

POLS 2650: Political Inquiry and Research Methods
Department of Political Science
University of Guelph
Fall 2025

Credit Weighting: 0.50

Pre-/Co-Requisites: 4.00 credits including POLS 1150

Restrictions: POLS 3180

Instructor: Dalal Daoud, Ph.D.

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Class: Monday and Wednesday 8:30 – 9:20

Location: ROZH 103

Office Hours: Monday 9:45 – 10:45 and Wednesday 9:45 – 10:45

General Details

In our daily lives, we constantly encounter political statements from various sources—friends, family, pundits, social media commentators, journalists, and politicians. Discerning truth from falsehood in this deluge of information can be increasingly challenging. This political inquiry course introduces you to the principles and processes of political science research, enabling you to conduct independent research and critically evaluate existing political phenomena and discourse.

The course begins with the philosophical underpinnings of the scientific method. Following this, we will examine the critiques and constraints inherent in social science, with a particular emphasis on political science. The course then transitions to the fundamental logic of social inquiry, reviewing key concepts and elements of empirical political analysis: namely, causation, theorization, operationalization, measurement, and research design. The course will conclude with a discussion of information gathering techniques employed by both qualitative and quantitative researchers, encompassing methods such as field research, interview strategies, and unobtrusive data collection.

This course consists of two main components:

1. **Class Lectures:** Held twice a week for 12 weeks, these lectures cover essential course material. Students are highly encouraged to attend all lectures, as each session builds directly on previous content, making it difficult to catch up if a lecture is missed. Although all lecture slides will be available on Courselink prior to each class, reviewing them is not a substitute for attendance, as additional material will be introduced in class.
2. **Tutorials:** These sessions are held once a week for 10 weeks and are mandatory. Tutorials provide students with an opportunity to work through workbook exercises and discuss lecture material.

Learning Objectives

- Differentiate between contrasting perspectives on truth, knowledge, and social science conduct.
- Learn the elements of writing a strong research proposal, including formulating a researchable question.
- Navigate the stages of a research project, focusing on question formulation, theorization, operationalization, research design, case selection, and data collection.
- Critically evaluate research projects, including published articles.
- Identify and assess methodological choices in political science research.

Method of Assessment

Tutorial Participation – 15%

Workbook Exercises – 15 %

Midterm Exam – WEEK 7 – 30%

Final Exam -- UNIVERSITY SCHEDULED – 40%

Course Readings

Required material:

Mycoff, Jason D. *Working with Political Science Research Methods: Problems and Exercises - 5th edition*. Sage College Publishing. Available in bookstore.

Recommended material:

Johnson, J.B.; Reynolds, H.T. & Mycoff, J.D. (2019). *Political Science Research Methods* (9th edition). Sage Publishing. (Chapters 1-10 & 15)

This textbook is available in paperback at the University bookstore. An e-book version can also be rented from vitalsource.com.