Political Science 2503: Evidence and Knowledge
Temple University
Summer 2016

Instructor: Everett A. Vieira, III   **Days:** Online
Email: evieira@temple.edu   **Time:** Asynchronous
Office: Gladfelter Hall 465   **Session:** I
Office Hours: Online by appointment   **Classroom:** Virtual

Official Course Description
"This course introduces students to the fundamental concepts that underlie the evaluation of empirical evidence. The focus will be on the design of research, rather than the analysis of data. Major themes covered in the course include: measurement, causality, uncertainty, the scientific method, and the methodological debates that animate political science research." - *Course Catalog (Temple University)*

Course Design
This course introduces undergraduates to the methods political scientists use to answer questions about politics. We will focus on how researchers marshal evidence to accumulate knowledge about political phenomena. First, we will discuss sources of political theory and hypotheses, and learn about the challenges involved in making descriptive and causal inferences. The course then covers a range of strategies for empirical research including experimentation, statistical analysis of large datasets, and qualitative case studies. Students should emerge from the course better able to understand and evaluate social science research, and better equipped to pose and answer research questions on their own.

Goals and Objectives
There are several goals for this course. First, the course will challenge you to think - **A LOT**. Critical thinking is a buzzword in higher education, but I want you to think deeply about the subjects covered in this course without accepting the readings as gospel. Second, this course is not only about earning three credits toward graduation - it is also meant to help you become a better political scientist. As such, honing your communication abilities so that your research and arguments are accessible to a wide range of audiences is an important skill to master. Third, information literacy is a key lesson to be learned in this course. We will read a lot of theory and how-to articles and book chapters, but the goal is to take these readings and apply them to the real world.

Furthermore, my personal goal is to help you gain an understanding and appreciation for the issues and subjects covered in this course. As such, it is my hope that the course readings, materials, and discussions enable you to be a wise and astute consumer (if not producer) of political information and ideas. Another goal is to impart on you that politics can be interesting, exciting, and above all else, relevant. As a result, I expect you to keep up with current events and prepare to discuss these in our one-on-one meetings and on the discussion boards.

Course Readings
In order to minimize expenses, we will use a collection of digitized texts throughout the semester rather than a traditional textbook. All course readings are available through the Temple University library online (http://library.temple.edu/) and via Blackboard (https://blackboard.temple.edu) where noted. No financial costs will be associated with these readings. I reserve the right to change the assigned readings ahead of the class for which they are scheduled, but will give notice if I do so. Please be advised that if you do not do your readings for each week, your grade will suffer significantly.

There are, however, two textbooks the Department of Political Science recommends for majors. These are resources that students can consult during their upper-level coursework, especially prepstone and capstone courses, when students would benefit from reviewing how they approach their research projects.

Barakso, Maryann, Daniel M. Sabet, and Brian F. Schaffner. 2014. *Understanding Political Science Research Methods: The Challenge of Inference*. New York: Routledge.

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, and H. T. Reynolds. 2011. *Research Methods in Political Science*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 7th edition.

Course Requirements
Homework Assignments (30%)
There will be three (3) equally weighted homework assignments. The homework assignments will cover lectures, assigned readings, and the discussion boards on Blackboard. The homework assignments will serve as the building blocks of your research design (see below). Homework assignments must be submitted on their respective scheduled dates. **NO MAKE-UPS** will be given without documentation that a doctor has excused your absence or that there are other outstanding circumstances.

Discussion Board (30%)
You will be required to write two (2) equally weighted original posts **AND** two (2) response posts on the Blackboard discussion boards. You must discuss the course readings in your post and be prepared to talk about them in our one-on-one meetings. In order to write these posts you must be following politics in the news. I have posted a few links to newspapers on Blackboard, but please feel free to cite whatever news outlet you desire as long as it is reputable. These posts are designed to help you see the relationship between course material and current political events, to review the readings and lectures, and to help you develop your writing skills. Each post will be assessed on the following criteria: reference to and evidence of understanding the course material; your ability to draw on examples from current political events; and writing skills. Poor grammar, bad spelling, and incoherence will result in lower post grades. Instructions on how to write your posts are available on Blackboard and will be reviewed in lecture.

One-on-One Meetings (20%)
We will schedule two (2) one-on-one meetings via Google Hangouts that will last approximately 30-60 minutes. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss the course readings and discussions, address any concerns you may have about the class, and help you write your research design (see below). These one-on-one meetings are **NOT** a substitute for office hours. More details are available on Blackboard.

Research Design (20%)
At the beginning of the semester, you will decide on a research topic or question that interests you. Your homework assignments and our one-on-one meetings are designed to allow you to explore your chosen topic/question so that by the end of the semester, you will have a coherent research design in place. This research design can (and likely should) be modified and improved upon for use in future prepstone/capstone courses in your major. More details are available on Blackboard and will be discussed in lecture.

Grading
The percentage breakdown for assignments is as follows:

10%   Homework Assignment #1
10%   Homework Assignment #2
10%   Homework Assignment #3
15%   Discussion Board #1
15%   Discussion Board #2
10%   One-on-One Meeting #1
10%   One-on-One Meeting #2
20%   Research Design

I will use the following grading scale for this course:

A (100-93), A- (92-90), B+ (89-87), B (86-83)…F (≤ 59).
Note: in order to receive a grade of 'CR' you must earn a 70% or better in the class.

If you want to contest your grade on an assignment, you **MUST** follow these rules:

1. Wait 24 hours before doing anything.
2. Submit your complaint in writing through a formal letter or email.
3. In the letter, explain a) what you are contesting, and b) your rationale for why the grade is incorrect.

Any complaint that does not follow these rules will be automatically dismissed. Finally, you will have one (1) week from the day the assignments are handed back in class to contest your grade. After the week has passed, grades are final.

Course Suggestions
Consistent Readings
Due to the nature of an asynchronous online course, class meetings to discuss course material will take the form of lectures, discussion boards, and one-on-one meetings. As a result, you will need to do your readings *before* the first day of the week in which they are listed in order to maximize learning and retention.

Class Participation
Tied to the suggestion above, complete all the reading assignments prior to class and be ready to think, act, ask, and contribute. While I will post video lectures and PowerPoint slides to present information, I ask a lot of questions and encourage class discussion and feedback. Think of your education as an investment: the more you put in, the more you will receive.

Communication
Office hours via Google Hangouts are a great way to discuss material you are having trouble understanding. While I will not simply give answers to all of your questions, I will assist you in developing the comprehension skills necessary to be successful in this class. Office hours are strongly encouraged to be taken advantage of sooner rather than later, and we can work to find a time that works for us both. In addition, email and phone are also great ways to keep the lines of communication open.

Current Events
I expect you to keep up with events in the news to help synthesize material we cover in class. The news outlets posted on Blackboard are suggested, but not required, resources for your convenience.

Blackboard and Email
This syllabus and other relevant course materials will be posted on the course's Blackboard site (https://blackboard.temple.edu). Please check the site regularly for announcements and additions. I will also use the email function of Blackboard to communicate. Make sure your email address is updated on Blackboard and check your accounts regularly.

Academic Honesty
Students may discuss papers and readings outside of class, but I expect all submitted work to be the product of individual effort. Failure to cite text or ideas borrowed from other sources, copying written assignments from other students, and cheating during exams are acts of academic misconduct. Academic misconduct will result in a failing grade for the course. Temple University's standards for academic honesty appear in the undergraduate bulletin:

http://bulletin.temple.edu/undergraduate/about-temple-university/student-responsibilities/.

Students with Disabilities

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Disability Resources and Services (215.204.1280, drs@temple.edu, Ritter Annex 100) will assist in coordinating reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Final Notes

Please be respectful of others in the class. The classroom, even online, is a safe space for exchanging questions and ideas. At times, we will discuss topics and issues that may be of a sensitive nature to some. While some conversations may continue outside the virtual classroom, all students should be treated equally and with respect at all times - regardless of the setting.

Reading and Submitted Assignments

Week 1 (09-13MAY): What is Political Science?
- The scientific method
- Independent and dependent variables

Read
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 3-33. (Blackboard)
- Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. 2006. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research." *Political Analysis*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Summer), 227-49.
- Johnson, Janet Buttolph, and H. T. Reynolds. 2011. *Research Methods in Political Science*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 7th edition, 428-45. (Blackboard)

Due
- **Topic/Question for your research design (Sunday, 15MAY by 11:59pm)**

Week 2 (16-20MAY): How do we conduct our studies?
- Concepts, measurement, and operationalization
- Literature reviews

Read
- Sarkees, Meredith Reid. "The COW Typology of War: Defining and Categorizing Wars (Version 4 of the Data)." *Correlates of War*. (Blackboard)
- Hoffman, Bruce. 1998. *Inside Terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 13-44. (Blackboard)
- Knopf, Jeffrey W. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (January), 127-32.
- McMenamin, Iain. 2006. "Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (January), 133-5.

Due
- **One-on-One Meeting #1**
- **Homework Assignment #1 (Sunday, 22MAY by 11:59pm)**

Week 3 (23-27MAY): Large-N Designs
- OLS regression
- Experiments
- Surveys

Read
- Blattman, Christopher, and Jeannie Annan. 2010. "The Consequences of Child Soldiering." *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (November), 882-98.
- Beber, Bernd, and Christopher Blattman. 2013. "The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion." *International Organization*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Winter), 65–104.
- Gerber, Alan S. and Donald P. Green. 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 94, No. 3 (September), 653-63.

Due
- **Discussion Board #1 - Original Post (Wednesday, 25MAY by 11:59pm)**
- **Discussion Board #1 - Response Post (Saturday, 28MAY by 11:59pm)**
- **Homework Assignment #2 (Sunday, 29MAY by 11:59pm)**

Week 4 (30MAY-03JUN): Small-N Designs
- The comparative method
- Within-case analysis

Read
- George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 151-60. (Blackboard)
- Collier, David. 1993. "The Comparative Method." In *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, ed. Finifter, Ada W. Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 105-19. (Blackboard)
- Elster, Jon. 1998. "A Plea for Mechanisms." In *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*, eds. Hedström, Peter, and Richard Swedberg. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 45-73. (Blackboard)
- Snyder, Richard. 2001. "Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method." *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Spring), 93-110.

Due
- **Homework Assignment #3 (Sunday, 05JUN by 11:59pm)**

Week 5 (06-10JUN): Mixed Methods
- Best of both worlds?
- Subjugation of one design over another?

Read
- Lieberman, Evan S. 2005. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 99, No. 3 (August), 435-52.
- Ahmed, Amel, and Rudra Sil. 2012. "When Multi-Method Research Subverts Methodological Pluralism—or, Why We Still Need Single-Method Research." *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (December), 935-53.
- Various. 2008. "Symposium: Bridging the Gap? Connecting Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in the Study of Civil War." *Qualitative Methods: Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research*, Volume 6, No. 1 (Spring), 13-29. (Blackboard)

Due
- **One-on-One Meeting #2**
- **Discussion Board #2 - Original Post (Wednesday, 08JUN by 11:59pm)**
- **Discussion Board #2 - Response Post (Saturday, 11JUN by 11:59pm)**

Week 6 (13-17JUN): Fieldwork
- Ethics
- Ethnography
- Interviews
- Archival research

Read
- United States Department of Health & Human Services. 1979. "The Belmont Report." *Office of the Secretary, Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research, The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research*, April 18. http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/index.html (May 9, 2016).
- Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2007. "Field Research." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, eds. Boix, Carles, and Susan C. Stokes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 123-46. (Blackboard)
- Harpviken, Kristian Berg. 2009. *Social Networks and Migration in Wartime Afghanistan*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 184-90. (Blackboard)
- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2010. "Shades of Truth and Lies: Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence." *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (March), 231-41.
- Lustick, Ian S. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 90, No. 3 (September), 605-18.

Due
- **Research design (Friday, 17JUN by 11:59pm)**