Course Description

Methodology is about what how we gain knowledge, a tool by which we evaluate questions we ask, the methods we use, and knowledge we acquire. We will focus on reasons of doing research and help you look beyond current scope of research. Students will be guided to think widely at the discipline level by overview the major debates or controversies in the discipline. We will also evaluate some examples that may or may not advance our knowledge regarding our political life. While its reading load is heavier than other master-level courses, this course will focus more on intellectual discussion about current research in the field than on readings itself. To be more systematically formulate the flow of our discussion, the following subjects will be introduced in class, each of which will take about two weeks of reading and discussion. Note that these topics and relevant readings are introduced only for discussion purpose. We may introduce new topics and readings or modify the reading list as the semester goes.

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. How empirical is empirical enough? Method- versus Problem-Driven Research
6. How could theorization be achieved? The Challenges of Theory-Driven Research
7. What can be done? The prospect of the discipline
8. How much truth can we find out? Experiment and Causality
Course Texts and Readings

The course requires active participation in reading assigned materials. Most articles are available on university’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 basket with a proper label in the institute office one week before the class. You can also make a good use of the interlibrary loan system.

Grading Policy

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four reaction papers</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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- **Participation and Discussion Leadership (20%)**: Involvement in class discussion include your attendance, questions provided for discussion, and respondances to questions. You are asked to read through the given materials before the class and bring thoughts to the class. You will be assigned a week to play as a discussion leader.

- **Reaction papers (40%)**: Pick up four topics of this semester in the beginning of the semester and write papers of evaluating the readings of the chosen topic. Each reaction paper should cover the readings of the week, no longer than 6 pages, and doubled spaced. 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 returned for rewriting. Bonus points will be given to papers with extended (self-selected) readings that help develop arguments or clarify points. Papers will be graded based on the originality of thoughts, the organization of literature, the presentation of your thoughts, and overall format (use APA or APSA style).

- **Research paper (40%)**: This is a semester-long work that addresses research topic of your interest. The paper should have a clear research purpose, a set of research questions, a compacted literature review (10 to 15 articles or books). The paper, not like any other papers of other course works, should pay a considerate amount of attention to methodology, i.e., why you design your research this way.

- All papers are due in class. Make sure you manage your time well and turn in the hot copies of the papers before the deadlines.

Weekly Schedule

[Feb. 22] Introduction of the Class

[Feb. 29] A Doctoral Program Orientation

- Some Thoughts for Discussion:
[March 7 & 14] **TOPIC 1: How Divided Are We? An Outlook of the Discipline**

- Required:

- Supplemental:

[March 21 & 28] **TOPIC 2: How Useful is It to Label Ourselves as “Qualitative” or “Quantitative” Researchers?**

- 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 4, (11) & 18] TOPIC 3: How Could We Release the Tension between Science and Philosophy? Or, How Necessary is It?

• Required:


• Supplemental:


[April 25 & May 2] **TOPIC 4: “Science Ignorance” and the Discipline’s Evolutionary Epistemology**

- April 25 2pm. A talk by Prof. Alex Tan on Model Building and Hypothesis Testing.

- **Required:**

- **Supplemental (these are classics; no copies will be provided; read on your own):**

[May 9 & 16] **TOPIC 5: Scientific Realism and Beyond**

- **Required:**

- **Required:**

- **Supplemental:**


- **Required:**

- **Supplemental:**

[June 13 & 20] **TOPIC 8: How Much Truth Can We Find Out? Experiment and Causality**

- Student Presentation: Propose Your Method(s) and Methodology
- Required:

- Supplemental:

- ia.