

# POSC 230: Methods of Political Research

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Carleton College, Winter 2012

## Professor Devashree Gupta

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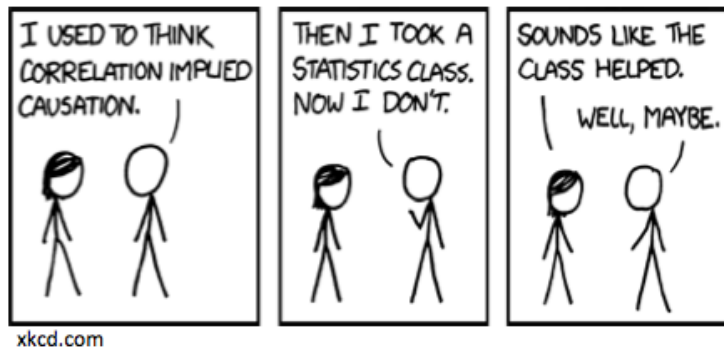
## Winter Office Hours:

Monday, 2:00-4:00pm

Wednesday, 2:00-4:00pm

Friday, 11:00-1:00pm

& Skype by appointment



**Prefect:** Danielle Smogard ([smogardd@carleton.edu](mailto:smogardd@carleton.edu))

## Course Description

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This course is intended to introduce students to the “science” side of political science. Over the course of the term, you will learn how to think like social scientists while developing various skills required by the discipline: how to choose and frame appropriate questions, how to undertake original research (complete with data collection and analysis), and how to present your findings to colleagues in a customary fashion. The goal at the end of this class is to enable you to think critically about the strengths and weaknesses of various methodological approaches, identify the methodological tools that are most appropriate for your own research, apply these insights to your own work, and justify your choice to other social scientists.

The course is divided into two sections. In the first, we will examine a central debate in the philosophy of science about how we observe and understand the social world. We will discuss the “truth producing” value of social science inquiry, the nature of social causation, and our ability to examine social phenomenon objectively.

The rest of the course introduces you to some of the most common methods of data analysis that any good political scientist (or those hoping to read and critique the work of political scientists) should have in his or her “toolkit.” We will spend roughly three weeks exploring basic quantitative methods and then three weeks on commonly used qualitative methods; we will also explore some mixed-method designs that attempt to bridge the quantitative-qualitative divide.

The course will involve some combination of lecture, discussion, labs, and hands-on “workshops” in which you get to practice and then discuss the discrete steps involved in conducting your term-long research project. The course will end with a two-day “mini conference” in which you will present and discuss your work in front of your classmates.

## Course Materials

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There are three required texts for this course, all of which are available at the Carleton bookstore:

- David Marsh and Gerry Stoker, Theory and Methods of Political Science (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)
- Philip Pollock, The Essentials of Political Analysis (TEPA) (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)
- Philip Pollock, A STATA Companion to Political Analysis (SCPA) (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)

All other readings will be available on Moodle.

## Course Requirements

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Your grade in this course will be based on the following five elements:

Participation	15%
Philosophy of science paper	20%
Research proposal	15%
Workshop assignments	20%
Final project	30%

### Participation

Your participation grade will be based on your degree of preparation for and engagement with the discussion in class. Regular (punctual) attendance, timely submission of workshop assignments, and active involvement in the final mini-conference (as a presenter and member of the audience) will also influence your grade.

### Philosophy of science paper

At the end of the first section of class, you will turn in a 4-6 page (double-spaced) paper responding to a specific prompt given in class. This paper will ask you to formulate an argument and support your argument with material drawn from the readings, lectures, and class discussions.

### Workshop assignments

These seven short assignments will break down the steps involved in carrying out a large research project while giving you opportunities to practice some of the tools and techniques involved in data analysis. Each workshop paper will be graded ✓, ✓+, or ✓-

- A ✓ indicates that your work is satisfactory and about at the average level of your peers. Earning seven ✓ results in a grade equivalent to a B (82.5%)
- Each ✓+ you receive will increase your grade by 2.5 percentage points (e.g., from 82.5% to 85%).
- Each ✓- you receive will lower your grade by 2.5 percentage points (e.g., from 82.5% to 80%).
- On any given workshop assignment, no more than 1/3 of the class will earn a ✓+. Late submissions are never eligible.

The point of this complicated scoring system is to “reduce the stakes” of each assignment and allow you to try out new ideas and techniques without facing a stiff grade penalty. Use these assignments to build and refine the ideas for your final project.

### **Final project**

All students will conduct an independent research project over the term that must involve substantial analysis of empirical data. Though we will learn about both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the final project for the class will involve quantitative analysis — not because such techniques are better, but because qualitative techniques are often difficult to execute well within the constraints of a ten-week term given how time-intensive they tend to be.

The project will have two graded parts: a presentation to the rest of the class (10%) and a poster that encapsulates your research and main findings (20%).

There is no final exam in this course.

### **Course Policies**

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**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. You are expected to come to class regularly and on time. If you are unable to attend a particular session due to illness or some other emergency, you should notify me by email, preferably in advance. A pattern of unexcused absences or tardiness will significantly lower your participation grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate and then come see me in office hours to answer any questions you have about the material or lecture. Please do not email me asking “did I miss anything important?” Yes. Yes, you did.

**Late work:** Late work will automatically incur a penalty of 1/3 grade for every 24 hours past the specified deadline unless you provide documentation of extenuating circumstances (illness, family emergency, etc.) Technology failures—unless system-wide—will not excuse late work. Late workshop papers will automatically receive a ✓ - after 48 hours (including weekends) and an additional 2.5 percentage points per every 24 hours thereafter. If you do not turn in a workshop paper at all, you will receive a 0 (equivalent to 11.8 percentage points).

**Extensions:** Extensions will not be granted except in exceptional circumstances involving unforeseen complications. Simply having a lot of work in a given week is not sufficient grounds for getting an extension. You know your due dates ahead of time; please plan accordingly.

**Internet/cell phones:** You are not to text, surf the internet, check email, or visit social media sites during class. There is a zero tolerance policy in effect. If you are caught violating this expectation, your participation score will be seriously affected. If internet usage during class seems to be a widespread and/or recurring problem, no one will be allowed to use a computer to take notes during class time.

**Plagiarism and academic dishonesty:** You are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity in this class, submitting only your own, original work and not taking credit for work done by anyone else or for any other class. Anyone caught plagiarizing, cheating, or otherwise violating the rules of academic honesty at Carleton will automatically receive a zero for the assignment and will have the case referred to the Dean’s office for further investigation and possible disciplinary action. In addition, offenders may receive a failing grade for the course at the discretion of the professor.

Because academic dishonesty comes in many forms, we will discuss and clarify some of these standards (especially with respect to citations) prior to your writing assignments. You are also

strongly encouraged to familiarize yourself with Carleton's website on academic honesty, which is available at <http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/honesty/>.

**Special needs:** If you require special accommodation due to a documented physical or learning disability, please come see me during the first week of class to discuss how I might best assist you in meeting the objectives and requirements of this course.

## Schedule of Readings

You are expected to do the assigned readings before coming to class. Your ability to discuss these readings—both the author’s main arguments and, if appropriate, the methodology used—will be key factors in your participation grade. Occasionally, I will post reading guides and questions on Moodle to help you understand and think about the material.

**PLEASE NOTE:** All assignments are to be (1) converted to PDF format, and (2) uploaded to Moodle no later than 5pm on the specified due date. Assignments turned in any other way will not be accepted. Please make sure your assignments conform to all the guidelines in the “Assignment Formatting” document, which is available on Moodle.

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
January 4	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No reading. Familiarize yourself with the syllabus and Moodle page</li> </ul>	
January 6	History, foundations, approaches, and controversies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marsh and Stoker, Introduction &amp; ch. 11</li> <li>Michael T. Heany and Fabio Rojas. 2011. “The Partisan Dynamics of Contention: Demobilization of the Antiwar Movement in the United States, 2007-2009.” <i>Mobilization</i>, 16(1): 45-64.</li> </ul>	
January 9	Ontology and epistemology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marsh and Stoker, ch. 9 and ch. 1-4.</li> <li>Optional: skim Marsh and Stoker, ch. 5-8.</li> </ul>	<i>Workshop #1 due</i>
January 11 *Lib 306*	Data structures and research resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guest speakers (Danya Leebaw and Paula Lackie); no reading</li> </ul>	
January 13	Causality and hypotheses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TEPA, ch. 3.</li> <li>Stephen Knack and Philip Keefer. 1997. “Does Social Capital Have an Economic Payoff? A Cross-Country Investigation.” <i>The Quarterly Journal of Economics</i>, vol. 112(4): 1251-1288.</li> </ul>	
January 16	Experimental and quasi-experimental design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TEPA, ch. 4-5.</li> <li>Marsh and Stoker, ch. 15.</li> </ul>	<i>Workshop #2 due</i>
January 18	Measurement and sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TEPA, ch. 1, 2, 6.</li> </ul>	
January 20	Lab: deconstructing the research paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lisa A. Baglione, <i>Writing a Research Paper in Political Science</i>, ch. 1, 4, 9.</li> </ul>	
January 23 *CMC*	Univariate and bivariate analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TEPA, ch. 7.</li> <li>Marsh and Stoker, ch. 13 (pp. 267-275).</li> </ul>	<i>Workshop #3 due</i>
January 25 *CMC*	Bivariate regression & dummy variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TEPA, ch. 8 (pp. 182-199).</li> </ul>	
January 27 *CMC*	Lab: bivariate regression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chong-Min Park and Doh Chull Shin. 2006. “Do Asian Values Deter Popular</li> </ul>	<i>Philosophy of science paper due</i>

		Support for Democracy in South Korea?" <i>Asian Survey</i> , 46(3): 341-361.	
January 30 *CMC*	Multivariate regression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TEPA, ch. 8 (pp. 199-211).</li> <li>Marsh and Stoker, ch. 13 (pp. 275-284).</li> </ul>	
February 1 *CMC*	Regression diagnostics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No reading</li> </ul>	
February 3 *CMC*	Lab: multivariate regression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reşat Bayer and Matthew C. Rupert. 2004. "Effects of Civil Wars on International Trade, 1950-92." <i>Journal of Peace Research</i>, 41(6): 699-713. Note: uses COW data</li> </ul>	Workshop #4 due
February 6 *CMC*	Fall break – no class!		
February 8 *CMC*	Logistic regression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TEPA, ch. 9.</li> </ul>	Research proposal due
February 10 *CMC*	Lab: logistic regression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laura R. Olson and Adam L. Warber. 2008. "Belonging, Behaving, and Believing: Assessing the Role of Religion on Presidential Approval." <i>Political Research Quarterly</i>, 61(2): 192-204. Note: uses ANES data</li> </ul>	
February 13	Presenting and writing about data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jane Miller, <i>The Chicago Guide to Writing About Numbers</i>, ch. 1, 2, 4.</li> <li>Edward Tufte, <i>Visual Displays of Quantitative Information</i>, ch. 1.</li> </ul>	Workshop #5 due
February 15	Comparative case design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marsh and Stoker, ch. 12 (pp. 249-258), ch. 14.</li> <li>Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, <i>Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences</i>, ch. 1, 4.</li> </ul>	
February 17	Case studies and process tracing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>George and Bennett, ch. 5.</li> <li>Ryan Moore and Michael Roberts. 2009. "Do-It-Yourself Mobilization: Punk and Social Movements." <i>Mobilization</i>, 14(3): 273-291.</li> </ul>	
February 20	Interviews and human subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marsh and Stoker, ch. 12 (pp. 258-261).</li> </ul>	Workshop #6 due
February 22	Participant observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jennie-Keith Ross and Marc Howard Ross. 1974. "Participant Observation in Political Research." <i>Political Methodology</i>, 1(1): 63-88.</li> </ul>	
February 24	Analyzing interview and participant observation data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No reading.</li> </ul>	
February 27	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marsh and Stoker, ch. 12 (pp. 261-266).</li> <li>Klaus Krippendorff, <i>Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology</i>, ch. 1.</li> </ul>	

February 29	Discourse analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Christine MacDonald. 2003. "The Value of Discourse Analysis as a Methodological Tool for Understanding a Land Reform Program." <i>Policy Sciences</i>, 36(2): 151-173.</li> </ul>	
March 2	Bridging the quantitative-qualitative gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>David D. Laitin. 2003. "The Perestroika Challenge to Social Science." <i>Politics and Society</i>, 31(1): 163-184.</li> </ul>	<i>Workshop #7 due</i>
March 5	Analytic narratives and QCA analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robert H. Bates, et. al. 1998. <i>Analytic Narratives</i>, Princeton: Princeton University Press, ch. 5.</li> </ul>	
March 7	In-class presentations		
March 9	In-class presentations		