

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

POLI 5100: Research Methods and Design

Fall and Winter Terms – 2023-2024

3 credit hours

*Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.*

Seminar meeting times: Fridays from 9:35 a.m.-12:25 p.m. in McCain Arts and Social Science Building (in room 2118 in the Fall Term and room 2184 in the Winter Term)

Note: The seminar runs throughout the academic year but doesn't meet every week.

Instructor: Professor Kristin Good, Associate Professor and Graduate Coordinator,
Department of Political Science (Cross-appointed with the Law, Justice and Society Program)

E-mail: Kristin.Good@Dal.Ca

Office: 301C Henry Hicks (located inside the Department of Political Science's main office because I am Graduate Coordinator)

Telephone: 902-494-1944

Note: My telephone is only answered when I'm in the office and I don't have voicemail. Email is my preferred mode of communication.

Learning Platform: The learning platform for this course is Brightspace, which can be accessed at the following address: <https://dal.brightspace.com>

Format: This class is offered in person as a small seminar with active participation expected from students.

Course description from university calendar:

POLI 5100 Research Methods and Design

CREDIT HOURS: 3

This course provides an overview of some of the most common qualitative research methods and designs among political scientists. Its primary objectives are two-fold: First, it aims to equip graduate students to engage with the broad political science community about methodological debates. Second, it is designed to take students through the process of developing either an MA thesis proposal or a PhD dissertation proposal in a systematic way as well as to enable students to defend their research design and methodological choices vigorously.

FORMAT: Seminar

PREREQUISITES: Permission of instructor.

RESTRICTIONS: Must be an MA or PhD student in political science

Extended Description and Learning Objectives

This course is designed to assist graduate students in thinking about the process of designing and implementing major research projects. It asks students to engage in the broader political science community by critically assessing the discipline, and by understanding precisely how to situate their research within it. It provides a critical overview of some of the most common qualitative research methods and designs among political scientists, and it facilitates the development of specific skills including writing literature reviews, making presentations, social media utilization in academic research (and knowledge transfer) as well as grant writing.

Students will be able to use the class to develop their own research designs, but they are also expected to engage in the collegial process of providing constructive feedback for their peers.

Required Textbook:

- Sandra Halperin and Oliver Heath. 2020. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. OUP (3rd edition)

Assignments, Grade Distribution, Grading Rubrics and Deadlines

*******Important Note:** Generative writing tools like Chat GPT, Google Translate and QuillBot (etc.) are not permitted in FASS classes, unless explicitly allowed by the course instructor. Their use is NOT permitted in this class. Using AI-powered tools constitutes an academic offense if the instructor has not explicitly sanctioned its usage.

Assignment 1 – One page reading response and answer to question of “What is political research and what is the role of the political scientist?” – 5% of final grade (Deadline: September 20th, 2023).

Assignment 2 - Research question, concepts and measurement – 10% of final grade (Deadline: October 20th, 2023)

Assignment 3 – Book analysis -10% of final grade (Deadline: December 8th, 2023)

Assignment 4- Literature review– 20% of final grade (Deadline: January 26, 2024)

Assignment 5 – Research design justification – 10% of final grade (Deadline: February 9, 2024)

Assignment 6 – Final proposal– 10% of final grade ((Deadline: March 22nd, 2024).

Assignment 7 – Proposal presentation – 15% of final grade - 3MT (March 1, 2024).

Assignment 8 – Blog on the Stanfield Lecture – 10% of final grade (Deadline: November 1st for first draft, Final deadline November 10, 2023).

Assignment 9 – Active participation in class – 10% of final grade – including informal presentation of assignments/state of your research project and general discussions.

Note: Two assignments are required but with no grade – Tri-council ethics certificate and MITACS Equity, Diversity and inclusion training (online modules and workshop if available). We will also make a trip to Africville Museum as a class.

All assignment should be submitted on Brightspace. Also, please note that Assignments 2-6 should also be submitted to your supervisor via email for grading and feedback (they will be co-marked by the instructor and the student’s supervisor).

Assignment 1 – The Role of the Political Scientist – Reading Response

Deadline: on Brightspace on September 20th at 8 a.m.

The responses will be shared with the class. Please see rubric in Appendix D.

Answer the following question “What is political research and what is the role of the political scientist?”

Reading response papers should respond to the question that is provided. They should draw upon ALL of the assigned readings and the textbook (and cite them). This is not a research essay and therefore you are not expected to identify additional sources to complete the assignment. For this reason, a bibliography isn't necessary unless the paper goes beyond the assigned readings (which isn't expected). However, **the sources listed below should be cited using Chicago Manual of Style's author-date system which means that each paraphrased idea and direct quotation requires the author's last name, the year of publication and the page number to appear in the text.**

The idea is to develop a dialogue among the authors in response to the assigned question asking, for instance, 'how would each author answer the question?' as well as 'on which points do the authors of the readings differ in their perspective and on which points do they share common ground?' What are the similarities and differences in what elements of the central concept is their focus?

Assignment 2: Research question, concepts and measurement- 10%

Deadline: October 20, 2023

Ask a research question that interests you within your area of research (and that could become your research question for your thesis). Identify a concept that is central to your research and write a 1000-word paper that describes and assesses the various ways in which the concept has been measured/operationalized and/or conceptualized in the literature. The paper should make an argument about how the concept is best conceptualized and operationalized with examples from the literature on the concept as well as literature on social science methodology to support the assessment. The concept could be of interest as either an independent or a dependent variable (where appropriate since not all research questions are about causal relationships). Or, it may be a concept framing normative/descriptive work. How would you approach the concept in your research and why? You should engage with at least three sources (articles or books that use the concept in the work) and two sources that discuss the challenge of conceptualizing and operationalizing concepts in social science research.

The following resources/reviews of how important concepts in political science are operationalized in different ways could be useful in terms of generating ideas:

Gary Goertz. 2006. *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*. Princeton University Press.

Gerardo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy," *Comparative Political Studies* 35:1 (February): pp. 5-34.

Nicholas Sambanis. 2004. "What is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48:6 (December): pp. 814-858.

Stuart A. Bremer and Faten Ghosn. 2003. "Defining States: Reconsiderations and Recommendations," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 20:1 (Spring): pp.21-41.

Karen Mossberger and Gerry Stoker. 2001. "The Evolution of Urban Regime Theory: The Challenge of Conceptualization," *Urban Affairs Review* 36, 6: 810-35.

Grading Rubric

A+ Assignments that earn the highest grade are exceptional. This grade is awarded for an assignment that asks a clear (and relevant) research question and that identifies an appropriate concept that could help to answer it. The concept's analysis would demonstrate a sophisticated command of the literature on that concept's strengths and weaknesses as a theoretical building block as well as the way in which it has been operationalized. Such assignments make a convincing argument for a way forward in terms of how to approach the concept, an argument that flows seamlessly from the analysis of its strengths and weaknesses with respect to addressing an aspect of the research question. Such an exceptional assignment could be included without revision in the student's MA thesis or PhD dissertation proposal. For PhD students, such an exceptional piece would be publishable as a short research note in an academic journal.

A This grade is awarded for an excellent assignment. Such an assignment develops a clear research question, demonstrates a strong command of the literature on the concept's strengths and weaknesses with respect to answering the research question, as well as makes an excellent case for a particular way forward. In this case, a fine-grained, nuanced treatment of the concept's strengths and weaknesses is provided but the transition from the literature review to question is not completely seamless and minor revisions would be required to include the piece in a final iteration of the thesis proposal.

A- This grade is awarded for work on a question and concept that is very good but that misses some nuances in the debate about its theoretical potential and operationalization and may contain minor lapses in clarity. The assignment's argument about the best way to approach the concept may be hampered by a lack of attention to an important nuance or nuances in the debate. The research question may also need some minor rethinking. In order to be included in the student's MA thesis or PhD dissertation proposal, additional research and further conceptual analysis would be required.

B+ This grade is awarded for an analysis of a concept that is good but misses many nuances in the literature. It presents an argument for how to approach the concept that is underdeveloped as a result. This grade suggests that in order to be included in a MA thesis or PhD proposal, significant further research on and analysis of the concept would be required.

B This grade is awarded for a satisfactory treatment of the concept but one that will need significant research and rethinking to become part of the student's MA thesis or PhD dissertation proposal. The question may also need to be rethought significantly.

B- This grade is awarded for a minimally passable treatment of the concept. It is a warning sign that the material is not being covered in a way that is acceptable at the graduate level and that could become part of a graduate thesis proposal.

Assignment 3: Book Analysis – 10%

Deadline: December 8th, 2023

Select a book that is seminal in your field of interest and write a 2000-word assessment of its strengths and weaknesses from a research design and methodological perspective. The assignment is similar to a book review or research note but one that focuses on and evaluates the research design choices of a significant work in political science.

A+ This assignment provides an exceptional analysis of the book's strengths and weaknesses from a research design perspective and could be published as a book review or research note in an academic journal.

A This assignment is excellent and could be publishable with revisions.

A- This assignment is excellent graduate work but contains a significant weakness in its analysis.

B+ This assignment is good but there are several significant weaknesses in its analysis.

B This assignment is passable but contains many significant weaknesses in its analysis.

B- This assignment is minimally passable and is a warning that the quality of work is not at the graduate level.

Assignment 4: Literature Review: Positioning your Research Question Empirically and Theoretically – 20%

Deadline: January 26th, 2024

Write a **2500-word (MA) or 5000-word (PhD)** paper that reviews the literature on your topic. How have past studies approached your research question? What bodies of theoretical literature could be employed to answer your research question? **Write a review that makes an argument about the state of the literature and positions your research theoretically.** (Use the theories to develop a hypothesis or hypotheses concerning possible answers to your question. Which theories are the most promising and why? Might an integrated approach be the answer? What gap in the literature does your research question answer and why is it important?)

Note: Students are encouraged to participate in relevant professional development workshops offered by the university to support the writing of strong literature reviews.

For instance, see relevant workshops associated with the Fall Research Camp:

<https://dal.ca.libguides.com/ResearchCamp/home>

Grading Rubric

A+ Assignments that earn the highest grade are exceptional. An A+ assignment presents an excellent synthetic summary of the state of the literature on their research topic as well as presents a theoretically sound and innovative way forward to address an important gap in the literature. Such an exceptional assignment could be included without revision in the student's MA thesis or PhD dissertation proposal. The ideas underpinning such an exceptional piece could be published as a literature review/state of the field piece in an academic journal.

A Assignments that receive this grade ask a clear research question and demonstrate a strong command of the theoretical literature and its strengths and weaknesses with respect to answering it, as well as make an excellent case for a particular way forward. Assignments receiving this grade, meet the standard of rigorous analysis and original research but are not as theoretically innovative as assignments receiving an exceptional grade of "A+" and require some minor revisions in order to be included in the student's MA thesis or PhD dissertation proposal.

A- This grade is awarded for a literature review that is generally excellent but is incomplete in some (relatively minor) way – ignoring some nuances in the theoretical debate and/or overlooks an important theoretical contender in terms of suggesting a way forward in the research. In order to be included in the student's MA thesis or PhD dissertation proposal, minor additional research and some further analytical work is required.

B+ This grade is for a literature review that surveys important work but may be incomplete, overly descriptive (rather than synthetic) and lacks sufficient rigour in its treatment of the relevant theories discussed in past research. It may not identify a significant and clear gap in the literature that the research aims to address. It may overlook serious theoretical contenders. This grade suggests that in order to be included in a MA thesis or PhD proposal, significant further research is necessary.

B This grade is awarded for an assignment that succeeds in identifying a subject area but is incomplete and lacks sufficient analysis. It is overly descriptive and lacks synthesis. It may identify theoretical approaches to the research but offers only a superficial assessment of them and, because of this, also a significantly underdeveloped plan on how to move forward in the research in a way that makes significant theoretical and empirical contributions. It will need significant research and rethinking to become part of the student's MA thesis or PhD dissertation proposals. The question may also need to be rethought significantly.

B- This grade is awarded for a minimally passable review of the literature. It is a warning sign that the material is not being covered in a way that is acceptable at the graduate level. Significant revision or even a complete overhaul is necessary in order to include the piece in the student's MA thesis or PhD dissertation proposal.

Assignment 5 – Develop a Research Design to Implement Your Research Project – 10%

Deadline: February 9th, 2024

Develop and justify a research design to address your question and to test the theory/theories in which you have positioned your research. You should specify whether the design will be a case study (and if so ‘what type?’), a comparison (and, if so, ‘what type?’) as well as what kinds of techniques will be used to gather and analyse your data. The assignment should **approximately 1500 words for MA students** and 2500 for **PhD students**.

Grading Rubric

A+ Assignments that receive this exceptional grade will demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which their question could be approached from a methodological perspective and an unusually innovative way of approaching the research. Such assignments answer all of the questions about methodology listed in the template below in a thorough and sophisticated way. The piece could be included in the MA thesis proposal/PhD dissertation proposal without revisions.

A Assignments that receive this grade establish and justify a clear approach to undertaking the research and answers the questions about methodology listed in the appropriate template below. Such an assignment could be included in the MA thesis proposal/PhD dissertation proposal with minor revisions.

A - Assignments that receive this grade have some methodological flaws and unanswered questions but are generally sound from a research design perspective.

B+ This grade suggests that the research design and methodological approach has some significant flaws but that the student has begun to consider alternatives in a productive way.

B This grade suggests that the student is having significant difficulty choosing a suitable methodological approach to their research and has not sufficiently addressed all of the questions asked in the methodology section of the appropriate template below.

B- The grade suggests that the student is struggling to perform at a graduate level and may not understand the logic of common research designs in political science research and how they relate to research questions.

Assignment 6: Your MA thesis Proposal - 10%

Deadline: March 22, 2024

Write a thesis proposal that builds upon past assignments (revise your literature review and research design in light of feedback) and includes the following:

Section 1: Introduction – answer the “so what?” question/justify the significance of your research to a broad audience of educated people/political scientists across subfields as well as introduce its theoretical significance.

Section 2: Conduct a literature review and position your research within it. What gaps are there in the literature? Where does your contribution fit? What theories will you use to help you answer the question and why?

Section 3: Provide a detailed outline and defence of your research design choices.

Section 4: Provide a chapter outline and proposed timeline for completing the research.

Templates for MA thesis and PhD dissertation proposals are below.

A+ A proposal that receives this exceptional grade is exceptionally sophisticated and innovative in all aspects of the proposal. The proposal is defensible without revisions and provides an excellent start on the first draft of one thesis or dissertation chapter.

A This proposal will be ready for defence with minor revisions.

A- This proposal will be ready for defence with some significant but not fundamental revisions. Major theoretical and research design choices are sound but need more elaboration or analysis.

B+ This proposal has a significant flaw that must be addressed to progress in the research and, overall, the proposal is not sufficiently rigorous.

B – The proposal has several significant flaws and requires significant revision before being defensible.

B- The proposal represents a start with respect to tackling the research question but is not yet close to being acceptable to a committee.

Assignment 7: 3MT Proposal Presentation – 10%

Deadline: March 1, 2024 (to be confirmed)

3-Minute Thesis presentation of your proposal.

The assignment will be assessed according to the Canadian Political Science Association’s rubric for 3MT competitions available here:

<https://cpsaevents.ca/2021/Documents/2021%203MT%20Instructions%20&%20Judging%20Criteria%20-%20Consignes%20et%20criteres%20d'evaluation%20Mt3m%202021.pdf>

Assignment 8: Blog Piece on Stanfield Lecture and Masterclass

You will write a **600-word blog** based on a theme raised by the Stanfield Lecture and/or the Masterclass (the lecture and masterclass will be held on Tuesday, October 24, 2023). We will share our blogs and discuss them in class - provide feedback/pointers about their effectiveness. They are due on **November 1st on Brightspace** can be revised and resubmitted in light of feedback. **Final deadline: November 10th, 2023.**

The grading rubric for this assignment is in Appendix E.

Assignment 9: Active Participation in the Seminar– See Grading Rubric Below

Deadline: Ongoing

Students are expected to participate actively in all seminars. A detailed rubric regarding grading of participation in seminars is available in Appendix A. Please note that level of collegiality will factor into one's grade as well. Active engagement with your peers' assignments, research and observations is essential to demonstrate collegiality.

Participation Grades Grading Rubric (adapted from document entitled "Graduate Student Grading Rubric: Department of Political Science)

F Absent.

A+ Demonstrates an exceptional level of preparation, analytical rigour and ability to synthesize the material: has analyzed case/subject exceptionally well, relating it to readings and other material (e.g., readings, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.); offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of case material, e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further; contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to the cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc.; demonstrates ongoing very active involvement.

A Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed case/subject very well, relating it to readings and other material (e.g., readings, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.); offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of case material, e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further; contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to the cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc.; demonstrates ongoing very active involvement.

A- Demonstrates good preparation: knows case or reading facts well, has thought through implications of them; offers interpretations and analysis of case material (more than just facts)

to class; contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way; responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way; offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion; demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement.

B+ Demonstrates adequate preparation: knows basic case or reading facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret or analyze them; offers straightforward information (e.g., straight from the case or reading), without elaboration or very infrequently (perhaps once a class); does not offer to contribute to discussion, but contributes to a moderate degree when called on; demonstrates sporadic involvement.

B Present, not disruptive; tries to respond when called on but does not offer much; demonstrates very infrequent involvement in discussion.

Please note: Links to or pdfs of all reading material (except chapters in class textbook) will be available on the course Brightspace platform

Course Agenda

FALL 2023

September 5: Departmental Orientation

September 8: Brief meeting to discuss tasks for next class and attend Prof. Haglund's lecture.

September 22: What is political research? Political science as vocation? What is the role of the political scientist in Canada? Why pursue graduate studies? Whose discipline?

We will discuss these questions as well as Assignment 1 (which will be posted on Brightspace after submission). Students are expected to read their peers' response papers.

Required reading:

Halperin and Heath – Chapters 1-3

Noël, Alain. 2014. "Studying Your Own Country: Social Scientific Knowledge for Our Times and Places" *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 47, 4, December 2014, 647-66.

Peter Aucoin. 1996. "Political Science and Democratic Governance," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. 29, 4: 643-660.

Nisha Nath, Ethel Tungohan, and Megan Gaucher. 2018. "The Future of Canadian Political Science: Boundary Transgressions, Gender and Anti-Oppression Frameworks." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 51(3): 619-642.

Danielzik, Chandra-Milena, Franziska Müller, and Daniel Bendix. "Tools Against the Masters: Decolonial Unsettling of the Social Science Classroom," (Chapter 13) in Daniel Bendix, Franziska Müller, and Aram Ziai. 2020. *Beyond the Master's Tools? Decolonizing Knowledge Orders, Research Methods and Teaching*. New York: Rowman & Little Field.

Other optional resources:

APSA. 1962. "Political Science as a Discipline," *American Political Science Review* 56/2: 417-21.

Gabriel Almond. 1988. "Separate Tables: schools and sects in political science," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 21/4: 828-842.

Theodore Lowi, 1992. "The State in Political Science: how we become what we study," *American Political Science Review* 86/1: 1-7

Tom Pocklington. 1998. "The Place of Political Science in Canadian Universities," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. 31/4: 643-658.

Robert O. Keohane. 2009. "Political Science as a Vocation" *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42/2 (April): 359-363.

Mark Weaver. 1998. "Weber's Critique of Advocacy in the Classroom: Critical Thinking and Civic Education." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31/4 (December): 799-801.

September 29: Identifying your Research Question and Positioning Your Research: Conducting a Literature Review

Halperin and Heath – Chapter 4

Jonathan Kirshnew. 1996. "Alfred Hitchcock and the Art of Research," *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 29: 511-513.

Aaron Wildavsky. 2003. "Reading with a Purpose," in *Craftways: On the Organization of Scholarly Work*. New Brunswick, USA: Transaction Publishers, pp. 25-38.

Iain Mcmenamin. 2006. "Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature," *PS: political Science and Politics*. 39, 1: 133-35.

Jeffrey Knopf. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review," *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 39, 1: 127-33.

October 13: Answering your Research Question: The Role of Theory in Political Research

Halperin and Heath – Chapter 5

Giovanni Sartori. 1970. "Concept Misformation in Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 64:4: 1033-1053.

David Collier, and James E. Mahon. 1993. "Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Alternative Views of Categories in Comparative Analysis," *American Political Science Review* 87:4 (December): pp. 845-55.

Christopher Alcantara, Jörg Broschek & Jen Nelles. 2016. "Rethinking Multilevel Governance as an Instance of Multilevel Politics: A Conceptual Strategy," *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 4:1, 33-51.

Student presentations of a concept (based on Assignment 1).

October 24: Stanfield Conversation

It is mandatory to attend the **Stanfield Conversation on October 24** as well as the Masterclass for graduate students. Information on the Stanfield Conversation can be found here: <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/arts/research/faculty-lectures-seminars/-stanfield-conversations.html>

From the website:

"2023 Conversation:

"Can democracies meet the challenge of climate change?"

This year's Conversation will go beyond the concepts established in previous Stanfield Conversations, and will focus on the topic, **"Can Democracies meet the Challenge of Climate Change?"** On Tuesday, October 24, we will welcome three distinguished guests to discuss this topic:

Megan Leslie, President & CEO of WWF-Canada and former Member of Parliament for Halifax

Naheed Nenshi, former mayor of Calgary

Mark Jaccard, *Distinguished Professor* at Simon Fraser University and Director of the School of Resource and Environmental Management and author of *The Citizen's Guide to Climate Success: Overcoming Myths that Hinder Progress*.

November 3: Stanfield Lecture Blogs– Discussion in Class

Due on Brightspace on November 1, 2023 and will be “workshopped” in class on November 3rd.

Scholarships and grant-writing – if there is a demand for this.

[I will add reading material here about writing blog posts/for the public]

November 10: Research Design I: Basic Principles, Data and Research Ethics

Halperin and Heath – Chapters 6 and 7

Tri-council online certificate on research ethics:

[Log In :: TCPS 2: CORE-2022 \(tcps2core.ca\)](https://tcps2core.ca)

(Complete the certificate before class and emailed it to the instructor)

NOTE: November 13-17 – Fall Study Break

November 24: Research Design II: Case Studies and Comparative Designs

Halperin and Heath – Chapter 9 and 10

Bent Flyvberg. 2006. “Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research,” *Qualitative Inquiry*. 12, 2: 219-245.

Jack S. Levy. 2008. “Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 25: 1-18.

Good, Kristin. 2005. “Patterns of politics in Canada's immigrant-receiving cities and suburbs: How immigrant settlement patterns shape the municipal role in multiculturalism policy”. *Policy Studies*, 26(3-4), 261-289.

Other resources:

Arend Lijphart. 1972. “The Comparable Cases Strategy in Comparative Research,” *Comparative Political Studies* 8, 2: 158.

Carsten Ankar. 2008. "On the Applicability of the Most Similar Systems Design and the Most Different Systems Design in Comparative Research," *Social Research Methodology*. 11, 5: 389-411.

Winter Term 2024

January 12: Collecting and Analysing Data I: Content & Discourse Analysis

Halperin and Heath – Chapter 14

Jared J. Wesley. 2014. "Qualitative Document Analysis in Political Science," in Bertie Kaal, Isa Marks and AnneMarie van Elfrinkhof eds. *From Text to Political Positions: Text Analysis Across Disciplines*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 135-160.

Margaret Denike. 2014. "Polygamy and Race-thinking: A Genealogy" in Gillian Calder and Lori Beaman, eds. *Polygamy's Rights and Wrongs*. Vancouver: UBC Press, pp. 142-169.

Rebecca Wallace. 2021. "Warriors don't sleep til noon": colonial rhetoric and the framing of Indigenous recipients of welfare in Canadian news, 1990-2015," *Politics, Groups and Identities* 9, 2: 300-318.

January 19: Collecting and Analysing Data II: Historical Research

Halperin and Heath – Chapter 10

Varun Uberoi. 2016. "Legislating Multiculturalism and Nationhood: The 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 49(2): 267-287.

Required

George, Alexander and Andrew Bennett. 2005. "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation" Chapter 10 in *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, Pp. 205-232.

Tannenwald, Nina. 2007. "The Nuclear Taboo." *International Organization*, 53: 433-468.

Schimmelfennig, Frank. 2014. "Efficient process tracing," in Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel eds. *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 98-125.

Note: Guest session on "process tracing" with Prof. Ruben Zaiotti @ 10:30 a.m.

January 26: Collecting and Analysing Data III: Field Research, Participant Observation, Interview methods, and Developing an “Ethnographic Sensibility”

Halperin and Heath – Chapters 12 and 13

Royce Koop, Heather Bastedo, and Kelly Blicook. 2018. *Representation in Action: Canadian MPs in the Constituencies*. Vancouver: UBC Press. – Chapters 1, 6 [skim] and Conclusion [available as an e-book through Novanet]

Debra Thompson's. 2022. *The Long Road Home*. Toronto: Scribner. [Chapters TBD]

Additional resources on interview research (not required for class):

Edward Schatz. Ed. 2009. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. (Introduction and Chapter 1)

Edward Schatz- Introduction – “Ethnographic Immersion and the Study of Politics”;

Jan Kubik – Chapter 1 – “Ethnography of Politics: Foundations, Applications, Prospects,”

Layna Mosley. Ed. 2013. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Beth L. Leech. Ed. 2002. Symposium on “Interview Methods in Political Science” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35:4 (December): 663-688.

Oisín Tansey. 2007. “Process Tracing and Elite Interviewing: A Case for Non-Probability Sampling,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 40:4: 765-772.

February 2: Practical Research Skills: Using NVivo and Making Academic Presentations

A guest speaker (TBD) will provide an introduction to using NVivo software.

We will also review 3MT presentations made at CPSA and discuss and critically evaluate them to shed light on how to prepare for the departmental “competition” (presentation of MA thesis proposals).

Note: Students should spend February writing their thesis proposals and preparing their 3MT.

March 1: Thesis presentations to department in a 3-minute thesis competition format.

APPENDIX A: MATRIX FOR SUMMARY OF RESEARCH (Use this as a Tool)

Topic area	
Problematic	
Research question	
Sub-questions	
Hypothesis	
Dependent variable(s)	
Independent variables	
Theoretical framework	
Method	
Scope/unit of analysis	
Participants	
Research contribution	

Please note: Not all categories apply to every research project.

APPENDIX B: MA THESIS PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

MA proposals should be 18-25 pages + bibliography (double spaced; 1 inch margins; 12 pt font).

Most MA theses in the department range from 100-125 pages in length.

1. Thesis Statement and Research Objectives (2-3 pages):

The main purpose of the MA proposal is to convince your thesis committee that you have identified an 'important' question that demands a clear answer, and you are the right person, with the right approach, to provide that answer. You should begin with a very clear description of the problem(s) you intend to address in your thesis, and an explanation for why they are important. Try to be as precise as you can about your questions, puzzles, hypotheses, perspective or the debates you will engage (or resolve) through your research. With respect to specific questions to be answered in this section:

- what is the purpose of your study?
- what do you wish to prove or disprove?
- what is your thesis/hypothesis and how conventional or counterintuitive is this thesis?
- why do you want to undertake this particular project?
- why is it important/relevant and what do you hope to contribute?
- do you expect to uncover/reveal key policy recommendation?

2. Relation to Current Knowledge/Literature/Theoretical Perspectives (8-10 pages):

You will need to provide a detailed overview and assessment of the relevant literature. The only way to establish the originality and/or importance of your 'contribution to knowledge' is to situate your research within the literature. It is imperative in this section to clearly establish how your research will challenge, critique, reinterpret, build on or deconstruct conventional wisdom on the topic, puzzle or cases you've selected. With respect to key questions for this section:

- what is the received/accepted/conventional wisdom in the literature on the issue?
- what are the strengths and weaknesses of the current state of knowledge on the subject?
- what central puzzles will you be focusing on or attempting to resolve?
- how will your study, approach or case contribute to or challenge conventional wisdom?
- how will your research create new knowledge on the subject?
- why is your work original and important?

3. Methodology (3-5 pages):

This is perhaps the most important part of the proposal and thesis -- the quality of your conclusions depends heavily on the logical and empirical soundness of your methodology. It is imperative that you provide a crystal clear explanation of the methods you will use to collect the data, facts, evidence you need to support your theory, interpretations, conclusions or policy recommendations. It would help to provide in this section a brief (critical) review of the methods and approaches used by others to answer similar questions. Questions to consider:

- how have others attempted to address these or similar questions?
- what are the problems/impediments with these traditional approaches?
- how will your approach overcome these impediments?
- where will you go to find the information you need?
- what types of data are pertinent?
- what variables and concepts are relevant?
- how will you collect and process the data/information on these variables (interviews?);
- what are the limitations? How serious are they? And how will they be addressed?

4. Chapter Outline (1 page):

Include brief summary paragraphs describing each chapter, explain how the chapters are connected, and provide an outline of how the arguments will unfold:

- how will you structure your argument?

- how do you intend to break down the content of your study?
- what will the chapters include and how are they related to the main thesis?

5. Timetable and Research Strategy (1 page):

Briefly describe your schedule over the next several months with a monthly breakdown of research plans priorities and expectations.

6. Bibliography (3-5 pages):

Provide a list of references cited in the proposal, preliminary sources you think might be useful, and any other material you plan to review.

APPENDIX C - PhD Proposal Template - FYI

Dissertation proposals should be 31-37 pages (double spaced; 1 inch margins; 12 pt font).

1. Thesis Statement and Research Objectives (3-5 pages):

The main purpose of the PhD proposal is to convince your dissertation committee that you have identified an 'important' question that demands a clear answer, and you are the right person, with the right approach, to provide that answer. You should begin with a very clear description of the problem(s) you intend to address in your dissertation, and an explanation for why they are important. Avoid the impression that you already have clear answers to your central research questions. Try to be as precise as you can about your questions, puzzles, hypotheses, perspective or the debates you will engage (or resolve) through your research. With respect to specific questions to be answered in this section:

- what is the purpose of your study?
- what do you wish to prove or disprove?
- what is your thesis/hypothesis and how conventional or counterintuitive is this thesis?
- why do you want to undertake this particular project?
- why is it important/relevant and what do you hope to contribute?
- do you expect to uncover/reveal key policy recommendation?

2. Relation to Current Knowledge/Literature/Theoretical Perspectives (15 pages):

You will need to provide a detailed overview and assessment of the relevant literature. The only way to establish the originality and importance of your dissertation's 'contribution to knowledge' is to situate your research within the literature. It is imperative in this section to clearly establish how your research will challenge, critique, reinterpret, build on or deconstruct conventional wisdom on the topic, puzzle or cases you've selected. With respect to key questions for this section:

- what is the received/accepted/conventional wisdom in the literature on the issue?
- what are the strengths and weaknesses of the current state of knowledge on the subject?

- what central puzzles will you be focussing on or attempting to resolve?
- how will your study, approach or case contribute to or challenge conventional wisdom?
- how will your research create new knowledge on the subject?
- why is your work original and important?

3. Methodology (5-8 pages):

This is perhaps the most important part of the proposal (and dissertation) -- the quality of your conclusions depends heavily on the logical and empirical soundness of your methodology. It is imperative that you provide a crystal clear explanation of the methods you will use to collect the data, facts, evidence you need to support your theory, interpretations, conclusions or policy recommendations. It would help to provide in this section a brief (critical) review of the methods and approaches used by others to answer similar questions. Questions to consider:

- how have others attempted to address these or similar questions?
- what are the problems/impediments with these traditional approaches?
- how will your approach overcome these impediments?
- where will you go to find the information you need?
- what types of data are pertinent?
- what variables and concepts are relevant?
- how will you collect and process the data/information on these variables (interviews?);
- what are the limitations? How serious are they? And how will they be addressed?

4. Chapter Outline (2 pages):

Include brief summary paragraphs describing each chapter, explain how the chapters are connected, and provide an outline of how the arguments will unfold:

- how will you structure your argument?
- how do you intend to break down the content of your study?
- what will the chapters include and how are they related to the main thesis?

5. Timetable and Research Strategy (1-2 pages):

Briefly describe your schedule over the next several months with a monthly breakdown of research plans priorities and expectations.

6. Bibliography (5 pages):

Provide a list of references cited in the proposal, preliminary sources you think might be useful, and any other material you plan to review.

APPENDIX D – RUBRIC FOR READING RESPONSE

Criteria	Description of excellence
Organization (40%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thesis is clear in first paragraph (or even first sentence);• Argument is organized well (around a thesis);• the piece flows logically;• The thesis is “restated” in the final couple of sentences.• The final sentence has impact.• Title captures response’s essence.
Critical analysis and comprehensiveness (50%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A deep level of understanding is demonstrated;• Argument is made powerfully.• The readings are synthesized and compared rather than simply described.• All sources are engaged in the piece.
Quality of writing and citation in-text (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The style is appropriate to the audience (in terms of how complex ideas are conveyed);• The writing is clear and error free (no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors were made);• Title is engaging.• Sources are cited appropriately in text (and other sources are listed in a bibliography if applicable). Additional research isn’t necessary but sources that are cited should be provided.

APPENDIX E – RUBRIC FOR BLOG PIECE

Criteria	Description of excellent blog
Organization (40%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thesis is clear in first paragraph (or even first sentence);• Ideas are important and relevant to the theme;• Argument is organized well (around a thesis);• the piece flows logically;• The thesis is “restated” in the final couple of sentences.• The final sentence has impact.• Title captures blog’s essence.
Creativity and critical analysis (40%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blog is written in an engaging way;• Unique insights are offered;• Argument is made powerfully.• Title is creative.
Voice and quality of writing (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The piece has a consistent audience in mind;• The style is appropriate to the audience (in terms of how complex ideas are conveyed);• The piece is engaging;• The writing is clear and error free (no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors were made);• Title is engaging.
Positioning, Support and Citations (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Piece is made relevant through links to relevant academic works, popular media and other relevant sources and data.• All sources – text and other media are cited appropriately.

SECTION B: UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS

Territorial Acknowledgement:

The Dalhousie University Senate acknowledges that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and pays respect to the Indigenous knowledges held by the Mi'kmaq People, and to the wisdom of their Elders past and present. The Mi'kmaq People signed Peace and Friendship Treaties with the Crown, and section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights. We are all Treaty people.¹

The Dalhousie University Senate also acknowledges the histories, contributions, and legacies of African Nova Scotians, who have been here for over 400 years.

Internationalization

At Dalhousie, "[thinking and acting globally](#)" enhances the quality and impact of education, supporting learning that is "interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, global in reach, and orientated toward solving problems that extend across national borders."

Academic Integrity

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in all of our work by the values of [academic integrity](#): honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility and respect. As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all of the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity.

¹ The Dalhousie University Senate also acknowledges the histories, contributions, and legacies of African Nova Scotians, who have been here for over 400 years.

For more information about the purpose of territorial acknowledgements, or information about alternative territorial acknowledgements if your class is offered outside of Nova Scotia, please visit <https://native-land.ca/>.

Accessibility

The Student Accessibility Centre is Dalhousie's centre of expertise for matters related to student accessibility and accommodation.

If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course (online or in-person) that result in barriers to your inclusion please contact:

- the [Student Accessibility Centre](#) (for all courses offered by Dalhousie with the exception of Truro)
- the [Student Success Centre in Truro](#) for courses offered by the Faculty of Agriculture

Your classrooms may contain accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in place, undisturbed, so that students who require their use will be able to fully participate.

Conduct in the Classroom – Culture of Respect

Substantial and constructive dialogue on challenging issues is an important part of academic inquiry and exchange. It requires willingness to listen and tolerance of opposing points of view. Consideration of individual differences and alternative viewpoints is required of all class members, towards each other, towards instructors, and towards guest speakers. While expressions of differing perspectives are welcome and encouraged, the words and language used should remain within acceptable bounds of civility and respect.

Diversity and Inclusion – [Culture of Respect](#)

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2).

Code of Student Conduct

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The [Code of Student Conduct](#) allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students don't follow this community expectation. When appropriate, violations of the code can be resolved in a reasonable and informal manner—perhaps through a restorative justice process. If an informal resolution can't be reached, or would be inappropriate, procedures exist for formal dispute resolution.

Fair Dealing policy

The Dalhousie University [Fair Dealing Policy](#) provides guidance for the limited use of copyright protected material without the risk of infringement and without having to seek the permission of copyright owners. It is intended to provide a balance between the rights of creators and the rights of users at Dalhousie.

Originality Checking Software

The course instructor may use Dalhousie's approved originality checking software and Google to check the originality of any work submitted for credit, in accordance with the [Student Submission of Assignments and Use of Originality Checking Software Policy](#). Students are free, without penalty of grade, to choose an alternative method of attesting to the authenticity of their work, and must inform the instructor no later than the last day to add/drop classes of their intent to choose an alternate method.

Student Use of Course Materials

These course materials are designed for use as part of the Course Code at Dalhousie University and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third party copyrighted materials (such as books, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law. Copying this course material for distribution (e.g. uploading to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a violation of Copyright law.

SECTION C: UNIVERSITY POLICIES, GUIDELINES, AND RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

Dalhousie courses are governed by the academic rules and regulations set forth in the [Academic Calendar](#) and the [Senate](#).

Important student information, services and resources are available as follows:

University Policies and Programs

- [Important Dates in the Academic Year](#) (including add/drop dates)
- [Classroom Recording Protocol](#)
- [Dalhousie Grading Practices Policy](#)
- [Grade Appeal Process](#)
- [Sexualized Violence Policy](#)
- [Scent-Free Program](#)

Learning and Support Resources

- Academic Support - Advising [Halifax](#), [Truro](#)
- [Student Health & Wellness Centre](#)
- [On Track](#) (helps you transition into university, and supports you through your first year at Dalhousie and beyond)
- [Indigenous Student Centre](#). See also: [Indigenous Connection](#).
- Elders-in-Residence: The [Elders in Residence program](#) provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel and support. Visit the office in the [Indigenous Student Centre](#) or contact the program at elders@dal.ca or 902-494-6803.
- [Black Student Advising Centre](#)
- [International Centre](#)
- [South House Sexual and Gender Resource Centre](#)
- [LGBTQ2SIA+ Collaborative](#)
- [Dalhousie Libraries](#)
- [Copyright Office](#)
- [Dalhousie Student Advocacy Service \(DSAS\)](#)
- [Dalhousie Ombudsperson](#)
- [Human Rights & Equity Services](#)
- [Writing Centre](#)
- [Study Skills/Tutoring](#)

Please note that I (Kristin Good) am the Department of Political Science's Graduate Coordinator and could advise you on graduate studies. Dr. Peter Arthur, is our department's Undergraduate Advisor. He can be reached at peter.arthur@dal.ca/