Course Description

Before taking this class, you should have read about the philosophy of science, experienced field re-
search, and/or learned some skills of analyzing data. This course is designed to help you look beyond the
skill level of research and think widely at the discipline level. We will overview the major debates or contro-
versies in the discipline, think about how to release ourselves from the constraints, and discuss how to con-
duct meaningful research that addresses these methodological and epistemological concerns. The course will
primarily focus on the following subjects, each of which will take about two weeks of reading and discus-
sion:

1. How divided are we? The outlook of the discipline
2. How useful is it to label ourselves as “qualitative” or “quantitative” researchers?
3. How could we release the tension between science and philosophy? Or, how necessary is it?
4. “Science ignorance”?: The reexamination the epistemology of political science
5. Rational political animals? The reflections on rational choice assumptions
6. How empirical is empirical enough? Method- versus Problem-Driven Research
7. How could theorization be achieved? The Challenges of Theory-Driven Research
8. What can be done? The prospect of the discipline

Course Texts and Readings

The course requires active participation in reading assigned materials. Most articles are available on uni-
versity’s electronic journal archives. A copy of required book chapters and some journal articles that are not
available in the library or databases (marked with ** in the end of the entry) will be put in a blasket with a
proper label in the institute office one week before the class. You can also make a good use of the interli-
brary loan system.

Grading Policy

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>Five reaction papers</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Research paper</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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• **Class participation (30%)**: Involvement in class discussion include your attendance, questions provided for discussion, and respondances to questions. You are asked to read through the given materials and bring thoughts to the class.

• **Reaction papers (50%)**: You are free to pick up five topics to write reaction papers in the beginning of the semester and write papers that each has about five pages, doubled spaced (no less than four and not longer than six pages). Reaction papers should demonstrate your (re)organization of the assigned readings and your thoughts (evaluation or critiques) about the papers. *Papers that simply summarize the assigned readings will be rejected for rewriting.* Bonus points will be given to papers with extended (self-selected) readings that help develop arguments or clarify points.

• **Research paper (20%)**: Research paper, due on *June 16* (5pm), is your “free-style” research work. Ideally, it is a part of your dissertation, research proposal, or research of your interest. It should be a semester-long project and shows how your thoughts or ideas learned in this class are integrated into your ongoing project. You need to consult me first if you want to write something beyond the scope of this class. You can extend your reaction papers into a term paper, but there is no need to do so. Your research paper should be at least fifteen-page long (double-spaced) in English, or twenty-five-page long in Chinese. Papers are graded based on the importance and originality of the topic, the choice and organization of literature (there should be at least ten journal articles or book or book chapters), your methodology, the presentation of your findings, the interpretation of your results, and overall format format (use APA style). A research paper that is qualified for a conference presentation will get 85; 95 for submitting to a journal.

• All papers are due in class. The term paper is due in the beginning of the last class. Note that *I do not give “I” for incomplete works.* Make sure you manage your time well and turn in the hot copies of the papers before the deadlines. The cover page of papers should include the following information: class name, author’s full name and student id, paper type (mid-term paper or final term paper), turn-in date, and contact information.

**Weekly Schedule**

*[Feb. 18] Introduction to the class.*

*[March 4 & 6] TOPIC 1: How Divided Are We? The Outlook of the Discipline*

• **Required:**

• **Supplemental:**
[March 11 & 18] **TOPIC 2: How Useful is It to Label Ourselves as “Qualitative” or “Quantitative” Researchers?**

- No class on March 25.

- Required:

- Supplemental:
  - Lees, C. (2006). We are all comparativists now - Why and how single-country scholarship must adapt and incorporate the comparative politics approach. *Comparative Political Studies*, 39 (9), 1084-1108.**

[April 1 & 8] **TOPIC 3: How Could We Release the Tension between Science and Philosophy? Or, How Necessary is It?**

- Required:

- Supplemental:
[April 22 & 29] **TOPIC 4: “Science Ignorance”? Re-examine the Epistemology of Political Science**

- No class on April 15 (the mid-term exam week)
- Required:
- Supplemental (these are classics; no copies will be provided; read on your own):


- Required:
- Supplemental:

• Required:

• Supplemental:


• Required:

• Supplemental:

[June 10] TOPIC 8: What Can be Done? The Prospects of the Discipline

• Required:

• Supplemental:
