

Political Science Research Methods

Academic Year 2018-19



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

You will have to use such skills to write up your undergraduate dissertation in the last semester of your studies. Later, you will also need those skills for your Masters dissertation.

Because writing skills are highly transferable, they will also be useful in your professional life to write policy papers and country reports.

Approach

- The course is **pluralist**: it contains a presentation of general research design as well as a wide range of methods and analytical strategies.
- 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].”
- The course is **bilingual**: it will be taught either in English or in French, depending on the session lecturer.

Mechanics

This course is composed of 12 **main sessions** and 3 **guest lectures** taught by a large team of permanent and guest ESPOL lecturers.

The final exam for this course will be a 90-minute quiz covering the entire course, at the exception of the guest lectures. Attendance to all sessions is compulsory.

The **readings** listed at the end of this syllabus, which are all optional, are meant to help you map the methodological literature that you will need to read for your research dissertations.

This course is running for the first time this semester. The syllabus is currently a work-in-progress, and will be updated throughout the semester.

Main sessions

1. Introduction: Topics, Sources, Methods

By [François Briatte](#)

Why this course, why we (teachers, researchers, students) all need research methods, why study many approaches, and how to get started in any subject area.

2. Research Design, Research Questions and Literature Reviews

By [Felix-Christopher von Nostitz](#)

What is a literature review, what is a conceptual framework, and why we need both to articulate facts and theory into a proper conceptual framework and research design.

3. Case Studies and Comparison

By [Sabine Weiland](#)

What do we call case study analysis, how to compare cases, and how to design a 'small-*N*' comparative analysis.

4. Quantitative Methods and Statistics: Datasets and Models

By [François Briatte](#)

What does it mean to collect a dataset, what datasets already exist, and how to produce informative statistics and visualizations from data.

5. Mixed Methods for Studying Parties, Votes and Attitudes

By [Giulia Sandri](#)

How to use surveys and other material to produce a 'mixed-methods' analysis; how to study (democratic) electoral politics with those methods, focusing on political parties, electoral results (votes) and political attitudes.

6. Interviews and Participant Observation

By [Brendan Coolsaet](#)

Introducing ethnography, the systematic study of people and cultures, its purpose, its usefulness and its limits, focussing mainly on how to conduct in-depth interviews and participant observation through fieldwork.

7. Interviews and Documents in European Union Policy Analysis

By [Oriane Calligaro](#)

An introduction to the specific challenges of the study of EU policies: how to identify the main actors, how to access and analyse official documents and grey literature, how to plan interviews.

8. Archival Research and Document Analysis

By [Agatha Verdebout](#)

Introduction to the notion of 'archive', their accessibility, their (relative) importance, and the special methodological precautions and challenges connected to their manipulation.

9. Methods in Political Philosophy and Theory

By [Pierre-Yves Néron](#) and [Thierry Chopin](#)

How to study philosophical or ideological arguments, using texts and contexts: the Cambridge School; what sets political theory and philosophy apart; Continental vs. analytical traditions; critical vs. normative approaches.

10. Deconstruction and Discourse Theory

By [Janis Grzybowski](#)

How to deconstruct texts or discourses so as to unravel the underlying politics weaved into their very structure, and thereby help students investigate the silent presuppositions behind statements of fact or value.

11. Discourse-based Analysis

What is discourse, and what are 'discourse-based' approaches? What are the relationships between discourse, language and knowledge? How does discourse relate to, and inform, the social and political realities we want to study?

By [Philippe Bonditti](#)

12. Wrap-up and Research Writing

By [François Briatte](#)

What this course has taught you, how to structure your written work in order to go through all the required steps. Points covered: problem statement formulation, supporting evidence, argumentation, and paper formatting.

Guest lectures

The following additional sessions will be delivered by guest and invited lecturers or professors who are currently teaching at ESPOL. The lectures, which are grounded in our guests' own research, will offer applied case studies of the methods and analytical strategies presented in the main lectures.

1. Social History of Ideas, Collective Memories and Gender

By [Sidonie Verhaeghe](#) (CERAPS, University of Lille)

2. Studying Prisons, Deviance and Punishment

By [Joël Charbit](#) (CLERSÉ, University of Lille) and [Alexia Venouil](#) (CESDIP)

3. Applying Discourse Methods to Security Studies

By [Falk Ostermann](#) (Justus-Liebig-University of Giessen)

Readings

Handbooks

Buttolph Johnson, J., Reynolds, H.T. and Mycoff, J.D. 2016. *Political Science Research Methods*, 8th ed., Thousands Oaks and London: Sage.

Coman, R. et al. 2016. *Méthodes de la science politique. De la question de départ à l'analyse des données*, Brussels: De Boeck.

della Porta, D. and Keating, M. (eds). 2008. *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences. A Pluralist Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gerring, J. and Christenson, D. 2017. *Applied Social Science Methodology. An Introductory Guide*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hancké, B. 2009. *Intelligent Research Design. A Guide for Beginning Researchers in the Social Sciences*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roux, C. and Savarese, É. (eds). 2017. *Science politique*, Brussels: Bruylant.

Surel, Y. 2015. *La science politique et ses méthodes*, Paris: Armand Colin.

van Campenhoudt, L. and Quivy, R. 2011. *Manuel de recherche en sciences sociales*, 4th ed., Paris: Dunod.

Session-specific readings

1. Introduction: Topics, Sources, Methods

Course handbooks: Coman et al., ch. 2 (“Les grandes options méthodologiques”) and 3 (“Les étapes de la construction d’une stratégie de recherche”); Hancké, ch. 1 (“Research in the Social Sciences”); Roux et Savarese, ch. 5.1 (Pina, “Produire des données d’enquête en science politique”); Surel 2015, ch. 3 (“Faire une recherche en science politique”), van Campenhoudt and Quivy, ch. 2 (“L’exploration”) and 5 (“L’observation”).

Other handbooks: Becker, H.S. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade. How to Think about Your Research While You’re Doing It*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Berger, P.L. 1963. *Invitation to Sociology. A Humanistic Perspective*, New York: Random House; Parsons, C. 2007. *How to Map Arguments in Political Science*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Other readings: Keohane, R.O. 2009. “Political Science As A Vocation,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42(2): 359–63; Merton, R.K. 1942. “A Note on Science and Democracy,” *Journal of Legal and Political Sociology* 115(1): 115–26.

2. Research Design, Research Questions and Literature Reviews

Course handbooks: Gerring and Christenson, ch. 11 (“Reading and Reviewing”); Hancké, ch. 2 (“Constructing a Research Design”); della Porta and Keating, ch. 10 (Mair, “Concepts and Concept Formation”); Roux et Savarese, ch. 5.4 (Savarese, “Le statut de la théorie en science politique”).

Other readings: Abbott, A.D. 2004. *Methods of Discovery. Heuristics for the Social Sciences*, New York: W.W. Norton, ch. 1 (“Explanation”) and 2 (“Basic Debates and Methodological Practices”); Parsons, C. 2007. *How to Map Arguments in Political Science*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, ch. 1 (“Boundaries and Divisions in Explanation of Action”).

3. (a) Case Studies

Course handbooks: Coman et al., ch. 8 (“Le traçage de processus dans une étude de cas”); della Porta and Keating, ch. 11 (Vennesson, “Case Studies and Process Tracing: Theories and Practices”).

Other handbooks: Yin, R. 2003. *Case Study Research. Design and Methods*, 3rd ed., Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Other readings: Campbell, D.T. 1975. “‘Degrees of Freedom’ and the Case Study,” *Comparative Political Studies* 8(2): 178–85; Eisenhardt, K.M. 1989. “Building Theories from Case Study Research,” *Academy of Management Review* 14(4): 532–50.

3. (b) Comparison

Course handbooks: della Porta and Keating, ch. 11 (della Porta, “Comparative Analysis: Case-Oriented versus Variable-Oriented Research”); Hancké, ch. 3 (“Constructing Case Studies and Comparisons”); Roux et Savarese, ch. 5.3 (Vigour, “La démarche comparative”).

Other handbooks: Ragin, C.C. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, Berkeley: University of California Press; Morlino, L. 2013. *Introduction à la politique comparée*, Paris: Armand Colin.

Other readings: Collier, D. 1993. “The Comparative Method,” in Finifter, A.D. (ed.), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, Washington: APSA, pp. 105–19; Rueschemeyer, D. and Stephens, J.D. 1997. “Comparing Historical Sequences: A Powerful Tool for Causal Analysis,” *Comparative Social Research* 16(1): 55–72.

4. Quantitative Methods and Statistics: Datasets and Models

Course handbooks: Coman et al., ch. 2 (“Enquêtes et bases de données”); Hancké, ch. 4 (“Constructing Data”); della Porta and Keating, ch. 13 (Franklin, “Quantitative Analysis”);

Gerring and Christenson, Part 3 (several chapters, covering all basics of quantitative methods in roughly 100 pages).

Other handbooks: Barnier, J. 2018. *Introduction à R et au tidyverse* (Web book); Carroll, J. 2018. *Beyond Spreadsheets with R*, Shelter Island: Manning; Larmarange, J. et al. 2018. *Introduction à l'analyse d'enquêtes avec R et RStudio* (Web book); Peng, R.D. 2016. *Exploratory Data Analysis with R*, LeanPub (also: [Web book](#)).

Other readings: Briatte, F. 2019. "[Quantitative Social Science Data](#)" (Web page); Gelman, A. 2008. "What's in a Number? Definitions of Fairness and Political Representation," in Gelman, A. and Cortina, J. (eds), *A Quantitative Tour of the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 11–9.

5. (a) Mixed Methods

Course handbooks: Roux et Savarese, ch. 5.2 (Blanchard, "Qualitatif et quantitatif : la fin du malentendu ?").

Other handbooks: Seawright, J. 2016. *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools* (see esp. ch. 1, "Integrative Multi-methods Research"); Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Toshkov, D. 2016. *Research Design in Political Science*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Other readings: Lieberman, E. S. 2005. "[Nested Analysis as a Mixed-method Strategy for Comparative Research](#)," *American Political Science Review* 99(3): 435–52

5. (b) Studying Parties, Votes and Attitudes

Other handbooks: Dalton, R.J. and Klingemann, H.-D. (eds). 2006. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Fisher, J. et al. (eds). 2017. *The Routledge Handbook of Elections, Voting Behavior and Public Opinion*, London: Routledge; Mayer, N. 2010. *Sociologie des comportements politiques*, Paris: Armand Colin.

Other readings: Döring, H. and Regel, S. 2019. "[Party Facts: A Database of Political Parties Worldwide](#)," *Party Politics*, forthcoming; Fieldhouse, E. and Prosser, C. 2017. "[Horses for Courses: Using Internet Surveys for Researching Public Opinion and Voting Behavior](#)," in Fisher, J. et al. (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Elections, Voting Behavior and Public Opinion*, London: Routledge, pp. 472–83; Poguntke, T. et al. 2016. "[Party Rules, Party Resources and the Politics of Parliamentary Democracies](#)," *Party Politics* 22(6): 661–78; Scarrow, S.E. 2007. "[Political Activism and Party Members](#)," in Dalton, R.J. and Klingemann, H.-D. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 636–54.

6. Interviews and Participant Observation

Course handbooks: della Porta and Keating, ch. 15 (Bray, "Ethnographic Approaches"); Coman *et al.*, ch. 6 ("Les entretiens"); and 9 ("L'observation empirique").

Other readings: Mosley, L. (ed.). 2013. *Interview Research in Political Science*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

7. Interviews and Documents in European Union Policy Analysis

Other handbooks: Lynggaard, K., Manners, I. and Lofgren, G. (eds). 2015. *Research Methods in European Union Studies*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, ch. 6 (Kronsell, "Single Policy Analysis") and ch. 7 (Crespy, "European Discourse Analysis").

Other readings: Lequesne, C. 1999. "Interviewer les acteurs politico-administratifs de la construction européenne", in Cohen, S. (ed.), *L'art d'interviewer les dirigeants*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, pp. 51–66.

8. Archival Research and Document Analysis

Other handbooks: Gunn, S. and Fair, L. 2012. *Research Methods for History*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, ch. 2 (King, "Working with/in the Archives").

Other readings: Offenstadt, N. 2011. "Les historiens, les documents et leur critique," in *L'historiographie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, ch. 2; Schenk, D. 2014. "Pouvoir de l'archive et vérité historique," *Écrire l'histoire* (13–14): 35–53; Smith, K.L. 2018. "Guide to Online Primary Sources," UC San Diego.

9. Methods in Political Philosophy and Theory

Other handbooks: Skinner, Q. 1978. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2 volumes; Strauss, L. 1959. *What is Political Philosophy?*, New York: Free Press; Strauss, L. and Cropsey, J. (eds). 1963. *History of Political Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Other readings: Dunn, J. 1992. *Histoire de la théorie politique*, Paris: Menta; Koselleck, R. 1990 [1979]. *Le futur passé. Contribution à la sémantique des temps historiques*, Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS; March, A. 2009. "What is Comparative Political Theory?" *The Review of Politics* 71(4): 531–65; Norman, W. 1998. "'Inevitable and Unacceptable?' Methodological Rawlsianism in Anglo-American Political Philosophy," *Political Studies* 46(2): 276–94; Skinner *et al.* 2002. "Political Philosophy: The view from Cambridge," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10(1): 1–19.

10. Deconstruction and Discourse Theory

Other readings: LaCapra, D. 1982. "Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts," in LaCapra, D. and Kaplan, S.L. (eds), *Modern European Intellectual History*, Cornell: Cornell University Press, pp. 47-85 [[article version](#)].

11. Discourse-based Analysis

Course handbooks: Coman et al., ch. 7 ("L'analyse de discours et de contenu").

Other readings: Bourdieu, P. 1977. "L'économie des échanges linguistiques," *Langue française* (34): 17–34; Boutet, J. and Maingueneau, D. 2005. "Sociolinguistique et analyse de discours : façons de dire, façons de faire," *Langage et société* 4(114): 15–47; Fairclough, I. and Fairclough, N. 2012. "Analyse et évaluation de l'argumentation dans l'analyse critique du discours (CDA) : délibération et dialectique des Lumières," *Argumentation et analyse du discours* (9); Maingueneau, D. 2012. "Que cherchent les analystes du discours ?" *Argumentation et analyse du discours* (9).

12. Wrap-up and Research Writing

Course handbooks: Gerring and Christenson, ch. 14 ("Writing"); Hancké, ch. 5 ("Writing Up Your Research").

Other readings: APSA Committee on Publications. 2006. *Style Manual for Political Science*, Washington D.C., American Political Science Association. Labaree, R.V. 2018. "Organizing Your Social Sciences Research Paper," University of Southern California; Moskos, P. 2015. *Grammar 101*. Université Paris 8. 2012. *Brochure LEC1*.