

University of Hawaii at Manoa

## **POLS 390 Political Inquiry and Analysis (W)**

Instructor: Hye Won Um

Email: hyewonum@hawaii.edu

Office: Saunders Hall 607

Office Hour: By appointment

### **Course Overview**

This course is designed to introduce undergraduate students to the logic of inquiry and the methodology of empirical research in the social sciences generally and political science in particular. Students will examine basic elements of empirical research and explore a wide range of methodologies. Readings are assigned in an effort to prepare students to evaluate existing research and to design their own research paper. By the end of the course, students are expected to have an expanded sense of research strategies available to them, a deeper understanding of research design (in qualitative research), a stronger grasp of logic, and a capacity to read and evaluate the diverse scholarship produced in our discipline.

Reading and writing assignments for this course emphasize three goals. First, students should pursue concrete steps to apply their chosen theory and execute their methodology well in their own research design. For this purpose, we will trace all steps of the research design – asking the research questions, choosing proper methods, collecting and analyzing data, and so on. Second, students should learn how to read – analyze and better understand - the world around them. To help students understand the world in a hands-on approach, this course will provide students experiences to conduct their field research. Third, this course will deal with questions beyond the technical aspects of method – interpretation, ethics, politics, development of concept and theory (history), validity, and so on. Specific possibilities and problems that each method may have for particular projects should be considered throughout the semester.

### **Course Objectives/ Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this semester, students will be able to

- 1> Explain the difference between positivist and interpretivist research.
- 2> Describe qualitative research.
- 3> Explain the strengths and weaknesses of various qualitative research.
- 4> Recognize and resolve the ethical dilemmas that might arise during field research.
- 5> Formulate research questions.
- 6> Design research projects using qualitative methods.

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- 7> Conduct your research including both archival and field research.

### **Course Assignments & Grading**

This is an online course and we will use the UH Lulima system for assignment submission and communication.

All writing assignments should be double-spaced, with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right), and in a font no smaller than Times New Roman 11. They should follow the general rules of academic writing including the rules of grammar and spelling. Students are expected to submit all assignments by the due dates. Unless accompanied by a legitimate and documented excuse, one full letter grade will be docked every 24 hours past the deadline. All paper assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course. (There is no incomplete.) The instructor's comments and grades on written assignments will be given within 2 weeks of their submission.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Possible Research Questions (150 points) & Annotated Bibliography (150 points)

Please check details in "Research Paper Assignment" (pages 7-9).

2. Field Notes or Interview Based Essay (200 points)

You can choose either field notes or interview based essay.

**Field Notes:** Each student will choose a research site that will serve as the location for completing the field assignments. The site can be any public place that interests you -indoors or outdoors. Each student will be required to keep and turn in field notes during the course. The field observations should be at least one hour each time. You will be assigned a theme to help you shape your observations. Beginning this activities before you have any practical knowledge of how to conduct this kind of research will allow you to see how the quality of your observations change as you learn more. The reading under "ethnography" will serve as a comprehensive introduction to writing field notes and their use in research. You may spend more time than one hour if you like by either going to your site more often or staying longer than one hour on a given day. You will be required to share your observations with the class, and may submit excerpts of your field notes to the class for comment and discussion. You will complete two observations.

**Interview:** Each student will conduct a 30-minute interview on a topic of your choice. You will learn various research techniques from the course reading on interviewing. You may decide which type of interview you conduct (open-ended, structured, or semi-structured). You should decide on a general research question before the interview. You will use the interview experience and the data to write a 3-5 page essay that analyzes the data (what you learned in the interview) and reflects on the experience of interviewing. (When you answer the question on what you learn in the interview, your answer will be both substantive and reflective.) You should also discuss the problems and benefits associated with using

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interviews for research.

3. Ethical Dilemmas in Research Essay (100 points)

You will write a 3-page essay that analyzes the effectiveness of current policies to protect human subjects of research.

4. Final Research Paper (300 points)

Please check details in “Research Paper Assignment” (pages 7-9).

5. Class Discussion and Other Participation (100 points)

Note:

This is a writing intensive (W or WI) on-line course, which means you have to deal with more reading and writing assignments than in a regular class. Please keep this in mind, and understand that skipping readings and failing to turn in assignments on time will hurt your final grade. (You need to work at least 3-5 hours a week.)

### **Readings**

All readings will be available in electronic form. (Check the resource section on Lulima.) Students are expected to keep up with each week’s readings. Example readings are not mandatory. They are provided just in case students want to read more.

### **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will result in an “F” for the course. If you borrow words, ideas, thoughts, etc. from someone, you must give them credit. Purchasing papers online and turning in work written for another course without the instructor’s permission is also unacceptable. All such matters will be referred to the department chair. UHM website on academic dishonesty and related issues is available at:

<http://www.catalog.hawaii.edu/about-uh/campus-policies1.htm>

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## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1 Introduction: The Study of Politics as a Social Science**

No assigned readings. PPT will be provided.

### **Week 2 Positivism, Interpretivism, and Critical Approaches**

#### **Required Readings**

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books. Chap. 1 (3-30).

Gladwell, Malcolm. "The Order of Things." *The New Yorker* (2011)

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/02/14/the-order-of-things>

Kaufmann, Eric. "Moneyball: Can Sports Statistics Save Political Studies?" *Political Insight* 2, no.3 (December 2011): 18-20.

Marcus, Gary and Ernest Davis. "Eight (No, Nine!) Problems with Big Data." *The New York Times* (2014)

[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/07/opinion/eight-no-nine-problems-with-big-data.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/07/opinion/eight-no-nine-problems-with-big-data.html?_r=0)

\*\*\* Possible research questions due on June 17 (Friday).

### **Week 3 Concepts, Model, and Theory- Developing Research Question**

#### **Required Readings**

Jones, Charles O. "Doing Before Knowing: Concept Development in Political Science." *American Journal of Political Science* 18, no. 1 (February 1974): 215-228.

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chap. 2 (34-74).

### **Week 4 Construing Causation and Explanation**

#### **Required Readings**

Tilly, Charles. "To Explain Political Processes." *American Journal of Sociology* 100, no. 6 (May 1995): 1594-1610.

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\*\*\*1<sup>st</sup> field note due on July. 1 (Friday).

**Week 5 Measurement and Measurement issues**

Required Readings

Adcock, Robert, and David Collier. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95, no. 3 (September 2001): 529-546.

\*\*\* Annotated Bibliography due on July 8 (Friday).

**Week 6 Qualitative Evidence and Process of Acquiring Them:**

**Participant Observation & Interview I**

Film

Required Readings

Lorraine Bayard de Volvo and Edward Schatz. "From the Inside Out: Ethnographic Methods in Political Research." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, no. 2 (April 2004): 267-271.

Soss, Joe. "Talking Our Way to Meaningful Explanations: A Practice-Centered Approach to In-Depth Interviews for Interpretive Research." In *Interpretation and Method*, edited by D. Yanow and P. Schwartz-Shea, 161-182. New York, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

**Week 7 Qualitative Evidence and Process of Acquiring Them:**

**Participant Observation & Interview II**

Film

Required Readings

Burton, Susan. "Terry Gross and the Art of Opening Up." *The New York Times* (2015)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/25/magazine/terry-gross-and-the-art-of-opening-up.html>

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. University Of Chicago Press. Chap. 1

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\*\*\*2<sup>st</sup> field note/ or Interview based essay due on July 22 (Friday).

## Week 8 **Research Ethics**

### Film

### Required Readings

Fisher, Jill A. "Governing human subjects research in the USA: Individualized ethics and structural inequalities." *Science and Public Policy* 34, no.2 (2007):117-126.

Heintzelman, Carol A. "The Tuskegee Syphilis Study and Its Implications for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." *The New Social Worker* 10, no.4 (Fall 2003).

[http://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/ethics-articles/The\\_Tuskegee\\_Syphilis\\_Study\\_and\\_Its\\_Implications\\_for\\_the\\_21st\\_Century/](http://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/ethics-articles/The_Tuskegee_Syphilis_Study_and_Its_Implications_for_the_21st_Century/)

\*\*\*Ethnic Dilemmas due on 29 (Friday).

## Week 9 **Qualitative Evidence and Process of Acquiring Them: Visual Analysis**

### Film

### Required Readings

Ishiwata, E., "Re-made in Japan: Nikkeijin Disruptions of Japan's Ethno-Spatial Boundaries." *Japanstudien*, 16 (2004): 91-117.

## Week 10 **Review Session**

\*\*\*Final paper due on August 12(Friday).

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## **Research Paper Assignment**

A principal requirement of this course is the design and execution of research paper focusing on a question of contemporary interest in political science. The writing assignments are intended to provide the opportunity for students to apply both abstract concepts and various methods to actual case. A substantial part of this course is devoted to seek answers about elements of good research paper, and course structure follows the steps of research design focusing on important aspects of the research process.

Although the specific elements of a research design vary with different topics and methods, there are two fundamental aspects to all designs. First, you must **clearly identify the question you want to answer and justify its importance**. Second, you must **explain your concepts and methods in detail and justify your chosen strategies**. To fulfill these two aspects, it is important to link your research to existing theory embedded in the relevant literature on the subject.

### **A statement of the research question:**

Good questions are grounded in the existing literature. They often reconcile a theory with an observation that doesn't seem to fit, or fill in a gap in existing theory. They frequently begin with a "WHY" question, and seek explanations for political actions or events.

### **Literature review:**

Good research questions often emerge from a literature review, too. You sometimes find that you are not convinced by an author's explanation in your readings. You may think the research methods are not appropriate to the subject, or there are other plausible explanations. You may find that changes of time and space also would affect the results.

Even though you will have a research question before you start a project, the first step of the research design is to review previous research on the topic. The review should summarize, synthesize, and critically evaluate the literature as a whole. (You should concentrate on the forest rather than being preoccupied with individual trees in the forest!!) Discussion of the literature should emphasize the strengths and weaknesses of existing work in terms of both theory and methodology. Your research will attempt to build on these strengths and improve those weaknesses.

### **A statement of theory and/or hypotheses:**

Your design needs to identify the specific propositions and research hypotheses to be examined or "tested" in your research. You also should discuss how these explicitly stated and logically related ideas about the relationships among the phenomena were derived.

### **A definition of concepts:**

You need to identify, define, and operationalize the central concepts in your paper. You should indicate as

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clearly as possible what your concepts mean and how you will recognize them when you observe them in your research (e.g. when you analyze the relationship between political participation and economic development, what do you mean by economic development? What would convince you that one country or group of people is more economically developed than another?)

**An observation and measurement strategy:**

You need to justify your methods of observing and collecting evidence or data as being appropriate and feasible.

**A testing strategy:**

You need to think about how to measure the relationships between the concepts in your hypotheses, and how to check if your hypotheses are right or wrong.

**Limitations of research strategies:**

No matter how careful and thorough you have been in developing your research design, there is no perfect yet feasible research design. All research strategies have inherent limitations. You need to discuss these limitations explicitly and consider their likely consequences. You will be able to try to identify alternatives through this effort.

1. Possible Research Questions.

Think about three potential research topics based on your own interests and develop at least one research question per topic. Explain why you think the topic is important and how you plan to answer these questions. Since you are at the early stage of research design, it is acceptable to present very rough ideas about your research design. Each student should consult with the instructor about potential topics and relevant literature for this assignment. (All students must have consulted with the instructor and have their paper topic approved by March 7.) This assignment should be about 2–3 pages in length.

2. Annotated Bibliography.

The annotated bibliography is a summary of an article, book chapter or book. It typically contains: (1) a description of the author's research question and/ or hypotheses; (b) the methodology employed in the author's work; (3) the main conclusions of the piece. You will write an annotated bibliography of five academic sources (around 300 words per source) in order to familiarize yourself with the key debates around one specific issue, which will allow you to better ground your research question in the existing literature on the topic you elect to study. Thus, you will have to conclude the annotated bibliography before writing the essay proposal, or the outline. The annotated bibliography should be about 3–5 pages in length.

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### 3. Final Research Paper.

The final paper has to demonstrate that you have put serious effort into all the previous writing phases. It should have a clearly enunciated argument, cogently articulated intermediate units (where you develop your argument), and a final section. The research paper should be about 13–15 pages in length.

Before handing the paper in, please read it several times and ask yourself some questions. Is my argument clear? Do I provide enough evidence to support my main arguments or do I make unsubstantiated claims? Have I incorporated into the paper distinct points of view about the argument in question, pointing out their advantages and disadvantages? In making my main argument, am I showing that one can convincingly rule out alternative patterns of explanation? Last but not least, have I corrected any spelling or grammar mistakes?

At this point, much of this guideline may seem abstract and confusing. As the course progresses, the elements of the research design will become much clearer and more concrete. Don't panic! Contact your instructor anytime you have troubles to deal with your assignments.