Introduction to Political Inquiry
RPOS 516-0001 – Fall 2017

Instructor: Stephan Stohler
Office: Milne Hall 203
Email: sstohler@albany.edu
Telephone: 518.442.5263

Seminar: Husted Hall 217
Tuesday 5:45 PM-9:25 PM
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description
This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to political inquiry in the social sciences. Students will learn how to ask and answer empirical research questions, using different approaches to explore political phenomenon across different subfields of political science. Students will also evaluate the merits of a wide range of methods including experiments; large-n statistical analysis; historical case studies; content analysis; field research and ethnography; and interview and survey research. Students will be expected to construct research designs suitable for answering different research questions. Students will be exposed to different software tools for conducting empirical research and analyzing data. Finally, students will examine the ontological and epistemological debates relevant to the discipline of political science. This is a required course in the Department’s doctoral program curriculum.

Goals
After taking this course, students will be able to:

1. Ask and defend interesting research questions related to empirical political phenomenon;
2. Evaluate the merits of different methodological choices;
3. Propose a range of research design strategies to answer different research questions;
4. Use software to manage research, analyze data, and communicate findings;
5. Provide constructive feedback to improve colleagues’ research projects;
6. Construct research projects related to students’ interests; and
7. Demonstrate mastery of foundational debates about the study of the social world.

Assignments
Aside from completing weekly readings, students will be expected to contribute to weekly discussions and complete weekly assignments, which are listed on the syllabus.

Students are also expected to submit at least one research prospectus. For this assignment, students will propose an argument about the empirical world; defend the argument’s importance; identify evidence necessary to determine whether the argument is correct; and explain how you propose to collect the evidence. Each prospectus must be limited to five pages. The first prospectus is due on October 17, 2017. If the class decides to retain the current course structure, the second prospectus will be due on November 21, 2017.

Finally, students will compose a draft grant application based on a prospectus. The grant application is limited to fifteen pages (all inclusive) and is due on December 19, 2017. If you find it useful, consider as a


Grading & Evaluations
You will be evaluated according to your progress toward the goals of this course. Evaluations will occur regularly in class, on quizzes and exams, and on your final paper. The relative weights of each portion of the evaluation are listed below:

- **Exercises**: 15%
- **Participation**: 25%
- **Prospectus**: 30%
- **Grant Application**: 30%

Materials & Resources
Most of the readings will be made available via the course Blackboard website. Please obtain copies of the following books:


Policies
Student participation in this course is governed by the University’s Standard of Academic Integrity. Failure to comply with the Standard of Academic Integrity can result in a failing grade and dismissal from the course. Other academic discipline by the University may also result. Those standards are outlined here:


Every Student is expected to go through the following tutorial:

Schedule

**August 29. Introduction.**

**September 5. Research Ethics.**


**Assignment:** Complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) available at: [https://www.citiprogram.org/](https://www.citiprogram.org/)

**September 12. Research and Its Implications for Knowledge.**


**September 19. Multiple Research Traditions.**


Presentations by Stephen Lansing and Matthew Kirk.

September 26. From Theories and Hypotheses to Concepts and Measurements.


Presentations from Mutti Anggitta and Troy Norton.

October 3. Causation.


Presentations from Shikshya Adhikari and Trevor Kennerknecht.

October 10. Observational Research I.

Presentations from Casey Marvell, Isis McIntosh Green, and Dingnan Zhang.


**Assignment:** Find a political science article in an area related to your prospectus proposal that uses large-N statistical analysis. Prepare a short (5 minute) presentation for class about the article and be prepared to defend the article’s argument to your colleagues.

**October 17. Observational Research II.**

Due: First Prospectus (via email).


**Assignment:** Find a political science article or chapter in an area related to your prospectus proposal that uses a case study. Prepare a short (5 minute) presentation for class about the article and be prepared to defend the article’s argument to your colleagues.

**October 24. Experiments.**


Last updated: August 30, 2017