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 an overview of some of the most common qualitative research methods and designs among political scientists, and it facilitates the development of specific skills including grant writing, data collection, poster presentation, social media utilization, knowledge transfer, policy brief design, and publication.

Students will be able to use the class to develop their own research proposals, but they are also expected to engage in the collegial process of providing constructive feedback for their peers. The seminar will also provide professional development for young scholars beyond technical methodological issues. Attendance is mandatory.
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES:

Grant application  Due 31 Oct 2017  10%
In-class proposal presentation  3 Nov 2017  10%
Research matrix  Due 10 Nov 2017  10%
Literature review  Due 12 Jan 2018  10%
Final thesis proposal  Due 26 Jan 2018  20%
Policy brief  Due 16 Feb 2018  10%
Poster presentation  To be scheduled (Feb)  10%
Social media component  To 1 April 2018  10%
Attendance & participation  10%

DETAILED INFORMATION ON ASSIGNMENTS

1. GRANT APPLICATION: (31 Oct 2017)

Students will identify at least one funding opportunity that is relevant to them (eg., SSHRCC, Killam, NSGS, etc) and prepare a completed grant application using the techniques and strategies outlined in the grant-writing boot camp.

2. IN-CLASS PROPOSAL PRESENTATION (3 November 2017)

Using the information presented in the Oct 13th seminar, students will verbally present the various components of their research proposal. Each of these components is listed in the research matrix (Appendix A).
3. RESEARCH MATRIX (10 November 2017)

Based on the feedback of their verbal presentation, students will submit a written summary of their research proposal based on the research matrix (Appendix A). Students are encouraged to do this in consultation with their thesis supervisors.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW (12 January 2018)

How has the problem you have identified been addressed by other theorists? Where are the tensions in these accounts, and where are the gaps? What are the strengths and the weakness of these accounts? Has the problem been addressed in any other disciplines? This literature review should be about 1500-1800 words in length.

5. FULL THESIS PROPOSAL (26 January 2018)

Pull together all of the previous elements in order to construct your formal thesis proposal, based on the template attached as Appendix B. For Masters students, this is the formal proposal which you will be publicly presenting. **PhD students will also be submitting a proposal based on the template in Appendix B**, and they will also be presenting it in the poster session, **but for them it is only a practice run**. The template for the formal PhD thesis proposal is slightly different, and is posted on the grad students’ website (POLI 9000). The formal version of the thesis proposal for PhD students will be written after comprehensive exams are completed. Please give an electronic AND a hard copy of your thesis proposal to the graduate coordinator, and give a copy to your supervisor in the format they request.

6. POLICY BRIEF (16 February 2018)

In this assignment, students are asked to think how best to communicate complicated policy issues in the most efficient form. Using information drawn from the seminar, students will write a policy brief based on a paper they have written (or are preparing). These briefs will be posted publicly.

7. POSTER SESSION (TBA, mid-February)

The poster session is the formal presentation of MA thesis proposals. For PhD students, the poster session is more of a practice exercise in presenting in poster format. It will also permit wider feedback from faculty regarding students’ proposed thesis topics. These posters will be displayed publicly.
8. SOCIAL MEDIA COMPONENT (ongoing throughout fall and winter terms)

Social media has become increasingly important in academic life, not only in diffusing research results, but also as a method of horizon scanning, and as a means of forming research networks across disciplines and geography. For this assignment, you will be asked to open a twitter account (if you do not already have one), to follow 25 individuals whom you believe are pertinent to your research, and to post 25 tweets (these may simply be retweets of research-relevant information). Students will also be asked to attend two academic talks (either on or outside of campus) and to post a very brief blog (100-300 words) discussing this talk on a specific website (you may also tweet this blog).

GRADUATE GRADING RUBRIC

Written work:

A+ Assignments that earn the highest grade are usually somewhat rare; they are original and innovative, and add to the scholarly discussion on the topic(s) at hand. They also show considerable command of critical and other secondary material. Depending on the type of assignment, these papers could, with no or minor revisions, be considered publishable in academic journals specific to the field.

A These assignments constitute excellent graduate work. They are original and strongly written, and show considerable command of critical and other secondary material, but would need significant revision before being considered publishable.

A- This grade denotes very good graduate level work, and are well written and researched, offering a good understanding of the primary material and the scholarly discussion thereof.

B+ Items in the B+ range may be considered good graduate work, but show weaknesses in terms of research, argumentation or writing.

B Assignments in this category comprise satisfactory graduate work, but with substantial flaws in one or more areas of research, argumentation or writing. They may indicate difficulty in moving beyond undergraduate-level work.

B- Items in this range are minimally passable graduate work, showing considerable weaknesses or errors in research, argumentation, and writing. These essays demonstrate difficulty in moving beyond undergraduate-level work.
Presentations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10 Points</th>
<th>8 Points</th>
<th>6 Points</th>
<th>4 Points</th>
<th>2 Point</th>
<th>0 Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content is complete, relevant &amp; accurate. An exceptional command &amp; depth of the material is presented in a logical &amp; organized manner. More than one aspect of the content shows good critical thinking or an original perspective. Outstanding oral presentation skills and engagement of class.</td>
<td>Content is complete, relevant &amp; accurate. A few minor pieces of information may be missing, but command &amp; depth of the material is presented in a logical &amp; organized manner. Some aspect of the content shows good critical thinking or an original perspective. Very good oral presentation skills and engagement of class.</td>
<td>Content is appropriate. Although some pieces of information may be missing, or irrelevant material included, adequate command of the material is demonstrated. The content may not be demonstrated in a way that maintains focus and may be disorganized. The content shows that the person thought about the information. Adequate oral presentation skills and engagement of class.</td>
<td>Some content is inappropriate. Marginally adequate command of the material is demonstrated. Important pieces of information are missing, or irrelevant material included. The content is disorganized and is not presented in a way that maintains focus. Weak oral presentation skills and engagement of class.</td>
<td>Content is weak because material is omitted, inaccurate or marginally relevant, demonstrating limited understanding of the material and/or limited ability to apply the material. Organization is a problem. Major deficiencies in oral presentation skills. Class is not engaged.</td>
<td>Lecture component absent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"There's a flaw in your experimental design. All the mice are scorpions."
SEMINARS

PLEASE NOTE THAT POLI 5100 WILL BE RUNNING FROM SEPTEMBER 2017 TO APRIL 2018

September 1 (1.30-3.00, Political Science Lounge): Introduction to the graduate program in Political Science

September 15th (12.00-2.00, Political Science Lounge): Political Science: The State of the Discipline

Readings:
- APSA. 1962. “Political Science as a Discipline,” American Political Science Review 56/2: 417-21

September 22nd (11.00-2.00, Political Science Lounge): Identifying Your Research Question and Positioning Your Research

Readings:
- Halperin and Heath, Political Research, chapters 1-14
October 6th (11.00-2.00): Grant-Writing Bootcamp

- **Readings:** To be distributed

October 13th (11.15-2.15): Designing Your Research Project 1: Understanding the Component Parts of Your Research

**Readings:**

- King, Keohane and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, ch 1-4

[deadline for grant applications to be submitted to grad coordinator: October 31]

November 3rd (11.00-2.00): Designing Your Research Project 2: Presenting the Component Parts of Your Research

[deadline for submitting matrix to supervisor and graduate coordinator: November 10th]
November 17th (11.30-1.30): The 21st Century Academy: Social Media in Academia

Readings:

[deadline for submitting literature review to graduate coordinator: January 12th]

January 19th (2.00-4.00): Finding Your Data

Readings:

[deadline for submitting formal thesis proposal to graduate coordinator and thesis supervisor: January 26]

February 9th (2.00-4.00): Skills bootcamp (posters, policy briefs, prezies, and gantts)

Readings: to be distributed

[deadline for policy brief to be submitted to graduate coordinator: 16 February]
March 16th (2.00-4.00): Knowledge diffusion and evidence-based policy making

Readings:

# Appendix A: Matrix for Summary of Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic area</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Research question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent variable(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent variables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope/unit of analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research contribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: THESIS PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

MA THESIS PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

Thesis proposals should be 15-20 pages + bibliography (double spaced; 1 inch margins; 12 pt font).

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.

- what is the purpose of your study?
- what do you wish to prove or disprove?
- what is your thesis/hypothesis? 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.

- what is the received/accepted/conventional wisdom in the literature on the issue? How do other authors explain/address the issue in which you are interested (or do they)?
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 answers similar questions.

- what are the problems/impediments with approaches previously used?
- 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?
- what are the limitations of your methodological approach? 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: USEFUL SOURCES


Mahoney J. and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press.


Aaron Wildavsky, *Craftways: On the Organization of Scholarly Work*. New Brunswick, USA: Transaction Publisher

APPENDIX D: STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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 (The Center for Academic Integrity, Duke University, 1999). 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.

What does academic integrity mean?
At university we advance knowledge by building on the work of other people. Academic integrity means that we are honest and accurate in creating and communicating all academic products. Acknowledgement of other people’s work must be done in a way that does not leave the reader in any doubt as to whose work it is. Academic integrity means trustworthy conduct such as not cheating on examinations and not misrepresenting information. It is the student’s responsibility to seek assistance to ensure that these standards are met.

How can you achieve academic integrity?
We must all work together to prevent academic dishonesty because it is unfair to honest students. The following are some ways that you can achieve academic integrity; some may not be applicable in all circumstances.
• Make sure you understand Dalhousie’s policies on academic integrity (http://academicintegrity.dal.ca/Policies/)
• Do not cheat in examinations or write an exam or test for someone else
• Do not falsify data or lab results
• Be sure not to plagiarize, intentionally or unintentionally, for example…
• Clearly indicate the sources used in your written or oral work. This includes computer codes/ programs, artistic or architectural works, scientific projects, performances, web page designs, graphical representations, diagrams, videos, and images
• Do not use the work of another from the Internet or any other source and submit it as your own
• When you use the ideas of other people (paraphrasing), make sure to acknowledge the source
• Do not submit work that has been completed through collaboration or previously submitted for another assignment without permission from your instructor (These examples should be considered only as a guide and not an exhaustive list.)

Where can you turn for help?
If you are ever unsure about any aspect of your academic work, contact me (or the TA):
• Academic Integrity website http://academicintegrity.dal.ca/
Links to policies, definitions, online tutorials, tips on citing and paraphrasing
• Writing Centre (http://www.dal.ca/campus_life/student_services/academic-support/writing-and-study-skills.html) Assistance with learning to write academic documents, reviewing papers for discipline-specific writing standards, organization, argument, transitions, writing styles and citations
• Dalhousie Libraries Workshops (http://libraries.dal.ca/) Online tutorials, citation guides, Assignment Calculator, RefWorks
• Dalhousie Student Advocacy Service (http://studentservices.dal.ca/services/advocacy.html) Assists students with academic appeals and student discipline procedures.
• Senate Office (http://senate.dal.ca) List of Academic Integrity Officers, discipline flowchart, Senate Discipline Committee

What will happen if an allegation of an academic offence is made against you?
As your instructor, I am required to report every suspected offence. The full process is outlined in the Faculty Discipline Flow Chart (http://senate.dal.ca/Files/AIO/AcademicDisciplineProcess_Flowchart_updated_July_2011.pdf) and includes the following:
• Each Faculty has an Academic Integrity Officer (AIO) who receives allegations from instructors
• Based on the evidence provided, the AIO decides if there is evidence to proceed with the allegation and you will be notified of the process
• If the case proceeds, you will receive a PENDING grade until the matter is resolved
• If you are found guilty of an offence, a penalty will be assigned ranging from a warning, to failure of the assignment or failure of the class, to expulsion from the University. Penalties may also include a notation on your transcript that indicates that you have committed an academic offence. Updated August 2011.