Libera Università Internazionale
degli Studi Sociali Guido Carli

LUISS

Syllabus PhD in Politics

Year of Offer	2024-2025 – first year
Study Course	PhD Research in Politics
Teaching/Module	Research Design
Teaching Period	First Semester
Professors	Vincenzo Emanuele and Elisabetta Mannoni
Course Year	2024-2025
Field	SPS/04 SCIENZA POLITICA
CFU	5
Total Hours of Frontal Instruction	20

Tipo Testo	Testo in Italiano/Inglese
OBIETTIVI/LEARNING GOALS	This course aims at providing tools for developing a sound research design. Moreover, it offers a wide-range introduction to the diverse strategies and methodological tools employed by contemporary social science, in order to first provide students with the ability to understand research products that belong to different research traditions and approaches in political science.
	Conoscenza e comprensione/ knowledge and understanding:
	Capacità di applicare conoscenza e comprensione/ applying knowledge and understanding:
RISULTATI DI APPRENDIMENTO ATTESI/ INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES	Autonomia di giudizio/ making judgements:
	Abilità comunicative/ communication skills:
	Capacità di apprendimento/ learning skills:
Prerequisiti / Entry Requirements	N/A
Contenuti Del Corso / Course Content	The course starts with a presentation of the cycle of social and political research. Some key aspects on how to build a proper research design are discussed and analysed in following steps, in particular: 1) the construction and development of *concepts* and their operationalization; 2) the selection of cases and all the choices related to the spatial and temporal scope of a research.
	The second part of the course moves on to a comparison among different approaches and strategies that a researcher may adopt within the broad framework of the comparative method, and particularly the long-term debate between small-N and large-N strategies, case-

oriented and variable-oriented research. Finally, students are asked to prepare and present their own PhD research design, based on what they have learnt throughout the course.

Class sessions include students' presentations of the readings (a mix of theoretical and empirical contributions), followed by instructor comments and discussion. All readings will be delivered in advance by the instructor. Students are required to read all the assigned material before coming to class. Reading in advance is crucial, as it fosters an interactive discussion that is productive in moving ahead of the simple presentation of the topic, towards the exploration of specific aspects that might be of interest for the students' current research projects.

Sessions and Readings:

1. Introduction: Doing social science research. What is a research design?

Della Porta, D. and Keating, M. (2008), 'How many approaches in the social sciences? An epistemological introduction', in Donatella Della Porta e Michael Keating (eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19-39. Chapter 2

Schmitter, P. (2008). 'The Design of Social and Political Research', in Donatella Della Porta e Michael Keating (eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 263-295. Chapter 14

McCauley, A., and Ruggeri, A. (2020). From Questions and Puzzles to Research Project. In L. Curini and R. Franzese (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science and International Relations*, Chapter 2.

2. Concepts

Sartori, G. (2009), "Guidelines for concept analysis" in Collier, D. and Gerring, J. (eds.), Concepts and Method in Social Science: The tradition of Giovanni Sartori, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 97-150. [only pp. 97-127]

Collier D. and J. E. Mahon, 'Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis', *American Political Science Review*, 87 (1993), pp. 845-855.

Collier, D., LaPorte, J., & Seawright, J. (2012). Putting typologies to work: Concept formation, measurement, and analytic rigor. *Political Research Quarterly*, 65(1), 217-232.

3. Operationalization and validation

Pollock, P. H. (2005). The essentials of political analysis. Washington DC: CQ Press., ch. 1 (pp. 7-25).

Adcock, R., & Collier, D. (2001). Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research, *American Political Science Review*, 95(3), 529-546.

Alvarez, M., Cheibub, J. A., Limongi, F., & Przeworski, A. (1996). Classifying political regimes. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 31(2), 3-36.

4. Case selection

Geddes, B. (1990). How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics. *Political analysis*, 2, 131-150.

Kreuzer, M. (2021), *The Grammar of time. Using comparative historical analysis to investigate macro-historical questions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Chapter 2: Varieties of time: how to study objects in transition).

King, G., Keohane, R. and S. Verba (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry. Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapter 6: Increasing the Number of Observations.

5. Comparative research strategies [Assignment 1 due by November 7, 10am]

Della Porta, D. (2008), 'Comparative analysis: case-oriented versus variable-oriented research', in Della Porta, D. and Keating, M. (eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences. A Pluralist Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 198-222. Chapter 11

Franklin, Mark (2008). 'Quantitative Analysis', in Donatella Della Porta e Michael Keating (eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 240-262. Chapter 13

Anckar, C. (2008). On the applicability of the most similar systems design and the most different systems design in comparative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *11*(5), 389-401.

6. Data collection and management [Assignment 2 due by November 14, 10am]

Powner, L. C. (2014). *Empirical research and writing: A political science student's practical guide*. CQ Press. Chapter 6: Qualitative Data Collection and Management

Powner, L. C. (2014). *Empirical research and writing: A political science student's practical guide*. CQ Press. Chapter 7: Quantitative Data Collection and Management

Powner, L. C. (2014). *Empirical research and writing: A political science student's practical guide*. CQ Press. Chapter 8: Preparing Quantitative Data for Analysis

7. Interpret the data and write up the research [Assignment 3 due by November 21, 10am]

Powner, L. C. (2014). Empirical research and writing: A political science student's practical guide. CQ Press. Chapter 9: Writing Up Your Research

Sandelowski, M. (1998). Writing a good read: Strategies for re-presenting qualitative data. Research in nursing & health, 21(4), 375-382.

Gilgun, J. F. (2005). "Grab" and good science: Writing up the results of qualitative research. Qualitative health research, 15(2), 256-262.

8. Students present their own PhD research design

Max 15 minutes per presentation. Each presentation is followed by instructor's feedback and Q&A.

Testi Di Riferimento / Reference Books	Dunleavy, P. (2003). Authoring a PhD: How to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation. Macmillan International Higher Education. Della Porta, D. and Keating, M. (Eds.). (2008). Approaches and methodologies in the social sciences: A pluralist perspective. Cambridge University Press. Powner, L. C. (2014). Empirical research and writing: A political science student's practical guide. CQ Press.
Metodologie Didattiche/ Teaching Method	
Modalità di verifica e di accertamento dell'apprendimento/ Detailed Description of Assessment Method	The course assessment is based on the following criteria: class attendance and participation (30%); paper presentations and assignments (30%); a written paper with a length of max. 3.000 words concerning the research design of the student's PhD research project (research question; concept and operationalization; case selection, spatial and temporal framework; hypotheses; data and method) (40%). You can contact the course coordinators to agree the research question that the paper will need to address. The completed paper will need to be submitted as a pdf document (incl a cover page with your name and the word count) no later than 10 January 2025.

The final course grade will be expressed in thirtieths (/30). A pass mark will be attained with a minimum mark of 18/30, while the maximum mark will be 30/30 com laude.

The three home assignments below are supposed to help you progressively advance on your final written assignment for the course (see below). Completing these tasks throughout the course should allow you to get feedback from the instructors, which you can take into account to adjust the direction of your final proposal on the way.

Home assignment 1: Research question and its relevance

Draft up to maximum 3 feasible RQs on your project's topic (one is enough if you are considering writing a monograph-shaped thesis; three if you are considering writing a paper-based dissertation – in that case, the questions should delve around the same topic, but from different angles). They should be no more than one sentence each. For each RQ, explain why it's relevant. Why should people in the field care about the answer to this question? For each RQ you should identify:

Unit of analysis

The variables whose relationship you want to investigate

The direction (and sign) of the relationship

Scope conditions (e.g. time and space)

Suggested reading: Powner, L. C. (2014). Empirical research and writing: A political science student's practical guide. CQ Press. Chapter 1

Home assignment 2: Concepts and variables and a short annotated bibliography

For your RQ from the first assignment,

define the key concepts and variables based on existing literature. What is the well-established definition of your concept? How can this concept be practically measured?

find at least five relevant (ideally, the most relevant) sources from authors in the field who worked on one or more of the concepts/variables you included. Below each source, write a short paragraph summarizing its content and briefly explaining how this source could benefit your project.

Suggested reading: Powner, L. C. (2014). Empirical research and writing: A political science student's practical guide. CQ Press. Chapter 2 and 3

Home assignment 3: Expectations/hypotheses/argument

For your RQ, relying on the sources from the previous assignment (to which you can add more, if needed)

based on it, write your expected answer to that question – in other words, your hypotheses (especially if you think you will rely on quantitative methods) or expectations (especially if you think you will rely on qualitative methods) or steps of your argument (in case you are working on a political theory project, more philosophical in nature).

If you are working on a qualitative/quantitative project: write a paragraph about how you would test whether your hypotheses/expectations are right or wrong. Which methodology could you use? Which data? Do you need to collect original data, or you can rely on existing data? If the latter, where will you find them? If you are working on a political theory project, write a paragraph about the possible counterarguments you could use or about the possibility to use existing empirical data to support any of your claims.

Suggested reading: Powner, L. C. (2014). Empirical research and writing: A political science student's practical guide. CQ Press. Chapter 4 and 5

Final assignment: research design paper

Suggested readings:

Hall, P. 1990. "Helpful Hints for Writing Dissertations in Comparative Politics," in PS: Political Science and Politics, 23(40): 596-598.

Most, B. 1990. "Getting Started on Political Research," in PS: Political Science and Politics 23(4): 592-6.

Przeworski A. and F. Salomon. 1995. "The Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Suggestions for Applicants to Social Science Research Council Competitions." Social Science Research Foundation.

Enterline, A. 2007 "A Guide to Writing Research Projects in Graduate Political Science Projects." Unpublished Manuscript. University of North Texas, October 2007. [Available here].

Gonzalez-Ocantos, E. 2019. "Formulating Research Questions and Designing Research Projects: Notes and Advice from a Qualitative Analyst." In Curini, L. and R. Franzese Jr. eds. SAGE Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science and International Relations. Thousand Oaks: SAGE

Robert Adcock and David Collier. September 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for

Qualitative and Quantitative Research," American Political Science Review, Vol. 95, pp. 529-546.

John Gerring. Spring 1999. "What Makes a Concept Good?" Polity, pp. 357-393.

John Gerring. 2007. "Is There a (Viable) Crucial-Case Method?" Comparative Political Studies,

Vol. 40, pp. 231-253.

Daniel McDermott, "Analytical Political Philosophy," in David Leopold & Marc Stears (eds.), Political Theory: Methods and Approaches (Oxford University Press, 2008).