

Introduction to Research

Master in Political Science

Academic year 2024-2025, Fall semester

10 ECTS

Mondays and Wednesdays, 11.30 to 14.00

Coordinator

Carol Galais

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Office hours: Tuesday 11:00 - 13:00 (appointment required in advance)

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Faculty

Eva Anduiza, Gabriela de Carvalho.

Introduction

The module introduces students to the principles of research design in mainstream political science. We begin with a brief introduction to the social science. We pay especial attention to quality standards and elements of a research and an article. We devote several sessions to conducting and writing a literature review. We examine the purpose of theories, approaches to generating theories and ways of evaluating their validity. We discuss the purpose and nature of testable hypotheses; how to derive hypotheses from theories; how to test competing hypotheses; how to measure theoretical constructs; and what to do (and not to do) with empirical evidence. We devote a session to academic writing with a focus on research proposals. Finally, we explore how different styles of testing hypotheses may be used to help us make valid causal inferences.

The course will not cover interpretive methods in the discipline. If you're interested in exploring this approach to research, a good place to start is Yanow & Schwarz-Shea, *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn* (2015, Routledge).

Course objectives

The module strives to provide students with the methodological tools required to design research projects in political science. In more practical terms, the module's goal is that each student prepares an original research proposal for their Master's thesis.

The module provides an overview of the different stages of research (e.g., defining a research problem; reviewing the literature; operationalizing concepts), anticipates potential obstacles in the research process and offers possible workarounds as discussed in the literature. Within the

module, faculty members will present their ongoing projects, with an emphasis on linking important research questions to adequate research strategies.

The module is non-substantive in nature; in other words, we are not directly concerned with specific substantive areas of research in political science. Instead, the focus is epistemological, and the examples of research employed throughout the module are directed at methodological rather than substantive issues. We strongly recommend students to connect the methodological contents of this course with their own research interests (see course assignments).

The module is the precursor to Research Methods (spring semester) which is focused on applied research techniques, both quantitative and qualitative.

Prerequisites

Students enrolled in this module are expected to hold a degree in political science or a social science discipline.

Reference handbook:

- Toshkov, D. (2016). Research design in political science. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Skills

- Generate innovative research ideas.
- Write an original research proposal for your MA thesis.
- Identify the main methodological difficulties that arise in political analysis and be able to deal with them using existing tools.
- Evaluate reports, documents and research carried out by third parties.
- Demonstrate reading comprehension of scientific texts in English.

Assessment

To be assessed, you need to attend 80% of the sessions. It is at the discretion of professors to call the roll or not.

Your participation during the classes and in the tutorial sessions accounts for **10%** of your final grade

For this course, you need to submit 3 written assignments.

-Assignment 1: first research proposal outline: research question and hypotheses. **20%** Due on **October 30**. Extension: about 500-800 words. Professor: **Carol Galais**

-Assignment 2: Assay on qualitative methodology. **20%**. Due on **December 9**. Extension: about 2000 words. Professor. **Gabriela de Carvalho**

-Assignment 3. Students will write a research proposal at the end of the course (**50%**). Due on **December 20**. Extension: about 3000 words. Professor: **Carol Galais**

Program and contents

Any changes to our regular course schedule are **highlighted**. You may also consult the course schedule on the Calendar of the Master's program.

1. 02/10/2024 Wednesday . Introduction: What is science, what is a social science research. General quality principles and good practices. *Carol Galais*.

- Recommended readings:
 - Mirya Holman's pre-submission checklist.

2. 07/10/2024 Monday. Anatomy of a paper. *Carol Galais*.

- Recommended readings:
 - Baglione, L. (2008). Doing good and doing well: Teaching research-paper writing by unpacking the paper. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 41(3), 595-602.

3. 09/10/2024 Wednesday. Research questions. *Carol Galais*.

- Recommended readings:
 - Firebaugh, G. (2008). Seven rules for social research. Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.

4. 14/10/2024 Monday. Literature review. *Carol Galais*.

- Recommended readings:
 - Pacheco-Vega (2018): Writing theoretical frameworks, analytical frameworks and conceptual frameworks.

5. 16/10/2024 Wednesday. From theories to hypotheses. *Carol Galais*.

- Recommended readings:
 - Syed Imran Ali (2012) What is hypothesis and how to prepare it?

6. 21/10/2024 Monday. Conceptualization & operationalization (I). *Eva Anduiza*.

- Recommended readings:
 - Toshkov, chapter 4
 - Gerring, John. 1999. "What Makes a Concept Good? A Criterial Framework for Understanding Concept Formation in the Social Sciences." *Polity* 31(3): 357–93.

7. 23/10/2024 Wednesday. Conceptualization & operationalization (II). *Eva Anduiza*.

- Recommended readings:
 - Toshkov, chapter 5
 - Pollock, Philip H., and Barry Clayton Edwards. 2019. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. 6th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA London New Delhi Singapore: CQ Press. Chapter 1

8. 28/10/2024 Monday. Principles of Research Design. *Carol Galais*.
 - Recommended readings:
 - Unal, Murat. (2022). Identification. The key to credible causal inference
9. 30/10/2024 Wednesday. Quantitative research designs (I). Observational research. *Carol Galais*
 - Recommended readings:
 - Galais, C., & Pérez-Rajó, J. (2023). Populist radical right-wing parties and the assault on political correctness: The impact of Vox in Spain. *International Political Science Review*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/01925121231190555>
10. 04/11/2024 Monday. Quantitative research designs (II). Quasi-experimental methods. *Carol Galais*
 - Recommended readings:
 - Van Hauwaert, S. M., & Huber, R. A. (2020). In-group solidarity or out-group hostility in response to terrorism in France? Evidence from a regression discontinuity design. *European Journal of Political Research*, 59(4), 936-953.
 - Cattaneo, M. D., Idrobo, N., & Titiunik, R. (2019). *A practical introduction to regression discontinuity designs: Foundations*. Cambridge University Press. Draft of Cambridge Elements text, available [here](#)
11. 06/11/2024 Wednesday. Introduction to qualitative research methods. *Gabriela de Carvalho*.
 - Recommended readings:
 - Gerring, John. 2017. "Qualitative Methods." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20 (1): 15–36. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-092415-024158>.
 - Pierson, Paul. 2007. "The Costs of Marginalization: Qualitative Methods in the Study of American Politics." *Comparative Political Studies* 40 (2): 146–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414006296347>.
12. 11/11/2024. Monday. Designing and selecting cases for case studies research. *Gabriela de Carvalho*
 - Recommended readings:
 - Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2006. "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12 (2): 219–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363>.
 - Gerring, John. 2004. "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" *American Political Science Review* 98 (2).
 - "Phase One: Designing Case Study Research." 2004. In *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, by Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, 73–88. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

13. 13/11/2024 Wednesday. Designing and selecting cases for comparative research. **Gabriela de Carvalho**

- Recommended readings:
 - Anckar, Carsten. 2008. "On the Applicability of the Most Similar Systems Design and the Most Different Systems Design in Comparative Research." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11 (5): 389–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401552>.
 - Joppke, Christian. 2007. "Transformation of Immigrant Integration: Civic Integration and Antidiscrimination in the Netherlands, France, and Germany." *World Politics* 59 (2): 243–73. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2007.0022>.
 - Tarrow, Sidney. 2010. "The Strategy of Paired Comparison: Toward a Theory of Practice." *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (2): 230–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009350044>.

14. 18/11/2024. Monday. Fundamentals of data collection and analysis in qualitative research: Techniques, sources, and triangulation. **Gabriela de Carvalho**

- Recommended readings:
 - Hussein, Ashatu. 2009. "The Use of Triangulation in Social Sciences Research" *Journal of Comparative Social Work* 4 (1): 106–17. <https://doi.org/10.31265/jcsw.v4i1.48>.
 - Yin, Robert. 2009. "Collecting Case Study Evidence: The Principles You Should Follow in Working With Six Sources of Evidence." In *Case Study Research and Applications. Design and Methods*, 71–103. London: SAGE Publications.

15. 20/11/2024 Wednesday. Writing and disseminating qualitative research. **Gabriela de Carvalho**

- Recommended readings:
 - Tracy, Sarah J. 2010. "Qualitative Quality: Eight 'Big-Tent' Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research." *Qualitative Inquiry* 16 (10): 837–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121>.

16. 25/11/2024 Monday. Experimental research (I) **Eva Anduiza**

- Recommended readings:
 - Toshkov, chapter 7
 - Watch Graeme Blair presentation of Round IV of Metaketa Project. Can community policing be used effectively by new and reconstituted police forces in contexts in which the state's legitimacy is challenged? From 16.20 min to 41 min: <https://youtu.be/UcNbqA95SOk>

17. 27/11/2024 Wednesday. Experimental research (II) **Eva Anduiza**

18. 02/12/2024 Monday. Tutorial Session (I) **Carol Galais**.

19. 04/12/2024 Wednesday. Tutorial Session (II) **Carol Galais**.

20. 09/12/2024 Monday. Tutorial Session (III) **Carol Galais**.