

Political Research Methods

Code: 101104
ECTS Credits: 12

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
2500259 Political Science and Public Management.	OB	2	A
2503778 International Relations	OB	2	A

Contact

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Use of Languages

Principal working language: catalan (cat)
Some groups entirely in English: No
Some groups entirely in Catalan: Yes
Some groups entirely in Spanish: No

Teachers

Agustí Bosch Gardella
Guillem Rico Camps
Jordi Garcia Muniesa

Prerequisites

No necessary prerequesit required.

Objectives and Contextualisation

The course aims to be an introduction to the different stages in political science research. The fundamental purpose of the course is to provide the student with the resources that will enable them to be able to produce knowledge through original research and critically evaluate the work from other authors. The course covers all the aspects necessary to understand the logic of political research: the different ways of producing knowledge, the formulation of questions and hypotheses, the treatment of concepts and the collection and analysis of data.

The main objectives of the course are:

1. To be able to design a research that produces knowledge.
2. To be able to transform concepts into variables in a valid and reliable way.
3. To be able to apply statistical tools suitable for categorical and numerical variables, to know how to use them and to know how to interpret them.
4. To be able to communicate comprehensively and accurately the results of the research carried out.

Competences

- Political Science and Public Management.
- Applying the different behaviour analysis techniques and political actors to real cases from the internal and international political arena.

- Applying the discipline's main theories and different fields to real practical and professional problems.
- Arguing from different theoretical perspectives.
- Demonstrating the comprehension of the logic behind the scientific analysis of political sciences.
- Managing the available time in order to accomplish the established objectives and fulfil the intended task.
- Managing the methodological foundations of politic sciences.
- Realising effective oral presentations that are suited to the audience.
- Synthesizing and critically analysing information.
- Using the main information and documentation techniques (ICT) as an essential tool for the analysis.
- Working autonomously.

International Relations

- Design, plan and carry out projects and studies for analysis and/or intervention in different areas of international relations.
- Recognise the methodological foundations of social science with special emphasis on international relations.
- Students must develop the necessary learning skills to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.

Learning Outcomes

1. Apply the methodology of political analysis to specific real or simulated case studies for international relations and design a complete research strategy.
2. Arguing from different theoretical perspectives.
3. Be familiar with basic methodology in political science.
4. Critically assessing the usage of inductive, deductive and comparative methods.
5. Critically assessing the use of analytical instruments to validate the hypothesis raised.
6. Critically evaluate the use of analytical instruments for the validation of the proposed hypotheses.
7. Critically evaluate the use of methods of induction, deduction and comparison.
8. Demonstrate an understanding of the logic of scientific analysis applied to political science.
9. Demonstrating the comprehension of the logic behind the scientific analysis of political sciences.
10. Designing and planning an investigation in the field of political sciences.
11. Managing the available time in order to accomplish the established objectives and fulfil the intended task.
12. Managing the methodological foundations of politic sciences.
13. Realising effective oral presentations that are suited to the audience.
14. Students must develop the necessary learning skills to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.
15. Synthesizing and critically analysing information.
16. Use a data political data base and for each case use the appropriate basic techniques of descriptive statistics.
17. Using a database of political data using in each case specific basic techniques of descriptive statistics.
18. Using the main information and documentation techniques (ICT) as an essential tool for the analysis.
19. Working autonomously.

Content

1. The research question

The research question: what? who? how? why?

The tentative answers: the review of the literature and the elaboration of the theoretical framework

The hypotheses

2. Use and measurement of concepts

The organization of the data: units, variables and observations

From concepts to variables: the process of operationalization

Independent variables and dependent variables

Measurement levels and type of variables

Measurement error: validity and reliability

3. Univariate descriptive analysis

The statistical description

Measures of centrality

Measures of dispersion

Graphic representations

4. Control of alternative explanations and research design

What should an explanation contain?

Causality: the relationship between variables

Control methods: experimental and observational studies (statistical and comparative methods, case studies)

Longitudinal and cross-sectional designs

5. Data collection

Data sources for political analysis

The standardized interview: the questionnaire

The qualitative interview: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews

Other ways to generate data: participant observation, document analysis

6. Sampling and inference

Population and sample

Representativeness and generalizability

Types of sampling

The normal distribution and the sampling distribution

Sampling error and confidence level

Sample size

Statistical inference

Significance level

7. Relationships between categorical variables

Relationships between variables and hypothesis testing

Contingency tables: cells, columns and rows

Types of tables: row column and total percentages

How to interpret the tables?

Measures of the degree of association between variables

Statistical hypothesis test: the chi-squared test (χ^2)

8. Relationships between dichotomous and numerical variables, and between numerical variables

Difference of means

Statistical hypothesis test: Student's t-test

Correlation and Pearson's R

Scatterplots

Simple linear regression

Methodology

To achieve the objectives of the course, the teaching plan includes two types of sessions: theory sessions and practical sessions.

The sessions will be oriented to the assimilation of the subject contents, which will have to be demonstrated in the different assessment tests.

The work sessions of the students will be devoted to the elaboration of an essay that requires the use of the techniques data collection and analysis covered during the course.

Students will get familiarised with the usage of Excel and jamovi.org software. They will use this software to conduct the different analyses that they will be required carry out throughout the academic year, including the essay in the topic that they will have to investigate.

Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Papers presentation	15	0.6	2, 9, 10, 13, 11, 15, 19, 5, 7
Practical lessons at the computer lab	30	1.2	2, 9, 11, 15, 19, 12, 18, 17, 5
Theoretical lessons	60	2.4	2, 9, 10, 12, 5, 4
Type: Supervised			
Tutorials to support papers elaboration	30	1.2	9, 10, 12, 5, 4
Type: Autonomous			
Papers elaboration	60	2.4	2, 9, 8, 10, 16, 11, 3, 14, 15, 19, 12, 18, 17, 5, 6, 4
Readings	30	1.2	2, 9, 11, 15, 19, 18, 4, 7
Study	60	2.4	2, 11, 3, 15, 19, 12, 17, 5, 4

Assessment

1. Exams (50% of the final grade), on the dates set by the faculty (in January and June).
 2. Practical examination (50% of the final grade). Within the section of the practical examination it is included:
 - Individual tests aimed at checking the achievement of knowledge. Some of them will be computer-based.
- There will be a total of 6 individual tests along the course. (30% of the final mark).
- Writing an essay in which the tools covered throughout the course will be used. The essay will be done individually. It will be delivered on a previously announced date (20% of the note).

Important considerations:

1. This subject requires class attendance due to its content and evaluation plan. Therefore, to have the right to be evaluated, it is required to have taken the exams and to have submitted the essay and (at least) 80% of the practical tests.
2. Submitting a practical test implies having attended the corresponding session and having handed it in person. Practical tests submitted beyond the due date will not be accepted.
3. In order to pass the subject, both the practical part and each of the two exams must be approved (with a minimum mark of 5/10).
4. In the case that only one of the three parts has a mark under 5/10, the subject may only be approved if a minimum of mark of 4/10 has been obtained and the other two have been passed.
5. Any detection of plagiarism in the essay or copied exams or practical tests will directly lead to the loss of the right to be evaluated and the subject will be graded as fail. There will be no right to compensation test.

COMPENSATION TESTS

- Those who have followed the course (see point 1) but have not passed the practical part or 1 of the two exams, are entitled to take a compensation test.
- The compensation test aim is to verify whether the students have obtained the minimum knowledge necessary to pass the subject. The result of this test will be "Pass" / "Fail." In the case of receiving a "Pass", this test will count as a 5 in the final note. In the case of obtaining a "Fail" in the test, the student will not pass the subject.

Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Final exams	50%	3	0.12	9, 11, 15, 19, 18
Paper	20%	12	0.48	1, 9, 8, 16, 13, 11, 3, 14, 19, 12, 18, 17, 5, 6, 4, 7
Practical tests	30%	0	0	2, 9, 8, 10, 16, 13, 11, 3, 14, 15, 19, 12, 18, 17, 5, 6, 4, 7

Bibliography

Manual reference

Corbetta, Piergiorgio. 2003. *Metodología y técnicas de investigación social*. Madrid: McGraw-Hill

Further readings

Crespo, Ismael; Anduiza, Eva, & Méndez, Mónica. 2009. *Metodología de la ciencia política*. Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.

Manheim, Jarol B. & Richard C. Reich. 1986. *Análisis político empírico. Métodos de investigación en ciencia política*. Madrid: Alianza.

Morales Vallejo, Pedro. 2008. *Estadística aplicada a las Ciencias Sociales*. Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas.

Ritchey, Ferris Joseph. 2002. *Estadística para las ciencias sociales: el potencial de la imaginación estadística*. México: McGraw-Hill.

Cea, M. Ángeles. 2004. *Métodos de encuesta. Teoría y práctica, errores y mejora. Síntesis*. Madrid.