University of Victoria
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
Political Science 505/605 – Spring 2019

Problems of Political Analysis
Dr. Marlea Clarke

Class Time & Location: Monday, 2:30-5:20, DTB A357
Office: DTB A344
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E-mail: mjclarke@uvic.ca (please put Poli 505/605 in subject line)
Office Hours: Thursday, 1:00-3:00 (or by appointment)

About the course: This course provides graduate students with an overview of some of the key debates associated with political analysis, with a primary focus on different approaches to the study of politics and political change. While the course explores the principles and practices of the study of politics, it approaches the question of methods from a political point of view; the implications of different choices of methods will be considered alongside the methods themselves. As such, the course focuses on competing methodologies in the social sciences and the different ways that particular research methods are employed within each methodological tradition. We will also explore debates surrounding research ethics and ethical frameworks. As such, the course provides students with the conceptual and practical skills to conduct research by discussing qualitative inquiry and research design, as well as mixed methods (research triangulation). The course builds on students’ prior knowledge and research experience, but there is no expectation that students have prior familiarity with research methods.

The study of politics is composed of the interrelationship between three important elements: the logic of political analysis, where we consider ontological and epistemological questions and issues of knowledge production; approaches of political inquiry, which provide the theoretical and philosophical basis for the study of politics; and methods of political inquiry, which structure the procedural rules and tools for data collection and analysis. This course will introduce students to all three elements.

The course has three goals. First, it aims to introduce students to some of the key methodological debates in the social sciences, and in political research in particular. The focus here is on three research paradigms. We begin by exploring the two main (or dominant) methodological traditions in contemporary social science - naturalism (‘positivism’) and constructivism (‘interpretivism’) – and will then turn to examine other important approaches such as indigenous and feminist approaches. We will discuss and examine how particular research methods are used by scholars within these traditions. Second, the course is designed to ensure that students have a basic understanding of research design and research methods (with an emphasis on qualitative research) and an ability to prepare and conduct research as well as analyze the data. The third aim of the course is to provide students with the opportunity
to develop the analytical and methodological foundations for their MA or PhD thesis by preparing and presenting their thesis proposal, ethics application or draft first thesis chapter (which must include a detailed methodology and methods section, theoretical discussion or literature review).

The first part of the course (Part One, weeks 2-8) focuses on methodology in social and political science. This section introduces students to a range of key epistemological, ontological and methodological issues, from the nature of knowledge and what can be known, to the strengths and weaknesses of the main research methods associated with different approaches. We end this section with an exploration of feminist and indigenous approaches to research.

The second part of the course (Part Two, weeks 8-13) introduces students to research design, methods and techniques, as well as the ethics of research. It explores the following qualitative approaches: narrative inquiry, phenomenology, grounded theory research, ethnography and case study research. Finally, this section examines concrete methods for gathering data, including interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation. The last class is dedicated to the presentation and discussion of each student’s draft major assignment.

Course readings:


Additional readings available from the UVic library, or available from the instructor.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Essays (2 x 15%)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Assignment (20-25 pages)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of Major Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
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TOTAL 100%
Seminar Attendance and Participation (10%)
This is a seminar course that is reading intensive and depends upon student participation. Students are expected to complete weekly readings in advance, and come prepared for in depth discussions of the required readings for that week. This involves taking initiative in class discussions, taking responsibility for providing brief summaries of one or more readings each week, and identifying key issues/questions that emerged from the readings. Participation will be assessed based on your overall attendance and participation in weekly seminars. Each student is required to lead one seminar discussion in additional to regular participation in each seminar.

Seminar Presentation (10%)
Each student (alone or in teams) will be responsible for leading one seminar discussion (can be the same week as either of your two review essays). You will be responsible for providing a brief overview of the readings (core argument/points advanced; evidence/information used to support this argument; key questions that emerge from the readings; links to other weeks’ readings, etc.).

Review Essays (2 x 15% each)
This course strongly encourages critical thinking and focuses on strengthening reading, writing and research skills. All academic work involves analysis, reading and writing. Writing about what you read helps you to work through and think about what you have read. It also helps you to think about and map out the logic of the argument being pursued, and to critically engage with the logic of the argument and conclusions reached. Students are required to write two short (approximately 6-7 pages) review essays based on the course readings.

The first essay must focus on any week in Part 1 of the course, the second essay must focus on any week in Part 2 of the course. Within these limitations, pick whichever week you like and review the required readings. The essay must be submitted at the beginning of the class that you are focusing on. The essay should provide a brief summary of the readings and should identify key issues/questions that emerged from the readings. This essay should go beyond simply summarizing the readings; it should identify and discuss broader issues, questions and/or debates arising from the readings. You can also discuss some of the concrete issues emerging from the readings with reference to your own research topic/research plans.

Major Assignment (40%)
Students will produce one major assignment for the course and may choose from one of three options listed below:

- A research proposal (only accepted if not a duplicate of 508/608). Proposals should be approximately 4000 words in length (15-20 pages). The proposal should include: a research question; information on the topic/prior research and/or brief literature review; methodology, including proposed research methods and rationale; a preliminary chapter breakdown; and a bibliography.
- An ethics proposal (using UVic’s required format), including draft interview questions.
• A draft thesis introductory chapter, including outline of methodology/methods and literature review. Approximately 4000 in length (15-20 pages).

Additional information about the assignment options will be provided in the seminar. Students will also have an opportunity to revise their assignments after their presentations and before final submission.

**Presentation of Major Assignment (10%)**
Each student is also expected to present her or his major assignment during a final seminar. Presentations should be a maximum of 10 minutes. Students will circulate their assignment one week prior, and all students will be expected to provide feedback on each other’s work.

**Grading Scale**
The following is the official University grading system for graduate classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Point Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>Exceptional work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>Outstanding work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>Excellent work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>Very good work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>Acceptable work that fulfills the expectations of the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>Unacceptable work revealing some deficiencies in knowledge, understanding or techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>65-69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>Failing grade. Unsatisfactory performance.</td>
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**Note:** Students must complete all assignments in order to get credit for the course. Extensions for written work will not be given except for documented emergencies.

**NOTE:** the instructor reserves the right to correct or modify the syllabus as the course progresses.
CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1 (Jan. 7): Introduction to the course
- Introduction of students & their research
- General discussion about political analysis and philosophical frameworks

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Week 2 (Jan. 14): Introduction to Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research; Introduction to the Naturalist Methodology
Required Readings:
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 1 “Introduction,” pp. 1-18
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 2 “Naturalist Philosophy of Science,” pp. 19-51
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 3 “The Experimental Method,” pp. 52-68
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 4 “The Statistical Method,” pp. 70-94

Week 3 (Jan. 21): From the Naturalist to the Constructivist Philosophy
Required Readings:
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 5 “The Comparative Method,” pp. 95-117
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 6 “History, Interviews and Case Studies,” pp. 118-144
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 7 “Sowing Doubts about the Naturalist Methodology,” pp. 145-168
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 8 “A Constructivist Philosophy of Science,” pp. 169-203

Week 4 (Jan. 28): A Constructivist Philosophy of Science
Required Readings:
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 9 “From Story Telling to Telling Histories,” pp. 204-230
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 10 “Comparing Contexts,” pp. 231-255
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 11 “Contextualizing Statistics,” pp. 256-279
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 12 “Interpretive Experiments,” pp. 280-299
- Moses & Knutsen, Ch. 13 “Conclusion,” pp. 300-312

Recommended:
Week 5 (Feb. 4): Feminist Epistemologies; Feminist Research
Required Readings


Recommended:

Week 6 (Feb. 11): Critical Approaches to Social Research: Indigenous Research Frameworks
Required Readings:


Recommended:


Week 7 (Feb. 18): READING BREAK. No class, no office hours.

Week 8 (Feb. 25): Action Research and Community Engagement
Required Readings:

Recommended

**PART TWO: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

**Week 9 (March 4): Ethics in Research**

**Required Readings:**
• Henn, Weinstein & Foard, Ch. 4 “Ethics in Social Research,” pp. 77-108 (copy provided)

**Recommended:**

Please also review UVic’s ethics requirements. See the main website and related pages: [https://www.uvic.ca/research/conduct/home/regapproval/humanethics/index.php](https://www.uvic.ca/research/conduct/home/regapproval/humanethics/index.php)

**Week 10 (March 11): Focusing the Study; Research Design**

**Required Readings:**
• Creswell, Ch. 3 “Designing a Qualitative Study,” pp. 42-68
• Creswell, Ch. 6 “Introducing and Focusing the Study,” pp. 129-144

**Recommended:** (copies available from instructor)
• Henn, Weinstein & Foard, Ch. 3 “Getting Started in Research: The Research Process,” pp. 48-76
• Henn, Weinstein & Foard, Ch. 10 “Designing a Research Proposal,” pp. 303-329

**Week 11 (March 18): Methods and Design Associated with Qualitative Approaches**

**Required Readings:**
- Creswell, Ch. 4 “Five Qualitative Approaches to Inquiry,” pp. 69-110
- Creswell, Ch. 5 “Five Different Qualitative Studies,” pp. 111-128
- Creswell, Ch. 7 “Data Collection,” pp. 145-178

**Week 12 (March 25): Conducting Qualitative Research: Data Collection**

**Required Readings:**
- Rubin & Rubin. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Chapters 1-11, pp. 2-187

**Recommended:**

**Week 13 (April 1): Analyzing and Presenting Data**

**Required Readings:**
- Rubin & Rubin. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Chapters 12-14, pp.189-237
- Creswell, Ch. 8 “Data Analysis,” pp. 179-212
- Creswell, Ch. 9 “Writing a Qualitative Study,” pp. 213-242
- Creswell, Ch. 10 “Standards of Validation and Evaluation,” pp. 243-268

**Recommended:**
- Creswell, Ch. 11 **‘Turning the Story’ and Conclusion,” pp. 269-281

**Final Seminar (date, TBA) Student Presentations and Discussion.**

Readings: Students’ Major Assignment (to be circulated via e-mail one week prior).

**Revised final paper due approximately 1 week later: date TBA**