

# Mini Class: Research Design Workshop in Political Science

---

COURSE INFORMATION	<i>Term:</i> Spring 2022 <i>Level:</i> Intermediate/Pre-Thesis <i>Meet:</i> Wednesday 12:30-3:20 <i>Room:</i> ACE 115 <i>Revision:</i> January 28, 2022	<i>Instructor:</i> Jack Reilly <i>Office:</i> Social Sciences 205 <i>E-mail:</i> jreilly@ncf.edu <i>Office Hours:</i> Tues & Friday 4-5:30, by appt <i>Appointments:</i> jacklireilly.com/appointments
DESCRIPTION	<p>This workshop will introduce students to the methodological and practical issues involved in studying politics and policy. Students will become familiar with the logic of inference and learn how to construct arguments about research in social science. A major goal of this course will be for each student to design a major research project, including the specification of the theories, models, literature, methods, data, and logistics involved in completing the project. Successful projects may be used as the foundation for a student's theses.</p> <p>The class is intended for students planning to complete a concentration in Political Science. All students who will be working with a Political Science thesis sponsor are welcome, including in concentrations in International Studies, Environmental Studies, Quantitative Social Science, Public Policy, and others. The course meets the requirements for Craft and Rhetoric in Political Science, Research Methods in Environmental Studies, and Research Design in Quantitative Social Science.</p>	
PREREQUISITE	Intermediate work in political science or the student's associated interdisciplinary field of study.	
CO-REQUISITE	Introduction to Statistics or equivalent (Dealing with Data I, Quantitative Political Analysis I) if not already completed.	
ENROLLMENT	This course is recommended for students who will begin to write their thesis next semester (or who are beginning this semester). Priority will go to third-year students preparing their thesis projects and fourth-year students who need the course for graduation. Second-year Political Science students who will be studying abroad in spring of their third year will have the next priority. Enrollment is by permission of the instructor.	
INTERESTED?	If you'd like to take the course, <b>let me know!</b> <a href="http://jacklireilly.com/interest">http://jacklireilly.com/interest</a>	

## Materials

---

### BOOKS

#### Required

- Toshkov, 2016. *Research Design in Political Science*. Palgrave. ISBN: 9781137342829
- Baglioni, 2016. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*. CQ Press. ISBN: 1483376168
- Becker, 2007. *Writing for Social Scientists*. Chicago. ISBN: 9780226041322

#### Recommended (for those interested in graduate study in politics or policy)

- King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton.
- Ashworth, Berry, and Bueno de Mesquita. 2021. *Theory and Credibility: Integrating Theoretical and Empirical Social Science*. Princeton.

## Course Requirements

---

OVERVIEW Satisfactory completion of the course requires completion of the following:

1. Daily Reading & Preparation
2. Assignments
  - (a) Project Assignments
  - (b) Minor Assignments
3. Core Exam
4. Final Project (Thesis Research Proposal)
  - (a) Paper
  - (b) Presentation

## Course Structure

---

This class is not a typical lecture or seminar. Class is divided into three segments - **research design, project strategies, and your project.**

RESEARCH  
DESIGN

You will be introduced to the process of creating - rather than merely consuming - empirical research in political science. We begin by focusing on broad questions (what is science?), talk about theory (what kinds are there?), continue into the logic of inference (how can I be sure of my conclusions? how sure can I ever be?), and finish with a survey of common research designs in political science (experiments, surveys, interviews, case studies, and more). Along the way, we will discuss the difference between qualitative and quantitative work in the social sciences, issues of measurement and operationalization, and how to best critically analyze the work of yourself and others.

PROJECT  
STRATEGIES

This component of the class covers the practical aspects of the process of conducting research, from the very beginning (how do I identify an interesting question?) to the end (how do I revise my work most effectively?) We will cover how to approach literature reviews, how to go about identifying and managing data sources, how to schedule your time most effectively for your project, and how to pick a research strategy that best suits the question you have chosen. We will also talk about how your interests can lead to, and yield, different kinds of jobs and career paths.

YOUR PROJECT

As a workshop class, the goal is to produce a fully fleshed out research design proposal (or prospectus) that you, should you wish to, can immediately start implementing for your thesis. Ideally, the process of creating this project will help illuminate your own research interests, help you identify a thesis topic (whether or not you write on the exact topic you chose to do in the workshop), and give you a broader understanding of the world of political science and academic inquiry in general.

WEEKLY CLASS

In terms of the specific structure of daily class periods, we'll largely devote time equally to each of these three components, with slightly more time devoted to the scientific method early on and more time devoted to your projects at the end of the class. In addition to presentations by the professor, we'll have visiting speakers from other offices on campus, other professors, and former New College students to explore the variety of ways you can approach a project, implement it, and carry it out.