

## **POLI 639: Mixed Methods Research in European Studies**

POLI 639  
Winter 2020

Leacock 541  
Tue 2:35pm – 5:25pm

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### **Course description**

This course has three main goals: 1) to introduce students to mixed methods research approaches and their philosophical foundation; 2) to help students learn how to execute these methods through analysis of examples from the European politics literature; 3) to provide an opportunity for students to generate their own mixed methods research design, which could become the basis of their thesis work.

### **Course requirements**

This is a graduate seminar, so class time will be devoted exclusively to the discussion of the assigned readings, rather than to lecturing on my part. This means that you should read the assigned material for the week *before* class.

#### **1) Participation (20%)**

You should participate actively and regularly in class discussions. Just showing up for class will certainly not be enough to get a high attendance/participation grade. Showing up sporadically will not be sufficient either, even you offer brilliant insights. Since this is a small seminar, its success is highly contingent on full participation and you should make every effort to attend all meetings.

#### **3) Book review (20%)**

Choose one of the assigned books and write a review of it. A book review contains an overview of the book's central arguments, a discussion of its methodology and data, an evaluation of its main contribution/s and any important shortcomings, and a brief discussion of its target audience. Check out some of the book reviews in the Critical Dialogues section in *Perspectives on Politics* to see how to structure and calibrate your review. The review should be between 1000-1500 words.

#### **4) Short paper exercise (10%)**

You will prepare two short exercises, submit them online before class, and come to class with a printout, ready to discuss them with everyone. These are designed to allow you to

apply the knowledge and tools about different methods that we discuss. You could choose to use the exercises to address different aspect of the same substantive problem. Alternatively, you can use them to explore a variety of topics.

These exercises are graded only satisfactory/unsatisfactory. You need a satisfactory grade on both of them to receive full credit for this portion of the course.

### **5) Research design paper (50%)**

The main requirement for the course is a 4-5,000 word paper that proposes a mixed methods study. The paper should have a short literature review, a discussion of the conceptualization of the dependent variable, a section on a hypothesis and the conceptualization of the independent variable(s), a section on measurement, and a section on the data to be collected and methods to be used to analyze it. If you are planning a mixed methods thesis, you can use this assignment to write a draft of your proposal. If you are planning a one method thesis, you can still use the literature review and theoretical discussion to draft portions of your proposal, but you will have to come up with an additional method that could be used to explore your chosen research question.

#### **Grading scale:**

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Grade Points</i>	<i>Grade Range</i>
A	4.0	>3.85
A-	3.7	3.51-3.85
B+	3.3	3.16-3.50
B	3.0	2.86-3.15
B-	2.7	2.51-2.85
C+	2.3	2.16-2.50
C	2.0	1.86-2.15
D	1.0	1.0-1.85
F	0.0	<1.0

#### **On Academic Integrity**

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity)).

## **Required readings**

All assigned articles are available through McGill Library's online resources. The books are also available through the library as e-books. You should download the pdfs early.

## **Course outline**

### **Jan 7 (Week 1): Introduction**

### **Jan 14 (Week 2): Epistemology, ontology**

Bevir, Mark. "Meta-Methodology: Clearing the Underbrush." In *The Oxford handbook of political methodology*. 2008.

Sartori, Giovanni. "Concept misformation in comparative politics." *American political science review* 64, no. 4 (1970): 1033-1053.

Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. "A tale of two cultures: Contrasting quantitative and qualitative research." *Political analysis* 14, no. 3 (2006): 227-249.

King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1994). Chapter 1 and pp. 34-49.

### **Jan 21 (Week 3): Concepts**

Adcock, Robert. "Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research." *American political science review* 95, no. 3 (2001): 529-546.

Gerring, John. "What makes a concept good? A criterial framework for understanding concept formation in the social sciences." *Polity* 31, no. 3 (1999): 357-393.

Goertz, Gary. *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*. Princeton: Princeton University Press (2006), pp. 6-7, Chapters 1-3 [you can skim the formal sections on pp. 39-44, 55-58].

Sartori, Giovanni. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." *The American Political Science Review* 64:4 (1970), pp. 1033-46 [you can skim the rest]

### **Jan 28 (Week 4): Exercise 1 discussion**

Pick a concept that is widely used in political science and describe its usual operationalization and measure (refer to least two authors). You can choose a concept

that is very abstract (e.g. power, reform, regime), very concrete (e.g. electoral volatility, civil war), or something in between (e.g. polarization, populism, ethnic identity). Diagram the concept's dimensions. How do we distinguish it from proximate concepts? What are the most common proximate concepts that might blur into this one? Specify the measures. How labor intensive are they? Do certain measures presuppose certain methods? How close is the measure to the core of the concept? What is it about the concept and/or its operationalization that makes it work well?

Write a 500-750 word response to these questions. Be ready to present and discuss your concept in class.

### **Feb 4 (Week 5): Regression and Case Studies: The meta-theory**

Mahoney, James 2010 "After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research", *World Politics* 62, 1, 120-147

Lieberman, Evan S. "Nested analysis as a mixed-method strategy for comparative research." *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 3 (2005): 435-452.

Gerring, John. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press (2007), Chapter 3 ("What is a Case Study Good For?"), Chapter 5 ("Techniques for Choosing Cases").

Jick, Todd D. "Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: Triangulation in action." *Administrative science quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1979): 602-611.

### **Feb 11 (Week 6): Example 1**

Kopstein, Jeffrey S., and Jason Wittenberg. *Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust*. Cornell University Press, 2018.

Lustick, Ian S. "History, historiography, and political science: Multiple historical records and the problem of selection bias." *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 3 (1996): 605-618.

### **Feb 18 (Week 7): Interviewing in the field: meta theory**

Rubin, Herbert and Irene Rubin. *Qualitative Interviewing. The Art of Hearing Data*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage (2012), Chapters 6-9

Cyr, Jennifer. "The pitfalls and promise of focus groups as a data collection method." *Sociological Methods and Research* 45:2 (2015), pp. 231-259

Mosley, Layna, ed. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Cornell University Press (2013). Introduction (Mosley), Chapters 1 (Lynch), 2 (Bleich and Pekkanen), 11 (Leech et al).

Simmons, Erica and Nicholas Rush Smith. "Comparison with an Ethnographic Sensibility" PS (2017) 50:1 pp. 126-30.

**Feb 25 (Week 8): Exercise 2 discussion**

Pick a classmate who will be your interview subject. Choose a question (it doesn't have to be political) to which you would like to know the answer and your classmate is in a good position to provide an answer. Write several interview questions that would help you elicit the information you need to answer the question. Which questions elicited the most useful information? Why? How did you feel while you were asking the questions? How did your respondent seem to feel when they were answering them? Finally, think of what other types of people might be able to help you answer this question. Consider how easy it would be to approach them.

Note: Keep in mind that your respondent can choose to not answer any of your questions. Avoid sensitive questions.

Write a 500-word discussion of what you learned when you interviewed your respondent, not just about the question, but also about how the interview process works.

**Mar 10 (Week 9): Example 2: Guest lecture by Prof. Carolyn Warner on experiments and interviews**

Warner, Carolyn M., Ramazan Kılınç, Christopher W. Hale, and Adam B. Cohen. *Generating Generosity in Catholicism and Islam: Beliefs, Institutions, and Public Goods Provision*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

**Mar 17 (Week 10): Example 3**

Mares, Isabela, and Lauren E. Young. *Conditionality & Coercion: Electoral clientelism in Eastern Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2019.

**Mar 24 (Week 11): Process-tracing or content analysis?**

**Mar 31 (Week 12): Trade-offs of mixed methods research**

Ahmed, Amel, and Rudra Sil. "When multi-method research subverts methodological pluralism—or, why we still need single-method research." *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 4 (2012): 935-953.

Coppedge, Michael. "Thickening thin concepts and theories: combining large N and small in comparative politics." *Comparative Politics* (1999): 465-476.

Sil, Rudra 2004, "Problems chasing methods or methods chasing problems? Research Communities, Constrained Pluralism, and the Role of Eclecticism", in Shapiro, I., Rogers M. Smith and Tarek E. Masoud (eds.), *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 307-321.

**Apr 7 (Week 13): Research design workshop:**  
**student presentations**