

## Political Science 7961: Seminar on Scope and Methods

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Fall 2018

Class Meeting: Friday 9:00-11:50

Class Location: 210 Stubbs

Instructor: David Sobek

Office Hours: Thursday 9:00-10:00

Wednesday 9:00-10:00

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Office Location: 211 Stubbs

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### **Summary:**

This class is the introduction to the study of research methods of political science. The course has two main goals. First, it is a broader introduction to the key debates within the philosophy of science literature. In other words, how do we learn about a subject and how do we know that we learned something. These are questions that are not specific to any sub-field in political science nor even to political science but are vital any endeavor that claims to be scientific.

The second goal of the course is more practical and that is to introduce the basic methods used in political science. There are numerous methods used and as such this course only provides a broad overview of the various approaches and discusses the benefits and costs of each approach. In addition, the course will provide an overview of how one designs and implements a research project starting from the research question to the completed manuscript.

### **Brief Overview of Requirements:**

Attendance and Participation: 20% of final grade.

Research questions: 5% of final grade

Research pages: 10% of final grade

Literature reviews: 15%

Final Paper Assignment: 25% of final grade.

Final Exam: 25% of final grade.

## Reading assignments

Many of the readings for this course come from the books. Significant portions of the readings, however, come from articles that you will need to acquire. For each week the assignments are listed in a specific order meant to demonstrate the development of the literature. Please read them in the order that they are listed.

### Required Books:

Chalmers, A.F. 1976. *What is this thing called Science? 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.  
ISBN-13: 978-1624660382  
ISBN-10: 162466038X

Green, Donald P. and Ian Shapiro. 1994. *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science*. New Haven, CT. Yale University Press.  
ISBN-13: 978-0300066364  
ISBN-10: 0300066368

Hoover, Kenneth and Todd Donovan. 1995. *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition*. New York: St. Martin's Press.  
ISBN-13: 978-1133607670  
ISBN-10: 1133607675

Kuhn, Thomas. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.  
ISBN-13: 978-0226458120  
ISBN-10: 0226458121

Voegelin, Eric. 1987(1952). *The New Science of Politics*. University of Chicago Press.  
ISBN-13: 978-4880592909  
ISBN-10: 4880592900

### Grading System:

Attendance and Participation (20%): Attendance and participation account for 20% of your final grade. It is vitally important for you to come to class prepared, i.e. having carefully read the assignments. Simply showing up for class is not sufficient. You will need to consistently contribute to class discussion in order to satisfy the participation aspect of this part of your grade.

Paper Assignment (25%): During the semester you will be required to write one 20-25 research paper. This is the equivalent of a research article but without the actual data analysis. The topic is up to you but the paper will have a literature review, theory section, and research design. As a way to prepare for the final paper, there are a series of additional graded assignments that lead up to the final paper.

Research question (5%): This is a set of 20 research questions (if-then statements about a particular topic). Your final paper topic will come from one of these questions, so be sure to cover a large set of potentially interesting topics.

Research pages (10%): You will take 10 of the research questions and expand them into a single page (single spaced). The research page essentially expands on the question and both highlights the question/puzzle that is to be answered as well as how you will answer it.

Literature review (15%): You will take 2 of the topics in the research pages and expand them into a full literature review. This is a 10-15 page examination of the previous literature on the topic that both covers what has been done but also shows why there is a question to be answered. These are meant to be comprehensive reviews, so the expectation is to have 30+ articles/books in the review.

Final Exam (25%): At the end of the semester you will be given a final exam. The final exam will contain a set of open ended questions that mainly test basic issues in philosophy of science but there will also be part of the exam that examines the different research methodologies.

## **Week 1 (August 24<sup>th</sup>): Introduction**

# **Philosophy of Science**

## **Week 2 (August 31<sup>st</sup>): What is Science and its Limits?**

Chalmers, Chapters 1-7

## **Week 3 (September 7<sup>th</sup>): The Research Program Approach**

Chalmers, Chapters 8-11

## **Week 4 (September 14<sup>th</sup>): The Sociological Approach**

Kuhn, Thomas. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

**Research Questions Due**

## **Week 5 (September 21<sup>st</sup>): Recent (relatively speaking) Approaches**

Chalmers, chapters 12-17

## **Week 6 (September 28<sup>th</sup>): Attack of the -isms**

Lake, David A. 2011. "Why 'Isms' are Evil: Theory, Epistemology, and Academic Sects as Impediments to Understanding Progress." *International Studies Quarterly*. 55(2): 465-481.

Sil, Rudra and Peter J. Katzenstein. 2011. "De-Centering, Not Discarding, the 'Isms': Some Friendly Amendments." *International Studies Quarterly*. 55(2): 481-487.

Nau, Henry R. 2011. "No Alternative to 'Isms.'" *International Studies Quarterly*. 55(2): 487-493.

# **Political Science Research**

## **Week 7 (October 12<sup>th</sup>): The Research Question**

Hoover and Donovan, chapters 1-3

## **Week 8 (October 19<sup>th</sup>): Measuring and Testing**

Hoover and Donovan, chapters 4-5

**Research pages Due**

## **Week 9 (October 26<sup>th</sup>): Rational Choice**

Green, Donald P. and Ian Shapiro. 1994. *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science*. New Haven, CT. Yale University Press.

## **Week 10 (November 2<sup>nd</sup>): Methods of Political Theory**

Melzer, Arthur. 2014. *Philosophy Between the Lines*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. pp. 1-24

March, Andrew. 2009. "What is Comparative Political Theory?" *Review of Politics*. 71(4): 531-65.

Required Reading for Phenomenological Inquiry:

Voegelin, Eric. 2004. "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History," *Eternita e storia: I valori permanenti nel divenire storico* (Florence: Valecchi, 1970): 215-34.

Arendt, Hannah. 2004. "Philosophy and Politics." *Social Research*. 57(3): 427-54.

References for Examples of their Method of Analysis

Voegelin, Eric. 1987(1952). *The New Science of Politics*. University of Chicago Press.

Arendt, Hannah. 1953. "Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government." *The Review of Politics*, 15(3): 303-27.

## **The Political Science Article**

### **Week 11 (November 9<sup>th</sup>): Literature Review**

Fearon, James. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organizations*. 49(3): 379-414.

Nepstad, Sharon Erickson. 2013. "Mutiny and Non-Violence in the Arab Spring: Exploring Military Defections and Loyalty in Egypt, Bahrain, and Syria." *Journal of Peace Research*. 50(3): 337-49.

### **Week 12 (November 16<sup>th</sup>): Theory**

Olson, Mancur. 1993. "Development, Dictatorship, and Democracy." *American Political Science Review*. 87(3): 567-76.

**Literature Reviews Due**

### **Week 13 (November 30<sup>th</sup>): Research Design and Results**

Kitschelt, Herbert C. 1986. "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies." *British Journal of Political Science*. 16(1): 57-85.

Gartzke, Erik. 1998. "Kant We All Just Get Along? Opportunity, Willingness, and the Origins of the Democratic Peace." *American Journal of Political Science*. 42(1): 1-27.

Greif, Avner. 1993. "Contract Enforceability and Economic Institutions in Early Trade: The Maghribi Traders' Coalition." *The American Economic Review*. 83(3): 525-48.

**Final Exam:** Tuesday of finals week. I will email you the exam 9AM and you need to email me back the exam by noon.