by sitting at a desk, or it can be done through engagement with living people. However one does it, they should do it ethically.

At the end of this course, you will:

1. Understand how political science works, and how qualitative methods fit into it;

2. Be able to digest a work of qualitative research, including its strengths and limits;

3. Have ideas about qualitative research you could do.

2 Required work product

Your grade will be based on the following components. Overall, they are designed to get you to write a better final paper.

1. Two short exams (25% each, 50% total) – A combination of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Each of these will focus on key ideas from the respective part of this syllabus: definitions, application, and your ability to give concrete examples *not from the readings themselves*. To study for these exams, I recommend keeping track of the key concept or distinction in each reading (see just below).

2. Class participation (20%) – Based on attendance and quality (not quantity) of additions to discussion. Try to do two things as you prepare for class: (1) find and understand the key distinction(s) in the readings, and (2) have some sense of how they relate to key distinctions from earlier classes. Please see this for tips: `https://jacksantucci.com/docs/syllabi/advice_for_readers.pdf`.

3. Article hunt (30%) – Find an article that uses qualitative methods. It must be peer-reviewed and from a political science journal. In 500-1,000 words, make an argument about the science presented in the article. What is the core argument, stated in terms of variables? What method(s) does the research use? What evidence is used to support the conclusion? Critically – and this should be the focus of your paper – what big question does it leave open? Please follow the guidelines outlined in this document: `https://jacksantucci.com/docs/syllabi/how_to_write_an_a_paper.pdf`. Getting you ready for this assignment is the focus of this syllabus. **Due at 11:59 PM (Eastern) on Sunday, December 13, via Turnitin.**

3 Efficient use of e-mail

1. Use a subject line that indicates your need. Please don't reply to a blanket email sent through Blackboard, nor to a thread about some other issue.

2. Include the full course number (i.e., PSCI-231-001).

3. Be as specific as possible, and use complete sentences.

4. Keep all correspondence with respect to the same issue in the same thread. Start a different thread for a different issue.

5. Use your Drexel email so that I can search my inbox for your username.

4 No redistribution of course materials

The following language is provided by Drexel University:

> It is important to recognize that some or all of the course materials provided to you may be the intellectual property of Drexel University, the course instructor, or others. Use of this intellectual property is governed by Drexel University policies, including the IT-1 policy found here: `https://drexel.edu/it/about/policies/policies/01-Acceptable-Use`

Briefly, this policy states that course materials, including recordings, provided by the course instructor may not be copied, reproduced, distributed or re-posted. Doing so may be considered a breach of this policy and will be investigated and addressed as possible academic dishonesty, among other potential violations. Improper use of such materials may also constitute a violation of the University's Code of Conduct found here: `https://drexel.edu/cpo/policies/cpo-1` and will be investigated as such.

5 Other policies

You agree to:

1. Treat guest speakers and classmates with respect.

2. Check Drexel email daily through the date of the final exam.

3. Attend class and meet course deadlines. Out-of-class written work loses five points for each 24-hour period past the time and date it is due.

4. Use Internet search or a dictionary to look up words you do not know.

5. Abide by all other Drexel policies, found at the following websites. Note that I reserve the right to use plagiarism-detection software.

   - Academic integrity: https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity
   - Disability accommodation: https://drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources/students
   - Add/Drop: http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-add-drop
   - Course withdrawal: https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-withdrawal
   - Incomplete grades: https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/incomplete_grades
   - Grade appeals: https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/grade-appeals

I agree to:

1. Abide by any grading guidelines in this syllabus and related instructions for assignments. Grading is on the 0-100 scale: 97 and up (A+), 93-96 (A), 90-92 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-87 (B), 80-82 (B-), and so on, down to 50 (F). Rounding occurs for final grades only, to the nearest whole number. The rounding threshold is 0.5 percentage points.

2. Answer student e-mail within 48 business hours. Business hours are 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday through Friday, non-holiday.

3. Except for any required books, post links to readings on Blackboard, if not the readings themselves.

4. Grade written work within 10 business days of submission.

5. Notify you of changes to this syllabus at least one week in advance of affected due dates.

6. Give office hours on a by-appointment basis. (See link above.) Students who are not in Philadelphia can book these times for phone conversations.

6   Schedule of readings and classes

6.1   Defining political science, hypotheses, and theories

Monday, September 21: This syllabus and the guidelines for papers. See links in Section 2 above.

Wednesday, September 23: My slides, titled "What is political science?"

Monday, September 28: Two items:

- Santucci, Jack. 2018. "Tips on Reading Political Science." Typescript. http://www.jacksantucci.com/docs/syllabi/advice_for_readers.pdf
- My slides, titled "How to read political science."

Wednesday, September 30: Two items:

- Ackerman, John, Barak Carlson and Young Han. "International Relations Paradigms." Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) Distance Learning Program, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL, 2010. **Skim.**
- My slides, titled "What is a theory? The case of international relations paradigms."

Monday, October 5: First exam.

6.2   Perspectives on qualitative methods

Wednesday, October 7: Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150.

Monday, October 12: Indigenous People's Day (no class).

Wednesday, October 14: Lieberman, Evan S. 2005. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99 (3): 435-452.

Monday, October 19: Pierson, Paul. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review* 94 (2): 251-267.

Wednesday, October 21: Thelen, Kathleen and James Mahoney. 2015. "Comparative-Historical Analysis in Contemporary Political Science." In James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen, eds., *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*, pp. 3-36. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Monday, October 26: Møller, Jørgen. 2020. "Reading History Forward." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, early version.

Wednesday, October 28: Collier, Dave. 2011. "Understanding Process Tracing." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44 (4): 823-830.

Monday, November 2: Soss, Joe. 2018. "On Casing a Study versus Studying a Case." *Qualitative and Multi-Method Research* 16 (1): 21-27.

Wednesday, November 4: Wedeen, Lisa. 2010. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 255-272.

Monday, November 9: National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. 1979. *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research.* Online at https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/sites/default/files/the-belmont-report-508c_FINAL.pdf. **And review for exam.**

Wednesday, November 11: Second exam.

6.3   Recent qualitative and mixed-methods work on the U.S.

Monday, November 16: Suttmann-Lea, Mara. 2020. "Poll Worker Decision Making at the American Ballot Box." *American Politics Research*, early version.

Wednesday, November 18: Weaver, Vesla M. 2019. "The State from Below: Urban Citizenship in Policed Communities" (lecture). Online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjymRn5d7-Y.

Monday, November 23: Kuo, Didi. 2019. "Comparing America: Reflections on Democracy Across Subfields." *Perspectives on Politics* 17 (3): 788-800.

Wednesday, November 25: Thanksgiving break (no class).

Monday, November 30: Hochschild, Arlie Russell and Christopher Sebastian Parker. 2018. "Strangers in Their Own Land" (panel discussion). Online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHU-3xRnYhU.

6.4   Discussion of article hunt

Wednesday, December 2: Course evaluation. Discussion of expectations, how to find an article, potential journals, keywords, et cetera.