DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE

POLS 2650: Political Inquiry and Research Methods

Credit Weighting: 0.50 **Pre-/Co-Requisites:** 4.00 credits including POLS 1150 **Restrictions:** POLS 3180

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Edward Koning, Ph.D.
Email: ekoning@uoguelph.ca
Office Location: MCKN 509

GENERAL DETAILS

This class offers an introduction to research methods in political science. It begins with a reflection on what we can and cannot achieve when conducting social science in general and political science in particular. In this component, we will discuss the philosophical underpinnings of the scientific method and the key arguments of those who are sceptical of its merit. The course then moves to the basic logic of social inquiry and reviews the most important concepts in and components of empirical political analysis: causation, theorization, operationalization, measurement, and research design. The final part of the class discusses how qualitative and quantitative researchers go about collecting their information, for example through field research, interview techniques, and unobtrusive methods of data collection. What we do with the information we gather is the subject of 'POLS 3650: Quantitative Methods of Data Analysis', which you can take in your third year.

The current speed of vaccinations suggest that it will be possible to offer this course in person. Considering how much of this is clouded in uncertainty, however, there is a possibility that we will have to switch to an online format just before the course starts or even halfway through the semester. In case we can go through with an in-person format, every week you will be expected to attend two lectures (which introduce the relevant material) and one seminar (in which you are invited to engage that material actively in a relatively small group). Any changes to this format necessitated by developments related to COVID-19 will be clearly communicated in advance.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Understand the merits and criticisms of the scientific method as it applies to the social sciences
- Reason through the stages of a research project, in particular question formulation, theorization, operationalization, research design, case selection, and data collection
- Identify and evaluate the methodological choices in political science research
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different methodological approaches

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

The final grade in this class consists of five components:
Participation in seminar activities (15 percent); Reflection paper (10 percent); Article analysis (term paper, 25 percent); Three online quizzes (5 percent each; total 15 percent); and Final exam (35 percent).

Please note that developments related to COVID-19 might necessitate a change in evaluation requirements. Any such changes will be clearly communicated in advance.

REQUIRED READING

In addition to the lectures, the following textbook presents the key material for this course: Johnson, J.B.; Reynolds, H.T. & Mycoff, J.D. (2019). Political Science Research Methods (9th edition). Sage Publishing. (Chapters 1-10 & 15)

A paperback version of this textbook is available in the University bookstore. It is also possible to rent an ebook version of the text. Please note that the University Bookstore can offer the paperback at a comparatively low price because of a discount I was able to negotiate with the publisher. Make sure to compare prices if you consider purchasing this text from a different retailer.