INTRODUCTION
Almost every graduate program in Political Science requires a course like POLI 701. These courses cover a wide range of topics from philosophy of science and epistemology, through the nature and processes of science and the social sciences, the history of Political Science and its status as a science, questions of theory and causation, how we study the empirical world around us, and how we can pull all of these elements together to develop plans to guide the researcher and let others know exactly how some piece of research was designed and executed, that is, research design.

In the introductory sections of this syllabus I have borrowed liberally from the syllabi of others who have taught this course at South Carolina, and at other institutions. I wish to acknowledge the material taken from the syllabi of: Don Songer, Sandy Schneider, and Bill Mishler (South Carolina), Bill Dixon (University of Arizona), Jim Garand (Louisiana State University), and Kim Hill (Texas A&M University).

Background: Course of Study at USC
This is a required seminar that is part of the core curriculum for all Ph.D. students in Political Science, regardless of their subfield specialization. It is generally taken by students in their first semester in the Ph.D. program. The course is generally not recommended for students in the MA program. Students enrolled in Ph.D. courses in other disciplines should consult with the instructor about whether this course is appropriate for your academic program. There are no formal pre-requisites for this course, but all students are expected to have a sufficient background for Ph.D. work in Political Science.
Description and Objectives
How do we know what we know about politics? What is political knowledge? How is it attained? How do we assess critically the quality of political analysis and the knowledge obtained from such analysis? These are questions we will address in this course. The main learning objectives of this course are: to provide students with an introduction to the logic of inquiry and the methodology of political research; to enhance the ability of students to understand the scientific enterprise generally and as it is pursued in Political Science. While the principal focus will be on the systematic empirical study of politics (or “neo-positivism,” or the “naturalistic,” or the “scientific” approach), the course should also help students understand different approaches to the systematic study of political phenomena, their theoretical and empirical assumptions, and their different potential contributions to our knowledge and understanding of these phenomena.

The course will also help enhance the ability of students to employ different research methods and approaches that are widely used in Political Science, and critically evaluate the theoretical and empirical strengths and weaknesses of research (their own and others). As noted, in pulling these objectives together, this course will help students learn how to design research projects—research you will be expected to carry out in your subsequent graduate seminars, and ultimately for your Ph.D. dissertation. The bottom line is that POLI 701 has been developed to equip each student with the basic concepts, analytical criteria, and research skills that will facilitate participation in later seminars, and allow each student to plan a general course of study at USC. The issues and problems discussed in more general terms in 701 will arise repeatedly in future reading, research, and substantive seminars.

COURSE READING
The following, four required-reading books have been ordered and are available at the area bookstores. One book has also been ordered as recommended for purchase. Note, copies of these books are not on reserve at Thomas Cooper Library.

• Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, Designing Social Inquiry (Princeton University Press, 1994) [KKV on syllabus] [req]
• Charles A. Lave and James G. March, An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences (University Press of America, 1993). This is the same book as the 1975 edition from Harper & Row. [L&M on syllabus] [req]

ALL of the other required readings, along with some of the recommended reading (and some of the readings listed for the “Classics” paper) are also available in electronic form on the Blackboard page for POLI 701. Readings on the syllabus marked by a [BB] can be found by clicking on the “Course Documents” tab. Readings marked [CC] are also in Course Documents, but listed separately at the bottom of that section. A number of books are on Reserve at Thomas Cooper Library—these are marked by a double asterisk. There are also folders of xeroxed material available at the Reserves desk, which can be checked out for reading in the Library.

Alternatively, many of the items noted on the syllabus, across the various categories, are articles in professional journals. As such, they will be readily available from the E-Journals link at the Thomas Cooper Library website, or in the library stacks. Each week I will take time to discuss the next week’s reading in terms of general content, priority, order of reading, etc.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS/EVALUATION**

Each student will be evaluated on the basis of the following calculation of final grades:

1) class and professional participation 30%
2) 2 short analytical papers 30%
3) Research Design paper 40%

1) **Participation (30%)**

Class participation and preparedness is a major component of evaluation in graduate seminars. Each student will be evaluated on the basis of informed participation and contribution to seminar discussion. *You must come to class prepared to discuss the week’s required reading.*

Participation includes your contribution to the presentation and discussion of student research designs at the conclusion of the course. In addition, you will be expected to attend and participate in at least 2-3 of the Political Science Research Workshop colloquia held on Friday afternoons; attend presentations of Ph.D. students preparing to go on job interviews; and participate in recruitment activities of new department faculty.
2) **Analytical Papers (30%)**

Each student will be required to write two short (5 page) papers. These papers may be handed in any time during the semester up to the last due date for each.

**“Classics” Paper:** While not a course on philosophy of science, the syllabus lists a number of “classic” items which focus (mostly) on philosophy of science/epistemology issues. For this paper each student will read one of the suggested “classic” items and write a 5 page paper which analytically links that paper to the required readings for that section of the course. That is, you will indicate how the selected classic item helps build background or context for all (or some) of the required items assigned; use the selected item to indicate strengths and weaknesses of the required reading; and/or use the required readings to indicate strengths and weaknesses of the selected classic item. The last date a classics paper may be submitted is **October 24 (in class)**. Note that there are “classics” listed for weeks beyond Topic #6 (“Concepts, Measurement...”). If you are interested in (or already familiar with) those topics/items, you may read ahead and write a paper for “classics” and topics later in the course. Please see the instructor if you have any questions on “classics”/topics.

**Empirical Research Critique Paper:** In discussion with the POLI 701 instructor or instructors in your other courses or in you subfield of interest, you should identify an article published in a political science journal which presents original, empirical research and its findings. You should write a paper in which you critique the article, pointing out what aspects of research design are well done, and which aspects are less well done. Your paper should focus on one or two of the topics covered in Part II of the syllabus, “Research Design and Political Analysis” (topics #6 through #10). The last date an Empirical Research Critique Paper may be submitted is **November 21 (in class)**.

Papers should be written double-spaced, normal margins and normal fonts (Times Roman 12 or equivalent). All written assignments are expected to be submitted by the due dates. Unless accompanied by a legitimate, documented excuse, late papers will receive a zero grade. All paper assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course. My policy is **not** to give incompletes.
3) Research Design Paper

A major research design paper (equivalent to a research grant proposal or [brief] thesis or dissertation proposal) will be required of all students. This paper will involve original empirical research on a topic of each student’s choosing that addresses a theoretically-grounded research question of interest to political scientists. Ideally, the finished product should be, subject to some revision, of sufficient quality to be a thesis, dissertation, or grant proposal.

Each student should begin to consider potential research topics (based on individual interests and subfield specialization) as soon as possible, and should consult with the instructor about potential topics and relevant literature. You will probably be advised to see other faculty to consult on topics/literature as well. A timetable for work on the research design paper is provided below. However, all students must have consulted with the instructor and have the paper topic approved by Monday, September 30.

The final paper will be due by 4:00 pm on Thursday, December 12.

Students will present their research designs in class on December 5 (and on a time to be determined if needed). In a simulated professional conference panel presentation environment, students will be given 12-15 minutes to present their designs. The other members of the class will act as the audience at the panel, and are expected to ask questions and engage in discussion of the proposal. Further details on presentations will be provided.
RESEARCH DESIGN ASSIGNMENT

A principal requirement of this course is the development of a formal research design. This assignment integrates in a very practical way the various elements of the course. It provides an opportunity to apply the abstract theoretical lessons of the course to the design of a research project that seeks to address an important, unanswered question in political science.

The research design must be typed and may not exceed twenty-five pages (not including references, but including notes), double spaced, with margins (top, bottom, left and right) of at least one inch, and in Times Roman 12. Papers must be written in accordance with the APSR manual. The design must be stapled (not paper-clipped or placed in a binder) in the upper left corner. Your paper should be proofread for mistakes, and be professionally presented. HINT: You should get copies of recent articles from the APSR (American Political Science Review) to use as guides for style.

What is a research design? A substantial part of this course is devoted to answering this question. Indeed, the structure of the course generally follows the structure of a good research design with each week's readings focusing in depth on an important aspect of the research process. Briefly summarized, however, a research design is an intellectual blueprint. It describes and defends a plan of research intended to answer an interesting or important question— one which contributes to the cumulation of knowledge. A research design does NOT include the execution of the design. Rather, it provides a detailed blueprint of a research project to be conducted in the future. See sections of Babbie, Hoover and Donovan, or Gurr, as examples used in this course, of books devoted to the development of good research design, and the components of such a design. (See also the “Outline of a Research Design” posted on BlackBoard under Course Documents.) STRONG HINT: You should read research articles in journals to see real examples of what research designs look like (ignoring the actual reporting of research results).

Although the specific elements of a research design will vary with different topics, there are two fundamental aspects to all designs. First you must identify clearly and precisely the research question you want to answer and justify its importance. Second you must describe in detail how you intend to answer the question you have identified and to justify your choice of strategies. Key to both parts of the process is to be certain that your research is closely tied to existing theory (or theories) and is embedded in the relevant literature (i.e. previous theory and research) on the subject.
More specifically, a good research design should include all of the following elements:

1) **A statement of the research question.** A good research question is one that contributes to theory or fundamental knowledge. Good questions are grounded in the existing literature. Frequently they seek to resolve an anomaly in a theory -- to reconcile a theory with an observation that doesn't seem to fit -- or to reconcile competing theories, or to fill in a missing piece or close a gap in existing theory or in the literature. Good research questions frequently begin with the question, "Why ...?" They seek explanations for political actions or events and not simply descriptions of them (although description often is an important step in the process of explanation).

2) **A review of the literature.** Good research questions frequently emerge from a review of the literature/existing research on a topic. In reading about a subject you find that you are not convinced by the explanation the author offers because, for example:
   a. you think the author's research methods are flawed, inadequate, or inappropriate to the subject (e.g. the author draws conclusions about adult voters from a study of high school students);
   b. you believe the authors failed to consider plausible alternative explanations (e.g. in explaining political violence you think the authors made a mistake by failing to consider poverty as a possible cause);
   c. you think that the author's results are limited by time or space (the author's explanation for political participation in the United States may not be appropriate in your experience for explaining political participation in non-industrialized societies or that the results of a study of voting in 1950 may not be relevant in 1990 when parties are much weaker and campaign spending much greater); or
   d. there is a "gap" in the literature in that there just does not appear to be any research on what you consider to be an important question.

Even if you have a research question in mind before you start a project, the first step in developing a research design is to review prior research on the topic. This review should summarize, synthesize, and critically evaluate the literature as a whole: where do scholars agree? disagree? where are there gaps? what questions are not asked?  NOTE: The focus of a literature review should be on a literature as a whole. A literature review is not an annotated bibliography. Nor is it a series of article and book reviews stuck together one after another. Rather, the focus should be on types of theory and research, along with their strengths and weaknesses. The idea is to concentrate on the forest and not allow yourself to become
preoccupied with individual trees. Your discussion of the literature should emphasize the strengths and weaknesses—both theoretical and methodological—of existing work. Presumably, the research you propose will attempt to build on these strengths while improving upon the weaknesses. Indeed, the proposed improvements to the literature are what make your work interesting.

3) **A statement of theory and/or hypotheses.** This section should identify the specific propositions and research hypotheses to be "tested" (or better, evaluated) in your research. It also should discuss how these propositions were derived—a process that typically takes you back to theory and to your literature review. Some scholars feel this is the most crucial aspect of research design. At the very least you should evoke a theory (a set of explicitly stated and logically related ideas about the relationships among the phenomena under consideration). As we will see in the course, research that explicitly considers multiple hypotheses or alternative theories usually produces the richest results. Designs that focus on a single theory or seek to test a single, isolated hypothesis generally are less interesting, though they still can be quite useful.

4) **A discussion of concepts.** Having identified one or more hypotheses, you need to identify, define and operationalize the central concepts in the hypotheses. Your major task here is to indicate as clearly as possible what your concepts mean and how you will recognize them when you observe them in your research.

5) **An observation and measurement strategy.** Here, you should discuss how you intend to observe the concepts that are the foci of your hypotheses, how you will operationalize and measure key concepts, and how you plan to collect the data—and on which cases? You must justify your choices keeping in mind issues of validity (and reliability).

6) **A testing strategy.** How will you measure the relationships between the concepts in your hypotheses? What will convince you that the hypothesized relationships exist or do not exist? What will convince you that the theory/hypotheses you are testing are “right” or “wrong”?

7) **A consideration of “threats to validity”.** There is no perfect research design. All research strategies have inherent limitations and you cannot, as a practical matter, control for everything. In this section you summarize these limitations and discuss their likely consequences for the research you propose.
A STRONGLY Suggested Schedule of Work on Research Design Paper

For the major Research Design paper, you will be expected to proceed through several discrete stages. You should be trying to meet the following set of deadlines in order to make sure that you can successfully complete the research design assignment on time. You do not have to submit the “drafts” noted below to the instructor. However, you should feel free to see the instructor during office hours to discuss your progress and any questions you have.

– approval of topic by September 30. This must include a 1-2 page proposal which clearly states the research question, provides a partial summary of how it builds on the leading published work in the field (i.e., I expect that you will have started reading for your literature review, but don’t expect that you will have yet read all of the relevant literature), and indicates your initial ideas of how you will obtain and analyze your data.

– draft of introduction sections and literature review, by October 21

– draft of theory and research design sections, by November 11

– final paper completed and submitted by 4:00pm, Thursday, December 12.
COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

1. Introduction: Focus, Contents, and Requirements of Course (Aug.22)

Part I  THE EMPIRICAL [“SCIENTIFIC”] STUDY OF POLITICS

2. Knowledge, Science, and the Social Sciences (Sept.5)
   Required Reading
   Babbie, ch.1 (ch.2)
   Hoover & Donovan, ch.1
   KKV, ch.1
   Phillips, “Preface”

Kenneth Benoit, “How Qualitative Research Really Counts,” Qualitative Methods, 3, 1, Spring 2005, 9-12 [BB] (see Qualitative Methods 3, 1)

Recommended
Kim Quaile Hill, “Myths About the Physical Sciences and Their Implications for Teaching Political Science,” P.S., 37, 3, July 2004, 467-471
Fritz Matchlup, “Are the Social Science Really Inferior?” Society, 1987

On the History/Development of Political Science:
See: James Garand syllabus, POLI 7961, the section “Historical Debates in Political Science” [BB] (listed as POLI 7961)

“Classics”
Carl Hempel, *Philosophy of Natural Science*, chs. 2,3,4
Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, chs. 4,5,6
Ernst Nagel, *The Structure of Science*, chs. 1,2,13
Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, chs. 2,3,4

3. Conceptions of Science: “Naturalism”/”Positivism” and Alternatives (Sept.12)

**Required Reading**
Babbie, ch.2
Phillips, ALL

David Laitin, “Interpretation, “ *Qualitative Methods*, 1, 2, Fall 2003, 6-9 [BB]

**Recommended**
M.H. Salmon, et al., eds., *Introduction to the Philosophy of Science* (Prentice Hall, 1992)
[Review last week’s articles by Bueno de Mesquita and by Ball]

“Classics”
Donald Moon, “The Logic of Political Inquiry...” 154-182[CC]
Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, chs. 2,3,4

4. **Theories, Models, and Hypotheses– Developing Research Questions** (Sept. 19 & 26)

Required
Babbie, chs. 3,4 (review ch.2)
KKV, ch.2 (review ch.1)
L&M chs. 1,2,3
Hoover & Donovan, chs.2, 3


Dina Zinnes, “Prologue” to book manuscript [BB]
Benjamin Most, "Getting Started on Political Research," *P.S.*, vol.23, 1990, 592-95 [BB]
Recommended
Review Phillips, ch.12


Ted Robert Gurr, Politimetrics (Prentice Hall, 1972) **

T.J. Moskowitz and L.J. Wertheim, Scorecasting (Crown, 2011)

Howard Becker, Tricks of the Trade (U. Chicago Pr., 1998), ch.2, “Imagery”


David Laitin, “Ethnography and/or Rational Choice: A Response from David Laitin,” Qualitative Methods, 4,1, Spring 2006, 26-33 [BB]

“Classics”


Arthur Stinchcombe, Constructing Social Theories (1968), ch.2, “The Logic of Scientific Inference”
5. **Causality and Causal Inference** (Oct. 3)

**Required**
- KKV, ch.3 (ch.5 recommended)
- Babbie, review ch.4
- Hoover & Donovan, ch.4


Gary Goertz, “Cause, Correlation, and Necessary Conditions,” in Gary Goertz and Harvey Starr, eds., *Necessary Conditions: Theory, Methodology, and Applications* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, 47-64) [BB] (found in Goertz & Starr Necessary Conditions)


Benjamin Most and Harvey Starr, *Inquiry, Logic and International Politics* (U. South Carolina Pr., 1989), ch.3, “Basic Logic and Research Design” [BB] (found in Goertz & Starr Necessary Conditions) **

**Recommended**
- Gary Goertz and Harvey Starr, eds., *Necessary Conditions: Theory, Methodology, and Applications* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), ch.1 (Goertz and Starr); ch.2 (Most and Starr) [BB]

“Classics”
- Herbert Simon, *Models of Man* (1957), ch.1 [CC]

**Research Articles**
- Gary Goertz and Harvey Starr, eds., *Necessary Conditions: Theory, Methodology, and Applications* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003): chapter by Tsebelis or the chapter by Mintz [BB]
Part II  RESEARCH DESIGN AND POLITICAL RESEARCH: DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION, METHOD AND ANALYSIS


Required
Babbie, chs.5, 6 (ch.7)
Hoover & Donovan, ch.5
KKV, ch.5

Michael Lewis, Moneyball, ch.6, “The Science of Winning an Unfair Game” [CC]

Recommended
Benjamin Most and Harvey Starr, Inquiry, Logic and International Politics (U. South Carolina Pr., 1989), ch.4, “Conceptualizing War” [CC] **

“Classics”
Eugene Webb, *Unobtrusive Measures*, chs.1,3


Giovanni Sartori, “Guidelines for Concept Analysis,” *Social Science Concepts* (Sage, 1984), 15-85

7. **Observation, Units of Analysis, and Issues of Case Selection** (Oct.31)

**Required**
Babbie, ch.7 (review ch.4)
KKV, ch.4

Most and Starr, *Inquiry, Logic and International Politics*, review chs.3, 4 [BB] [CC]**

Charles Ragin, *The Comparative Method*, ch.1, “The Distinctiveness of Comparative Social Science” [BB]


**Recommended**


**“Classics”**


8. **Observational Methods I: Experimental, Quasi-Experimental, and Non-Experimental Research** (Nov.7)

**Required**
Babbie, chs. 8, 9, 12


**Recommended**

Philip A. Schrodt, “Beyond on the Linear Frequentist Orthodoxy,” *Political Analysis*, 14, 3, 2006, 335-339 [BB]


Alan Gerber and Donald Green, “The Effects of Canvassing, Direct Mail, and Telephone Contact on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment,” *The American Political Science Review*, 94, 2000, 653-663.[BB]

“Classics”

Eugene Webb, et al., *Unobtrusive Measures* (Rand McNally, 1966), chs. 1, 2, 3
9. Observational Methods II: “Qualitative Methods” (and More on What is ‘Qualitative’ and What is ‘Quantitative’) (November 14)

Required
KKV, ch.6
Babbie, chs.10, 11


James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research,” Political Analysis, 14, 2006, 227-49 [BB]

David Collier, Jason Seawright, and Henry Brady, “Qualitative vs. Quantitative: What Might This Distinction Mean,” Qualitative Methods, 1, 1, Spring 2003, 4-8 [BB]

Recommended
Hoover & Donovan, ch.6

Charles Ragin, The Comparative Method (especially review ch.1)**


Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences (MIT Press, 2005)


Harry Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science,” in Greenstein and Polsby, Handbook of Political Science , Vol.7, ch.3

Eugene Webb, et al., Unobtrusive Measures (Rand McNally, 1966), ch. 2

Qualitative Methods, 2,1, Spring 2004– Symposium on “Field Research”; Symposium on “Discourse and Content Analysis” [BB]

David Collier, Understanding Process Tracing,” P.S., October, 2011, 823-830 [BB]


“Classics”

Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in C. Geertz, ed., The Interpretation of Cultures (Basic Books, 1973)[CC]


Arend Lijphart, “The Comparable Cases Strategy in Comparative Research,” Comparative Political Studies, 8, 1975, 158-177 [BB]

10. More on Understanding Relationships (Nov.21)

Required
Babbie, chs. 13, 14, 15, 16
L&M, chs. 4, 5
Charles Ragin, The Comparative Method, chs.5,6 [CC]**

Recommended
Charles Ragin and Benoit Rihoux, “Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA): State of the Art and Prospects,” Qualitative Methods 2, 2, Fall 2004, 3-13 [BB] (see Qualitative Methods 2.2)


11. Individual Presentations of Research Designs (December 5)

12. Continuation: Individual Presentations of Research Designs (Dec.6??)