

PLSC 389

## Research Methods in Comparative Politics

Albion College - Spring 2018

Mondays, Wednesdays, 8:00-9:50 (Robinson 404)

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Office hours: Monday 10:00-11:00 and Friday 2:00-3:00, Robinson Rm. 303

### Course catalog description

This course offers an introduction to research methods in the comparative social sciences. A variety of modes of social inquiry will be covered including qualitative methods, quantitative methods, and rational choice theory. The goals are to give students new analytic tools which they can apply to other courses and to increase their capacity to pose and answer research questions on their own. The readings and lectures will cover a wide variety of research methods. The readings include not only explicitly methodological texts but also many substantive examples from different fields of social science which serve to illustrate various approaches.

### Academic Integrity

All students are expected to understand and follow the College's guidelines regarding academic integrity: "As an academic community, Albion College is firmly committed to honor and integrity in the pursuit of knowledge. Therefore, as a member of this academic community, each student acknowledges responsibility for this or her actions and commits to the highest standards of integrity. In doing so, each student makes a covenant with the college not to engage in any form of academic dishonesty, fraud, cheating or theft" (Albion Catalog). Suspected violations will be reported to the student and the college officials immediately. Confirmed instances of academic dishonesty may result in failure of the course and other consequences as outlined by the College. If you are unsure about whether your actions may fall under these guidelines, please do not hesitate to speak with me about your concerns.

### Course requirements

Your grade will be determined by:

- Four in-class exams (15% each, 60% total)
  - Each exam will be worth 100 points. Here is how your grade will be calculated:

Points	Grade
100-93	4.0
92-90	3.7
89-87	3.3
86-83	3.0
82-80	2.7
79-77	2.3
76-73	2.0
72-70	1.7
69-67	1.3
66-63	1.0
62-60	0.7
59-0	0.0

- Attendance and participation (15%)
  - I will primarily grade participation on attendance and active participation in and quality of contributions to class discussion and completion of in-class assignments and activities. However, if you miss more than two classes your participation grade will not be higher than 3.7. If you miss more than four classes, 3.3 is the highest grade you will be able to earn; and so on.
- Weekly questions (5%)
  - To facilitate class discussion you are required to write one or two questions that you can raise during our meetings. This means you will have to complete assigned readings a week in advance. Your weekly questions are due at 8:00 a.m. every Monday. Please type these; handwritten submissions will not be accepted.
- Take-home assignments (20%)
  - These assignments will be distributed on Wednesdays and you will have one week to complete them. There will be 12 assignments total, but only your top ten grades will be taken into consideration.

### **Textbook**

Babbie, Earl. *The Practice of Social Research*. 14<sup>th</sup> edition (Cengage Learning)  
 Additional readings will be posted on Moodle

### **Other notes**

- Be sure to regularly check your albion.edu email for course announcements
- Audio recordings are not allowed
- Please bring your textbook to class
- You are responsible for contacting appropriate offices if you need special accommodations for exams. I need to be informed about such events at least two weeks in advance.
- Be respectful of others

### **Weekly Schedule**

#### **Week 1**

17 January. Introduction  
 Wednesday

#### **Week 2**

22 January. Human Inquiry and Science  
 Read:

Babbie “An Introduction to Inquiry” and chapter 1 “Human Inquiry and Science”  
 Almond & Genko (1977) “Clouds Clocks and the Study of Politics”  
 Almond (1988) “Separate Tables”

Monday  
 Wednesday

#### **Week 3**

29 January. Paradigms, Theory, and Social Research  
 Read:

Babbie chapter 2 “Paradigms, Theory, and Social Research”  
 Keohane (2003) “Disciplinary Schizophrenia”  
 Kohli et. al. (1996) “The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: A Symposium”

Monday  
 Wednesday

#### **Week 4**

5 February. The Ethics and Politics of Social Research

Read:

Babbie chapter 3 “The Ethics and Politics of Social Research”

Scarce (1999) “Good Faith, Bad Ethics”

Monday

Wednesday-Exam #1

#### **Week 5**

12 February. Research Design

Read:

Babbie chapter 4 “Research Design”

Trejo (2009) “Religious Competition and Ethnic Mobilization in Latin America”

Ekiert et. al. (2017) “Civil Society and Three Dimensions of Inequality in Post-1989 Poland”

Monday

Wednesday

#### **Week 6**

19 February. Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement

Read:

Babbie chapter 5 “Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement”

Sartori (1970) “Concept Misformation in Political Science”

Collier & Mahon (1993) “Conceptual ‘Stretching’ Revisited”

Weeden (2002) “Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science”

Monday

Wednesday

#### **Week 7**

26 February. Psychological explanations, overconfidence, and unintended consequences

Read:

Kahneman (2013) “Part III Overconfidence,” *Thinking, Fast and Slow*

Schelling (1978) “Sorting and Mixing: Race and Sex,” *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*

Edwards & Roy (2016) “Academic Research in the 21st Century”

Monday

Wednesday Exam #2

#### **Week 8**

12 March. Survey Research

Read:

Babbie chapter 9 “Survey Research”

Castle (2017) “Authoritarianism and Public Opinion on Church and State in the United States”

Cramer-Walsh (2012) “Putting Inequality in its Place”

PEW (2017) “Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe”

Monday

Wednesday

**Week 9**

19 March. Qualitative Field Research

Read:

Babbie chapter 10 “Qualitative Field Research”

Hale (2017) “Religious Institutions and Collective Action”

Monday

Wednesday

**Week 10**

26 March. Unobtrusive Research

Read:

Babbie chapter 11 “Unobtrusive Research”

Holman & Shockley (2017) “Messages from above”

Grzymała-Busse & Slater (2018) “Making Godly Nations” (forthcoming, please do not circulate)

Monday

Wednesday

**Week 11**

2 April. Process tracing

Read:

Mahoney (2012) “The Logic of Process Tracing in Social Sciences”

Meyer-Resende (2017) “A Holy Alliance between the Catholic Church and Constitution-Makers?”

Lorenzt et. al. (2017) “Qualitative investigation of theoretical models”

Fairfield & Garay (2017) “Redistribution Under the Right in Latin America”

Monday

Wednesday Exam #3

**Week 12**

9 April. Evaluation Research

Read:

Babbie chapter 12 “Evaluation Research”

Koppell (2005) “Pathologies of Accountability”

Soss (1999) “Lessons of Welfare”

Monday

Wednesday

**Week 13**

16 April. Rational Choice Theory

Read:

Ishiyama & Breuning (2010) “Rationality and Rational Choice”

Elster (2007) “Explaining Social Behavior” (selected chapters)

Varese & Yaish (2000) “The Importance of Being Asked”

Monroe et. al. (1990) “Altruism and the Theory of Rational Action”

Monday

Wednesday

**Week 14**

23 April. Rational Choice Theory II & Experiments

Read:

Babbie chapter 8 “Experiments”

Bates (1997) “Comparative Politics and Rational Choice: A Review Essay”

Green & Shapiro (1997) “Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory” (selected chapters)

Monday

Wednesday

**Final Exam (Exam #4)**

**Tuesday, 1 May from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (I reserve the right to amend this syllabus)**