

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY

POL 401.0 Scope and Methods of Political Science

T/TH 10:00 to 11:15am

Fall/Winter 2003-04

Instructor: Susan Thomson, Dalhousie University

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Office hours: By appointment only

Course Description:

POL 401.0 is a full-credit (6.0) course designed to introduce students to the scope and methods of social scientific inquiry and empirical investigation related to the discipline of political science. The course is introductory and assumes students have little experience with empirical research methods, statistics or data manipulation. Instead, the course is designed to provide students, particularly students who are planning to write an honours thesis or major research paper, with the tools to conduct political research scientifically.

Generally social research can be divided into two major categories: qualitative and quantitative. Both methodologies have inherent advantages and disadvantages, which will be considered in class. The main focus of the course is on qualitative methods as the basis of developing new, and refining existing, knowledge. No prior knowledge of mathematics or statistics is required.

Evaluation:

In addition to compulsory attendance and regular participation in class (20%), you will be required to complete the following:

Fall 2003:

Assignment #1: 10% (due 25 September 2003)

Assignment #2: 10% (due 30 October 2003)

Research project: 20% (due 2 December 2003)

Winter 2004:

Assignment #3: 10% (due 10 February 2004)

Assignment #4: 10% (due 11 March 2004)

Research project: 20% (due 13 April 2004)

A 1-point per day penalty will be assessed against any assignment is late (without express permission from me or supporting documentation detailing why your assignment was late).

Required texts:

Manheim, Jarol B., Richard Rich and Lars Willnat (2002), *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science*, New York: Longman.

Shively, W. Phillips (2002), *The Craft of Political Research*, New York: Longman.

Recommended text:

For those of you working on a thesis, or planning to go on to graduate level work, you may benefit from Derek Rowntree's text *Statistics without Tears: An Introduction for Non-Mathematicians* (Toronto: Penguin, 2002). It is available at the SMU bookstore.

Lecture Outline:

4 September 2003: Introduction and course outline. Student responsibilities.

Week 1: The Research Process

9/11 September: Chapter 1, Manheim *et al.*; chapter 1 Shively.

Week 2: Building and Testing Theory

16/18 September: Chapter 2, Manheim *et al.*; chapter 2 Shively.

Week 3: Reviewing the (Relevant) Literature

23/25 September: Chapter 3, Manheim *et al.*

ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE**Week 4/5: Operationalisation and Measurement (Part 1)**

30 September/2 & 7 October: Chapter 4 Manheim *et al.*; chapters 4 and 5, Shively

Week 5: Measurement (Precision) (Part 2) and Research Design (Part 1)

7 October: see week 4/5

9 October: Chapter 5, Manheim *et al.*

Week 6: Research Design (Part 2)

14//16 October: Chapter 5, Manheim *et al.*, chapter 6, Shively.

Week 7: Sampling

21/23 October: Chapter 6, Manheim *et al.*

Week 8 : CLASSES CANCELLED

28/30 October: **ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE : DROP IN MY MAILBOX IN THE DEPARTMENT.** Usual disclaimers apply despite my absence!

Week 9: Survey Research and Techniques

4 November: Chapter 7, Manheim *et al.*

6 November : Chapter 8, Manheim *et al.*

Week 10 : Content Analysis

11/13 November : Chapter 9, Manheim *et al.*

Week 11 : Aggregate Data

18/20 November : Chapter 10, Manheim *et al.*

Week 12 : Review and Presentations

25 November : Review

27 November : Presentations 1

Week 13 : Presentations

2 December : Presentations 2

Winter Term**Week 1: Comparative Research**

6/8 January : Chapter 11, Manheim *et al.*

Week 2: Data Manipulation

13/15 January: Chapter 12, Manheim *et al.*

Week 3: Description and Univariable Statistics

20 January: Chapter 13, Manheim *et al.*

22 January: Chapter 14, Manheim *et al.* (Shively chapter 7 as a reference but not required reading)

Week 4: Relationships between Two Variables

27/29 January: Chapter 15, Manheim *et al.* (Shively chapter 8 as a reference but not required reading)

Week 5: Relationships among Multiple Variables

3/5 February: Chapter 16, Manheim *et al.*

Week 6: Qualitative Methods

10/12 February: pp. 313-319, Manheim *et al.* (Rowntree also helpful here)

ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE

Week 7: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES**Week 8: Elite Interviewing**

24/26 February: Chapter 18, Manheim *et al.*

Week 9: Direct Observation

2/4 March: Chapter 19, Manheim *et al.*

Week 10: Focus Groups

9/11 March: Chapter 20, Manheim *et al.*

ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE

Week 11:
16/18 March: CLASSES CANCELLED

Week 12: Writing Up the Report
23/25 March: Chapter 21, Manheim *et al.*

Week 13: Review
30 March/1 April

Week 14: Project Presentations
6/8 April