Research Methodology in Political Economy

Course Number: U171400
Course Meetings: Thursday, 9-12 a.m., U10C
Instructor: Dr. Chih-Cheng Meng
Office: Northern Building of Social Sciences, 6th Floor, 06-2757575 ext. 50253
Office Hours: M 12:00-2 p.m. or By appointment.
E-mail: cmeng@mail.ncku.edu.tw

Course Description

This seminar offers a broad and intensive introduction to the field of methodology for first year students to equip with fundamental understandings and techniques to political-economic studies. In addition to surveying methodological debates across various research approaches, the emphasis of this course is on substantive practices of how to conduct an empirical research project. Therefore, the readings for this course are not prone to specific approach and substantive subfield in political economy. Both qualitative and quantitative methods will be taught, in order to extend students’ knowledge of research methods. There are two general objects for students after leaving this one semester’s seminar: One, this course expects students being able to follow a particular research approach with correct methodological positions; Two, this course aims to train students being able to apply appropriate and feasible analytical methods to their research and dissertation projects.

The readings are organized into four portions: (1) Introduction: Disciplinary Foundation and Debates; (2) Conceptualization and Measurement; (3) Contending Approaches of Political Economy; and (4) Empirical Inquiry of Political Economic Research. Due to the situation that the curriculum is intensive and the reading and assignment loads are heavy in this class, I strongly remind students who finally decide to take this class should be prepared to devote considerable time to accomplish all course requirements.

Requirements

(1) Seminar Participation (15%): Students are expected to attend class, keep up with the assigned readings for each seminar meeting and to come prepared to discuss them. Each student will be assigned to lead weekly seminar discussion one to two times. The discussion leader must prepare a 15-20 minutes summary of weekly readings and raise substantive questions for seminar participants. Students are also encouraged to utilize NCKU’s moodle system (at <http://moodle.ncku.edu.tw/> ) to receive frequently messages of class announcements, course materials and proceedings, and Q&A from professor and other class
cohorts. Your participation on the moodle’s discussion board will also be partially credited into your final grade.

(2) **Weekly Reaction Papers and Assignments (35%)**: This course designates two types of weekly assignments. First, an essay of TWO-pages in which students analyze a concept or a position of arguments in assigned readings. The essay should be critical, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of this literature. More important, students are always encouraged to have their own positions to challenge others’ arguments from various literature. Students are required to circulate this weekly essay to the professor and classmates by the noon of the date before each class meeting. Students should read others’ papers before class begins. The professor will ask students to present their responses toward selected readings and comment on the other students’ positions. Second, a statistical and computing practice in which students answer the assigned questions by utilizing the statistics and computing programs (STATA) lectured in class. Students are encouraged to seek for team-works and advices from outside resources while they undertake this statistical assignment. The due date of this statistical assignment will be announced in class.

(3) **Research Proposal (20%)**: An essay of 15-20 pages in which students develop a research design for carrying out a project using either qualitative or quantitative (or both) methods. This research proposal must be composed of clear research question(s), well defined dependent variable, brief literature review, research framework, adequate research design and expected results. All citations and references in this proposal must be drafted by APSR style. The instructions and samples for APSR style can be referred at <http://acme.highpoint.edu/~msetzler/generalissues/APSRcitation.htm>. You will be assigned an in-class prelim before you submit the final research proposal on week 11 (Nov. 24). My grading will pay much attention on the section of research design over the final draft. Specifically, I will examine whether you demonstrate adequate and feasible research design to test your research questions and theoretical hypotheses from the literature review. This proposal will be due by 5 p.m. on January 12. Please turn in the hard copy of your final paper along with your final exam to my office. I will not accept e-mail attachment or delayed paper for this final assignment.

(4) **Final Exam (30%)**: This exam will cover all the important issues that we discuss in this class. It is scheduled to proceed on January 12 from 9 am to 5 pm. The exact format of exam will be announced later. Students are expected to prepare this comprehensive exam earlier.

**Recommended Books to Purchase**


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**Reading Assignments**¹ and Schedule

**Part I: Disciplinary Foundations and Debates**

**Week 1: September 15**

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

1. Go through the syllabus

2. Share your research interests, ideas, current research projects, and etc.

**Week 2: September 22**

**SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS**

(Reaction paper for Week 2 is due by the noon of 9/21.)

1. Van Evera’s “What is a Political Science Dissertation?” , “Helpful Hints on Writing a Political Science Dissertation”, “The Dissertation Proposal”, “Profession Ethics” and “How to Write a Paper”. (Chaps. 3-6 and Appendix, pp. 89-128)


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¹ The readings which are marked * are assigned to necessary readings. Every class participant is required to go through the star-signed readings before class begins.


5. Kuhn. (Skim the book. You may like to read the book’s outline at <http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/Kuhn.html>.)


   You may like to read the summary of Lakatos’ theory (emphasize on the “Theoretic Context” section) at Chang and Chiu’s research paper.

Week 3: September 29

**Political Economy, Political Science and Methodology in Perspective**

(Reaction paper for Week 3 is due by the noon of 9/28.)


Week 4: October 6

**Approach and Debate: Qualitative and/or Quantitative I**

(Reaction paper for Week 4 is due by the noon of 10/5.)


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2. King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba (Emphasize on chaps. 1, 3, 4, skim the rest).

**Week 5: October 13**

**APPROACH AND DEBATE: QUALITATIVE AND/ OR QUANTITATIVE II**

(Reaction paper for Week 5 is due by the noon of 10/12.)


   **Part II: Conceptualization and Measurement**

**Week 6: October 20**

**QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

(Reaction paper for Week 6 is due by the noon of 10/19.)

2. Ragin, whole book (Emphasize on chaps. 1-2, 4-8, skim the rest)

**Week 7: October 27**

**QUANTITATIVE APPROACH**

(Reaction paper for Week 7 is due by the noon of 10/26.)


**Week 8: November 3**

**RETHINKING QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES**

(Reaction paper for Week 8 is due by the noon of 11/2)


**Part III: Contending Approaches of Political Economy**

**Week 9: November 10**

**HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH**

(Reaction paper for Week 10 is due by the noon of 11/9)

1. North, Chaps. 1-6.


Week 10: November 17

**POSITIVE APPROACH: RATIONAL CHOICE**
(Reaction paper for Week 11 is due by the noon of 11/16)


Week 11: November 24

**PRELIM OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL**
(Turn-in the outline of your final research proposal by the noon of 11/23, in which includes the title, research questions, theoretical hypotheses, a general research method and approach (if possible) that you will use in your final draft. This outline should be composed no more than 8 pages. The final draft is due by 1/12.)

Students deliver their in-class presentations regarding the outline of their research proposal. Each student needs to prepare slides for 15 mins briefing and to respond to the professor and other classmates’ questions for this weekly seminar.

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Part IV: Empirical Inquiry of Political Economic Research

Week 12: December 1
QUALITATIVE TOOLS I: FIELD RESEARCH
(Reaction paper for Week 12 is due by the noon of 11/30)


Recommended Readings


Week 13: December 8
QUALITATIVE TOOLS II: CASE AND COMPARATIVE METHODS
(Reaction paper for Week 13 is due by the noon of 12/7)


**Week 14: December 15**

**QUANTITATIVE TOOLS I: INTRODUCTION OF APPLIED REGRESSION AND THE RELATED**


**Week 15: December 22**

**QUANTITATIVE TOOLS II-1: LAB PRACTICE**

(Assignment for Week 14 is due by the noon of 12/21)

TBA

**Week 16: December 29**

**QUANTITATIVE TOOLS II-2: LAB PRACTICE**

(Assignment for Week 15 is due by the noon of 12/28)

TBA

**Week 17: January 5**

**QUANTITATIVE TOOLS II-3: LAB PRACTICE**

(Assignment for Week 16 is due by the noon of 1/4)

TBA

**Week 18: January 12**

**FINAL EXAM**
Check email to receive the final exam at 9 am. Return your exam (typed) along with the modified research proposal to my office in person by 5 pm.

**REMARKS:**

All your works in this class are prohibited to violate the plagiarism code which is explicitly stated on the NCKU’s Graduate Program Regulations (see [http://www.ncku.edu.tw/~register/english/a2_new.doc](http://www.ncku.edu.tw/~register/english/a2_new.doc)). You will take serious risks to ask withdrawal from NCKU, if I report you are suspect to violation of plagiarism code. The mostly important rules regarding your standing in the university are cited as the following:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5: Withdrawal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Part 16: Graduate Students under these circumstances are to be withdrawal from college/university:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subpart 1: Students who did not successfully complete their required academic course/courses and/or unit/units within the designated academic program year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subpart 2: Students who did not complete the required number of Preliminary Qualification Examination of Doctoral Degree Candidate given by their major department/college department within the designated year</td>
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<td>Subpart 3: Students who did not successfully obtain a passing grade from the Graduation Examination of first attempt and second attempt.</td>
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<td>Subpart 4: Students who have yet register and reapply after they have placed on suspension before the deadline.</td>
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<td>Subpart 5: Students who did not obtain a passing grade on their student of conduct.</td>
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<td>Subpart 6: Students who did not meet the minimum requirement for admission.</td>
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<td><strong>Subpart 7: Students who found to be plagiarized or embezzled in any thesis paper, creative work, presentation, written report, or technical report.</strong></td>
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As per the Rules and Regulations of Student Reward and Penalty, graduate students who violated the University Policies or other criminal laws are order for dismissal or disciplinary action.