

PSC/IR 501
Research and Writing in Political Science
Spring 2021
9:30AM-12:00 PM Fridays

Alexander Lee

Instructor:

Email: alexander.mark.lee@rochester.edu

Office: By Zoom

Office Hours: Fridays, 2pm-430pm. Sign up on Google Docs.

Course Goals:

This course is targeted at teaching graduate students how to develop ideas for conducting rigorous theoretical and empirical research, how to convey theory and finding effectively in writing, and the norms of the political science profession. Students will be asked to develop specific research proposals during the course. Topics include research design, academic writing and presentation.

Grading:

9 Class Assignments and Presentations x 10%— 90%

Class Participation— 10%

Course Policies:

Unexcused late work will be penalized a whole letter grade, and an additional letter grade for every additional 24 hours of lateness. Plagiarism or cheating will be treated seriously and reported to the Board of Academic Honesty. No other absences will be excused except by doctor's note.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Reading: Students will be graded on their attendance and participation in each week's activities.

Assignments: Students are required to complete the assignments detailed for each week and present them in class. Assignments are due the midnight before class. Students doing methodological, philosophical or formal theoretic work should consult with the instructor about alternatives to certain of the assignments.

February 5th: Introduction

Lecture: The basic outline of the academic career structure

February 12th: Know Your Enemy: Peer Review

Lecture: Where to publish, how the publication process works, and some tips on how to deal with it.

Readings: Readings from the instructor's work and reviews will be distributed before class

February 19th: Question and Research Design Selection

Lecture: How do we select suitable research questions? And how do we design empirical research in a way that will allow us to make reliable statements about cause and effect?

Resources:

Angrist, Joshua and Jorn-Steffen Pischke (2009). *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*. Princeton UP.
 Daniel Little. 1991. *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Westview Press.
 Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton.
 James Johnson. 2006. "Consequences of Positivism: A Pragmatist Assessment," *Comparative Political Studies* 39:224-52.

February 26th: Replication

Assignment #1: Students should submit before class a replication of the major results of an empirical paper published in the past three years in the *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, or *Journal of Politics*. Students should present results to see if some variation in measurement, functional form, or estimation strategy and see if that influences the results. Students should then prepare a brief presentation of their findings that does not make use of numerical tables.

Readings:

King, Gary. "Replication, Replication." <https://gking.harvard.edu/files/gking/files/replication.pdf>

March 5th: Qualitative Methods

Lecture: What are some non-quantitative ways of gathering empirical evidence?

Assignment #2: Students must informally in class a process of qualitative data gathering based on EITHER 1) and interview with a political actor or non-academic expert or 2) a book (minimum length 300 pages) written by a political actor.

Readings:

Richard Fenno. 1986. "Observation, Context, and Sequence," *American Political Science Review* 80:3-16.

Laitin, David. "Comparative politics: The state of the subdiscipline." (2000).

Phillip Schrodtt. 2014. "The Seven Deadly Sins of Contemporary Quantitative Political Analysis," *Journal of Peace Research* 51: 287–300.

<https://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS293/articles/mrperestroika.pdf>

<https://lists.h-net.org/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-polmeth&month=0207&week=b&msg=CdRdCYrvPctJOpCgllWsGQ>

March 12th: No Class, Student Meetings

Assignment #3: Class will not meet this week. Students will make appointments for 40 minute blocs of time to meet with the instructor and discuss a list of six research ideas, which they are required to bring to the meeting. Of these ideas 1) At least one should focus on a question that has not previous be raised in political science, 2) At least one should suggest a new answer to a well-established problem or question, 3) at least one should focus on a data source (real or potential) that has not previously been analyzed, and 4) at least one should involve the independent variable being randomly or ignorable assigned. Students interested in formal theory and/or methods topics may be excused from the last two requirements if they bring ideas that promise to contribute to these areas. For their ideas, students should ideally have some idea of the question they will ask, a hypothesis or theory they believe sheds light on this question, empirical data they will use to test such a hypothesis, and the research design they would use, though not all of these elements are applicable to all projects, and students may still be hazy on one element or another.

March 19th: Academic Writing

Lecture: Some tips on how to write

Assignment #4: Students should submit before class a comprehensive rewriting of the abstract and introduction of a rough draft of the instructor's graduate school second year paper, to be circulated before class.

Resources:

Colomb, G. G., and J. M. Williams. *Style: The basics of clarity and grace*. Boston: Longman, 2012.

Cook, Claire Kehrwald. *Line by line: How to edit your own writing*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1985.

March 26th: Structuring Papers (I)

Lecture: How to structure papers

Reading:

King, Gary. "Publication, Publication." <https://gking.harvard.edu/files/gking/files/paperspub.pdf>

Weingast, Barry. "Caltech Rules for Writing Papers."

<https://web.stanford.edu/group/mcnollgast/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/CALTECH.RUL..pdf>

Imai, Koskuke. "Final Project." <https://imai.fas.harvard.edu/teaching/files/HowToPaper.pdf>

Paine, Jack. "Writing Advice for Political Science Students: Version 2.0" (2018)

<http://nebula.wsimg.com/b9a22e95861ecee468222fe9199535c3?AccessKeyId=FD7670AEAE23BB8C3DAE&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>

March 20th: Structuring Papers (II)

Assignment #5: Students must 1) present in class the structure of a paper published in the past three years in the *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, or *Journal of Politics*, without describing the specific findings or arguments made and 2) submit before class and present in class the abstract and outline of a paper that they plan to write.

April 2nd: Writing Abstracts and Introductions (I)

Lecture: How to write abstracts and introductions

Assignment #6: Students must write and submit before class revised abstracts for three working papers that will be circulated before class.

April 9th Writing Abstracts and Introductions (II)

Assignment #7: Students must write and informally present an abstract and introduction to a research paper on their topic of interest. Student may make educated guesses about the solutions to models or the results of fieldwork or quantitative analyses. These hypothetical sections must be written in italics.

April 16th: The Academic Job Market

Lecture: The structure of the academic job market and tips for success.

Assignment #8: Data collection on the past of the political science job market (will be explained in class the week before).

April 23rd : Conferences, Networking and Teaching

Lecture: How to be an academic outside of peer review and the market.

April 30th: Presentation of Research Questions

Assignment #9: Students must circulate and informally present in class a memorandum (minimum length 800 words) describing one research idea. The proposal should describe in general terms the question or puzzle, the existing state of the literature on this question, the hypothesis or theory, the data to be used, the research design, and a brief discussion (based on existing cases) for why your theory might be correct.