Political Science Research Methods

Academic Year 2023–24

This course is intended to teach you basic **research design** and show you some of the **research methods** available to social scientists.

You will need to use those skills to write up your undergraduate dissertation, and several Masters programmes will ask for evidence that you have trained in them by requiring that you submit a written sample with your application. Since research and writing skills are highly transferable, they will also be useful in your professional life to write documents like policy papers and other kinds of reports.

The course is organised in a 'winter school' three-day format. Each day will start with a one-hour introduction, followed by three lectures.

Principles

- This course is **pluralist:** it covers a wide range of methods and analytical strategies, which is reflected in the fact that its sessions are taught by a diverse team of ESPOL researchers who themselves use different methods in their own research work.

  At no point during this course will you be told to adopt such or such theoretical or methodological perspective in your own dissertation: you will have to determine that yourself, possibly after consulting with your research supervisor.

- The course is **practical:** its sessions answer questions of the form "if you want to write a dissertation on [topic] using [method], then you should do [steps]."

  You will receive detailed readings on various methods and analytical strategies as the course goes. Those readings will likely contribute to the write-up of the methods section of your dissertation.

- The course is **bilingual:** like the rest of your degree, it will be taught either in English or in French, depending on the session lecturer.

  While the final exam for this course will be in English, the compulsory readings on which it will be based are also in both languages.

Schedule

Day 1	*Designing your research*	Monday 15 January 2024

9am–10am	**Introduction to the day**
10am–noon	**1. Literature Reviews**[1] by François Briatte
1pm–3pm	**2. Research Design** by Shoshana Fine
3pm–5pm	**3. Concepts and Theories** by Sara Dezalay

Day 2	*Collecting and analysing data*	Tuesday 16 January, 2024

9am–10am	**Introduction to the day**
10am–noon	**4. Collecting Evidence** by François Briatte
1pm–3pm	**5. Conducting Interviews** by Camille Kelbel
3pm–5pm	**6. Archival Research and Document Analysis** by Philippe Bonditti

Day 3	*Working with specific methods*	Wednesday 17 January 2024

9am–10am	**Introduction to the day**
10am–noon	**7. Case Studies and Comparative Analysis** by François Briatte
1pm–3pm	**8. History of Ideas and Political Theory** by Pierre-Yves Néron
3pm–5pm	**9. Public Policy Analysis** by Oriane Calligaro

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[1] This session does not cover how to access scientific books and journals, or how to make inter-library loans, but the librarians team at the Vauban Academic Library can assist you in these tasks.

Exam

The final exam for this course is an English-language **2-hour quiz** based on the contents of the compulsory readings listed below, as well as on some of the course lectures and on additional documents featured in the exam. You will receive a copy of the compulsory readings one month prior to the course. Further details on what to expect on the quiz will be provided during the introductory sessions of the course, which will include some Q & A time.

Readings

N.B. The readings are listed in recommended reading order, rather than alphabetically. All readings will be made available ahead of the course in both digital and printed formats.

Surel, Y. 2015. "Faire une recherche en science politique," in *La science politique et ses méthodes*, Paris: Armand Colin, pp. 131–70.

McCauley, A. and Ruggeri, A. 2020. "From Questions and Puzzles to Research Project," in Curini, L. and Franzese, R. (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science and International Relations*, London: Sage, vol. 1, pp. 26–43.

Elster, J. 2015. "Explanation," in *Explaining Social Behavior. More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3–22.

Toshkov, D. 2018. "Research Design," in Lowndes, V., Marsh D. and Stoker G. (eds), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 4th ed., pp. 219–36.

Knopf. J.W. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(1): 127–32.

Coman, R. *et al*. 2016. "Les entretiens," in *Méthodes de la science politique. De la question de départ à l'analyse des données*, Brussels: De Boeck, pp. 107–33.

Jupp, V. 2006. "Documents and Critical Research," in Sapsford, R. and Jupp, V. (eds), *Data Collection and Analysis*, 2nd ed., pp. 272–90.

European Commission. 2018. *Ethics in Social Science and Humanities*. H2020 report to DG Research and Innovation, Brussels: European Commission.

Guides

- ESPOL Guide to Academic Writing
- ESPOL Referencing and Plagiarism Avoidance Guide
- Listes indicatives de revues scientifiques (English and French)

Handbooks

Crucial that your diss. cites methodological readings. The ones assigned to this course are only a starting point. Go deeper.

If I had to recommend a single one, Baglione, 4th ed 2020. Chaps 3 and 4 complement the reading by Knopf. Chap 6 is good on writing strategy, and ch 9 provides guidance to write critical sections of the diss (intro, coda).

In French, from the readings above, Surel 2015 for an overview and Coman et al. 2016 for specifics. More details in Roux and Savarese.

In English, Lowndes et al. 2018 for a broad treatment, Howard 2017 for comparison and stats, Curini and Franzese for more focused contributions.

Also recommended, Halperin and Heath, and for more ambitious, della Porta and Keating 2008.

Example 1: interpretive policy analysis

https://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-de-science-politique-2013-3-page-569.htm

https://ipa.science/who-we-are/what-is-interpretive-policy-analysis/

https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/SectionDetails/1068

Handbook of Interpretive Pol.

Ideational ('cognitive') approaches, policy instruments.

Example 2: comparative party politics

FRA, BEL, GER, CZE

PartyFacts, CHES, Party Manifestos

Franklin, Howard etc.

Example 3: political ethnography

Organizational sociology.