Course Description

Methodology is about how to gain knowledge, not simply about methods of doing research. This course is not about introducing research methods but about reasons of doing research. Titled as “Political Methodology,” this course is designed to help political science graduate students to look beyond the skill level 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. 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

** Note: Due to my frequent international travel this semester, I plan to hold some sessions online if it is necessary. So, students are required to get familiar with the virtual class system (and later the video conference system) provided by the university.

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 blasket 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 (online and off line)</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three short reaction papers</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
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- **Class participation and Online Discussion (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 and bring thoughts to the class. Some online activities may be assigned during the semester. Get familiar with the university’s online classroom system: http://cu2.nsysu.edu.tw/.

- **Reaction papers (30%)**: You are free to pick up three topics to write reaction papers in the beginning of the semester and write papers that each has at least 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 returned for rewriting. Bonus points will be given to papers with extended (self-selected) readings that help develop arguments or clarify points.

- **Research paper (50%)**: Research paper, **due on June 16 (5pm), 2010**, 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. 24**] Class will formally start on March 3.

- Syllabus and virtual classroom are available online. You don’t need to do much in this week, except:
  - (1) Simply skim the syllabus;
  - (2) Post and share a short statement about your research interest, either in Chinese or in English. There is no word limit for it. Students who finish this warm-up exercise by the class of March 3 will gain extra point for the semester. Works posted later than March 3 will be accepted but won’t be credited.
[March 3] Introduction

[March 5 & 10] TOPIC 1: How Divided Are We? An Outlook of the Discipline

• Required:

• Supplemental:

[March 17 & 24] 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.**
[March 31 & April 7] **TOPIC 3:** How Could We Release the Tension between Science and Philosophy? Or, How Necessary is It?

- Note: The class of March 31 is a make-up class for April 28 when I will be travelling.
- Required:

- Supplemental:

[April 14 & May 5] **TOPIC 4:** “Science Ignorance”? Re-examine the Epistemology of Political Science

- No class on April 21 (the mid-term exam week) and April 28. Work on your research paper and discuss online.
- Research topics may be assigned on April 14. Students are expected to orally present *and defend* their choices of research topics on May 5. Discussion about this assignment in the virtual classroom during these two weeks are welcomed.
- Required:

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

- **Required:**

- **Supplemental:**


- **Required:**

- **Supplemental:**


- **Required:**

• Supplemental:

[June 23] What Can be Done? The Prospects of the Discipline (Online Discussion and Presentation of Student Research)

• Supplemental: