

Scope and Methods: Research Design and Techniques

Róbert Sata

Department of Political Science
Central European University

Mandatory for MA2/1
Fall/Winter semester 2017-18
2 credits/ 4 ECTS

Class meetings:

Wednesdays 15:30-17:10

Office hours:

Tuesday/Thursday: 10-12, by appointment

Course description

This course aims to introduce the students to the logic and instruments of empirical social research and help them acquire essential practical research skills. It is structured in three parts:

Part I gives an overview of the essential features of social research, such as its grounding in robust, controlled and transparent evidence, the search for patterns and causalities, its concern with generalization, the role and place of "theory", or the importance of a proper operationalization of research questions.

Part II provides an introduction to the logic underlying some of the most important methods for data collection and analysis in political science, such as survey research and statistical analysis, qualitative interviewing, experiments, ethnographic methods, archival and secondary data analysis, and qualitative and quantitative textual analysis. On the one hand, this part aims to convey some basic practical skills, such as how to formulate appropriate research questions that can successfully be addressed by a given method, and how to critically read and appraise research findings reported in academic and non-academic outlets (academic journals, mass media, etc.). Furthermore, it also wants to convey a general understanding of the advantages and limitations of particular research tools and how they are embedded in different logics of inquiry.

Finally, part III of the course looks at practical issues of research process and design. It discusses the most common research designs in political science (case studies, comparative designs) as well as academic writing from various angles (academic genres and conventions, the writing process). Former students and library professionals will join the course to talk about their actual experience and respectively the many options the library has to offer to students.

Course format

The first class of the course will take place during the pre-session, all first-year students of the two-year MA program will need to take the course. Some sessions in the course will feature lectures, accompanied by a series of mandatory readings, whereas others will be more interactive and take various shapes, such as group work, common discussions of selected readings, and presentations of actual research projects followed by Q&A sessions. Feedback on the assignments will be provided via (A) grades; (B) comments posted on the e-learning

sites and/or conveyed in class; and (C) individual consultations with the instructor during regular office hours and tutorial meetings.

The course should be seen as a complement to other methods courses offered by the Department (statistics, qualitative methods, case study research, etc.). It aims to convey a sense of both the variety of political science research and its unity across research traditions and paradigmatic controversies.

Course requirements and assessment

Attendance is mandatory. Late assignments submitted after the respective deadline will not be accepted.

A. *Take home assignments (40%)*

Take home assignments over the semester (including the one assigned during the pre-session) are to be handed in via the e-learning site of the course. The questions and deadlines for the assignments will be announced in due course on the e-learning site and also explained as necessary in class. Unless teamwork is explicitly encouraged in the description of the assignment, you must write your assignment entirely on your own: plagiarizing your colleagues' ideas will be appropriately sanctioned.

B. *In class exercises (15%)*

Apart from these take-home exercises, active class participation is paramount and some applied in-class tasks and quizzes will also be assigned during the semester. These exercises will be announced in due course on the e-learning site and in class.

C. *Final paper (35%)*

The requirements regarding the expected structure and content will be provided via the e-learning site. This paper will be an approximately 1,200 words research proposal requiring creative thinking, concise academic writing and an ability to link theories to empirical research while taking stock of what you learnt in the course. Note that your final paper will be graded 'as it is' and I will not try to guess what you may have meant when you wrote something that is not entirely clear or is not in perfectly polished English. Instead, I will grade what comes through clearly and explicitly from your submitted text. Therefore it is essential that you leave at least one week time to consult the Academic Writing instructors regarding the full draft of your paper before you submit it.

D. *Class Participation (10%)*

Active class participation is paramount for this class. Students should come prepared, having read the mandatory readings before class. All reading will be available on the e-learning site and in the departmental folder for readings.

E-learning site and access to the readings

We provide easy access to the required readings and some of the recommended further readings via the O: drive of the CEU server. The course has an e-learning site at <http://ceulearning.ceu.edu> that will be enriched with content throughout the semester. The e-learning site is also the only place where you can submit your assignments. Students enrolled in the class will get a password to access the e-learning site of their group during the pre-session before the deadline for the first assignment. For help with using the e-learning site, see https://docs.moodle.org/22/en/Student_FAQ. For specialist help with the site (e.g. if you have

uploaded the wrong file), please contact Gabor Acs, acs@ceu.edu directly.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, the students should have acquired:

- A clear idea of the nature of scientific inquiry and what differentiates it from other types of knowledge production (journalism, popular science, etc.) and other ways of treating "evidence" (court proceedings, police investigations, common sense, etc.).
- An understanding of the main methodological approaches to data collection and analysis in political science, how they link to different understandings of causality and the prospects for objectivity and generalization
- An improved practical sense for the research process, from the exploratory phase to conceptualization, operationalization, observation, data collection, data analysis and write-up
- Practical research skills (library search skills, literature review, formulation and operationalization of research questions, how to write a data analysis, some degree of methodological "literacy" when reading published research)

General readings

In addition to the recommended and supplementary readings listed in the course outline below, I recommend the following books as general companions to the course:

- Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. 2012. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blaikie, Norman. 2009. *Designing Social Research*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bryman, Alan. 2012. *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Martin, Michael, and Lee C. McIntyre, eds. 1994. *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M., Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, eds. 2008. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Brady, Henry E., and David Collier, eds. 2004. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Evera, Stephen van. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Yanow, Dvora, and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds. 2006. *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. New York: M.E. Sharpe
- McConville, Mike, and Wing Hong Chui, eds. 2007. *Research Methods for Law*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Leopold, David, and Marc Stears, eds. 2008. *Political Theory. Methods and Approaches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Billig, Michael. 2013. *Learn to Write Badly: How to Succeed in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

COURSE OUTLINE

PART I: THE LOGIC OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

Session 1 (pre-session week, 4 September) Introduction about the science in political science, research proposals and the actual research process, goals and practicalities of the course

- What – if anything – can make the study of politics a respectable science and why it may be worth to study?
- The distinct ways of generating and using evidence in science – empirical studies, positive and normative theory – as opposed to journalism, police investigations, courts, advocacy, applied research and consultancy
- The social foundations for political science as a craft, a scientific discipline, a guild, and a profession. Typical moral hazards, regulatory reforms, and ethical issues today

Take home writing assignment:

Assignment 1 will not be graded but serve as a point of orientation for the instructor regarding what the course should pay particular attention to. Feedback will be provided via the e-learning site.

You have to **submit assignment 1 via the e-learning site** of your Scope and Methods course **by 1 pm, Tuesday, September 12.**

Your task is to write a max. **500-word long skeleton for the scholarly content of a research proposal.** Start with elaborating a research question and explain its normative or practical relevance. Your research question can relate to any topic within political science, and may or may not relate to issues that you are thinking to address in actual research for your MA thesis or elsewhere. Finish with explaining the steps in the empirical analysis and the type of data that you would consider in answering your research question. In between this introductory and final sections, explain the various possible answers to your research question that are all more or less plausible and how your proposed research will allow us to have a better judgment about which if any of these answers may be correct. Append at the end a bibliography listing the works that you referenced in your 500 words (the bibliography will not count towards your 500 words).

Note that your task is merely to draft a research proposal. You will not be expected to actually do the proposed research either now or later on but be careful in proposing research that appears to be feasible if one has enough time, personnel and money, and has a high likelihood of providing convincing answers to your research question. Moreover, you only have to produce the skeleton of a research proposal that will entirely skip such usually required formalities of a real research proposal as the abstract, the proposed budget, time frame, expected outcomes (a.k.a. “deliverables”), list of collaborators, and so forth, and will only have to focus on scholarly substance. Since you only have a maximum word budget of 500 (excluding the bibliography), you will have to make even usually required sections of a research proposal extremely brief, e.g. situate the problem in the previous scholarly literature only very briefly, skip any literature review, and only justify the theoretical and practical relevance of your research question if it may not be totally obvious to your expected readers. Discuss what you plan to use as empirical measures of the concepts appearing in your theory only if your ideas regarding measurement are critical for either the originality or the feasibility of the study.

Allocate most of your word budget to discussing the research question, the **theory, expectations** about possible answers to your research question, your **testable hypotheses** (if any), **key concepts, research design, methodology** and **data** as clearly as possible within your word budget, highlighting how they are interconnected and instrumental for answering your

research question in a compelling way.

While writing research proposals and similar documents (i.e. grant proposals, project outlines, action plans) is one of the most common activities expected in the various professions that an MA in Political Science should prepare you for, there is unfortunately little in the way of paper-length written works discussing how good proposals for scholarly research should look like. However, you will find a few recommend readings on the **e-learning site for this course** that you can consult before writing up your assignment.

Recommended further readings:

Turner, Charles C., and Cameron G. Thies. 2009. "What We Mean by Scope and Methods: A Survey of Undergraduate Scope and Methods Courses." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42 (2): 367-373.

Schmitter, Philippe C. 2002. "The Ideal Research Proposal." Manuscript. Florence: European University Institute.

Schmitter, Philippe C. 2008. "The Design of Social and Political Research." In *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, ed. by Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Przeworski, Adam, and Frank Salomon. 1995. "The Art of Writing Proposals." Washington DC: Social Science Research Council. URL: http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new_publication_3/%7B7a9cb4f4-815f-de11-bd80-001cc477ec70%7D.pdf, accessed on 22 September 2010.

Session 2 (14 September) Theory and social research

- What is theory?
- Aspects of theory
- Direction of theorizing
- Range and levels of theory
- Three major approaches to social science

Mandatory readings:

Neuman, William Lawrence. 2004. *Basics of Social Research*. Pearson. Ch 2. pp. 23-46.

Recommended further reading:

Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. 2012. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 53-76, 78-96.

Yanow, Dvora, and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, eds. 2006. *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Donatella della Porta and Michael Keating. 2008. "How many approaches in the social sciences? An epistemological introduction" in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 19-39.

In-class exercise: Think of the research proposal skeleton that you just submitted for assignment one. The task will be to think about what theory would be most suited for the research you proposed. You must consider what paradigm is most appropriate for your research plans. Is your approach deductive or inductive? What are your basic concepts that you would employ? What level of theory do you think your proposal would fit? What type of explanation do you seek? Please take a few minutes and be ready to present your research plans to your colleagues.

Take home writing assignment: None.

Session 3 (20 September) Identifying good research questions. The reasons for separating normative and positive proposals and the difficulty of doing so

- From research ideas to research questions and problem articulations
- Finding literature: library catalogues, bibliographic databases, review articles, experts
- Evaluating and keeping track of the literature
- Operationalization: from research questions to observation
- Choosing observation instruments
- Logical thinking, arguments and evidence
- Debate about the mandatory reading (serves as an example of a literature review)

Mandatory readings:

Lijphart, Arend. 1997. "Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma." *American Political Science Review* 91 (1): 1-14.

Putnam, Robert D., with Roberto Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 3-16.

Recommended further reading:

Hancké, Bob. 2009. *Intelligent Research Design: A Guide for Beginning Researchers in the Social Sciences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. 2012. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 53-77, 101-128.

Parsons, Craig. 2007. *How to Map Arguments in Political Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[Another nice example of a modern literature review:] Haushofer, Johannes, and Ernst Fehr. 2014. "On the Psychology of Poverty." *Science* 344 (6186): 862-867

In-class exercise: We will form two groups to debate an issue in class. As there will be no preparation/practice time in class, you should have your points planned in advance of the class. The task of the groups will be to debate whether the evidence presented by the Lijphart (1997) reading provides satisfactory support for making voting mandatory in national elections. One group will have to argue for, and the other against mandatory voting using the ideas and research findings discussed in the Lijphart article and any further thoughts you may have about the matter. (Note that we are not looking for a 'correct answer' in this debate but try understand different types of arguments and how empirical evidence and value premises both contribute to them. You need to prepare at home for playing either role.)

Take home writing assignment: None.

Session 4 (27 September) Theory, hypotheses, operationalization. Causality and its tests. Critical reading, note taking

- Hypotheses
- Scope (or antecedent) conditions
- Key variables
- Model
- Data, tests, and their adequacy given what the theory is

Mandatory reading:

Putnam, Robert D., with Roberto Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 63-120.

Recommended further readings:

- Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. 2012. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 129-63.
- Jackman, Robert W., and Ross A. Miller. 1996. "A Renaissance of Political Culture?" *American Journal of Political Science* 40 (3): 632-59.
- Ballarino, Gabriele, and Hans Schadee. 2005. "Civicness and Economic Performance. A Longitudinal Analysis of Italian Provinces, 1980-2000." *European Sociological Review* 21 (3): 243-57.
- Morlino, Leonardo. 1995. "Italy's Civic Divide." *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1): 173-177.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1996. "Making Social Science Work across Space and Time: A Critical Reflection on Robert Putnam's Making Democracy Work." *American Political Science Review* 90 (2): 389-97.
- Jackman, Robert W., and Ross A. Miller. 1998. "Social Capital and Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 1: 47-73.
- Rothstein, Bo. 2005. *Social Traps and the Problem of Trust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 43-70.
- Solt, Frederick. 2004. "Civics or Structure? Revisiting the Origins of Democratic Quality in the Italian Regions." *British Journal of Political Science* 34 (1): 123-35.
- O'Connell, Michael. 2003. "Anti 'Social Capital'. Civic Values versus Economic Equality in the EU." *European Sociological Review* 19 (3): 241-8.
- Pepinsky, Tom, Edmund J. Malesky, Nathan Jensen, and Mike Findley. 2014. "Can Greater Transparency Lead to Better Social Science?" Monkey Cage blog hosted by the Washington Post. Available from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/09/24/can-greater-transparency-lead-to-better-social-science/> accessed on 26 September 2014.

In-class exercise: We will discuss the key points of the three chapters that you read from Putnam's 1993 book, so you might want to prepare reading memos. The lecture slides for last week give a couple of ideas and identify further sources that can help you in making effective reading notes. Your notes should effectively serve as a swiftly searchable reminder for the key points of the reading and what you yourself thought about it. As a rough guide, do not make your notes longer than 500 words – you should focus in selecting important points over less important ones.

Take home writing assignment: None.

PART II: THE DIVERSITY OF METHODS

Session 5 (4 October):

Quantitative research in the service of understanding patterns. Large N studies at the macro and micro level and cross-level interactions. Writing meaningful questionnaire items and doing surveys on the cheap

- Describing patterns, trends etc. with quantitative data:
- What to do when we have no theory to start with?
- The strengths of survey research; sampling methods
- How can we draw causal inferences from nonexperimental data (and can we do that at all)?
-

Mandatory readings:

Gray, Mark M., and A Wuffle. 2005. "Vindicating Anthony Downs." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 38 (4): 737-40.

Iyengar, Shanto, James Curran, Anker Brink Lund, Inka Salovaara-Moring, Kyu S. Hahn, and Sharon Coen. 2010. "Cross-National versus Individual-Level Differences in Political Information: A Media Systems Perspective." *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties* 20 (3): 291-309.

King, Ronald F., and Cosmin Gabriel Maria. 2008. "Defining Political Science: A Cross-National Survey." *European Political Science* 7 (2): 207-219.

Recommended further readings:

Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. 2012. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 222-225, 230-52, 338-418.

[example of control variables/alternative explanations exposing spurious correlation:]
Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared. 2008. "Income and Democracy." *American Economic Review* 98 (3): 808-842.

[a really scary example of unconvincing operationalization and ignored problems of comparability and sampling errors in survey research]: Luechinger, Simon, Stephan Meier, and Alois Stutzer. 2008. "Bureaucratic Rents and Life Satisfaction." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 24 (2): 476-488.

In-class exercise: You will be divided into groups and each group will develop, in the first 15 minutes of the class, a sampling procedure for a research study described below. The groups will then present their ideas to the class in five minutes, and we will discuss together which group did best. You will all have to prepare for the exercise individually, before the class. The composition of the teams will be announced at the beginning of class. As a preparation for the exercise you should all read and think through questions of case selection in the mandatory readings. Some of you may also recall what you learnt during your previous studies about survey sampling or factorial design and random assignment in experiments, while other can consult the recommended reading and the slides on sampling that will be uploaded to the e-learning site. You can also google the net for some further examples and explanations for the concepts that come up in those slides.

For instructions for class see the e-learning site

Take home writing assignment: None

Session 6 (11 October):

Experiments as a disputed model for scientific research. Control groups and randomization of stimuli. Internal and external validity. Sampling decisions in primary data collection. Quasi, natural, field, survey-embedded, and thought experiments

Mandatory readings:

- Shadish, William R., Thomas D. Cook, and Donald Thomas Campbell. 2002. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mufflin, pp. 1-32.
- Ulbig, Stacy. 2009. "Engaging the Unengaged: Using Visual Images to Enhance Students' "Poli Sci 101" Experience." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42 (2): 385-391.

In-class exercise: None

Recommended further readings:

- Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. 2012. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 187-201, 242-7.
- Morton, Rebecca B., and Kenneth Williams C. 2010. *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality: From Nature to the Lab*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kittel, Bernhard, Wolfgang J. Luhan, and Rebecca B. Morton, eds. 2012. *Experimental Political Science: Principles and Practices*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [for an example of a 'natural' experiment:] McDonald Ladd, Jonathan, and Gabriel S. Lenz. 2009. "Exploiting a Rare Communication Shift to Document the Persuasive Power of the News Media." *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (2): 394-410.
- [for examples of survey-embedded experiments:] Piazza, Thomas, Paul M. Sniderman, and Phillip E. Tetlock. 1989. "Analysis of the Dynamics of Reasoning: A General-Purpose Computer-Assisted Methodology." *Political Analysis* 1: 99-119.
- [for examples of thought experiments/formal models:] Acemoglu, Daron, Georgy Egorov, and Konstantin Sonin. 2010. "Political Selection and Persistence of Bad Governments." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 125 (4): 1511-1576.
- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. 2010. *The Predictioneer's Game: Using the Logic of Brazen Self-Interest to See and Shape the Future*. New York: Random House.

Take home writing assignment: Assignment 2 (max 500 words): improve the design of the experiment described in the reading by Ulbig. Assume that you can use a research budget up to 10,000 USD. You do not have to provide a breakdown of how you spend this budget, the sum is there merely to suggest that there are some limits to what you can plan but not quite as strict as the ones Ulbig herself faced. Keep Ulbig's research question, hypotheses, and sample of experimental subjects unchanged and only improve the design of the experiment in terms of internal validity, i.e. our confidence that the experiment will really show what it is meant to examine. The Shadish et al. (2002) reading will give you plenty of ideas about why and how you could achieve this, so make sure that you read that text carefully before writing your assignment and apply its ideas creatively.

Session 7 (18 October):

Text, speech, discourse. Methods, techniques and operationalization in content analysis

Mandatory reading:

- Baumgartner, Frank R., Suzanna Linn, and Amber E. Boydston. 2010. "The Decline of the Death Penalty: How Media Framing Changed Capital Punishment in America." In *Winning with Words: The Origins and Impact of Framing*, ed. by Brian F. Schaffner and Patrick J. Sellers. New York: Routledge, pp. 159-184.
- Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. 2012. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 309-37.

Recommended further readings:

- Benoit, Kenneth, Michael Laver, and Slava Mikhaylov. 2009. "Treating Words as Data with Error: Uncertainty in Text Statements of Policy Positions." *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (2): 495-513.
- Burnap, Peter, Nick J. Avis, and Omer F. Rana. 2013. "Making Sense of Self-reported Socially Significant Data Using Computational Methods." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 16 (3): 215-230.
- Procter, Rob, Farida Vis, and Alex Voss. 2013. "Reading the Riots on Twitter: Methodological Innovation for the Analysis of Big Data." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 16 (3): 197-214.
- Politi, Panagiota. 2009. "One-sided Laughter in Academic Presentations: A Small-scale Investigation." *Discourse Studies* 11 (5): 561-584.
- Dreyer, David R. 2014. "The Engaged Public - Political Science Gap: An Analysis of New York Times Non-Fiction Bestsellers on Politics." *European Political Science* 13 (3): 266-274.

In-class exercise: We will form competing groups in class. Each group will have to propose a political research question which can be addressed with text analysis and present the research design (question, data, sampling, variables) to the class. You should take inspiration from our readings but do not create a copycat of an application they discussed already. Make your dependent variable something related to the content of a certain body of text. Describe what variation on the dependent variable you expect to occur in your data and how your content coding will reflect that variation. Propose at least three independent variables that your study expects to influence your dependent variable. Your independent variables may regard, for instance, some other characteristics of the text in question, some characteristics of the authors or their expected audience, or the context in which the text was produced and/or published. Describe in some detail how, in order to help answering the research question, you would choose the corpus (the text samples) for the analysis. Note that your time and budget may only allow you to search and code a tiny little fraction of all relevant text in the period that you study, and discuss how you would choose your sample. Be careful: what you chose as your dependent and independent variables may well influence what the ideal sampling decisions are.

Take home writing assignment: none.

Session 8 (25 October): Qualitative research in the service of understanding mechanisms. Working with archival material, case studies, interviews, process tracing

Mandatory readings:

Motyl, Alexander J. 1999. "Why Empires Reemerge: Imperial Collapse and Imperial Revival in Comparative Perspective." *Comparative Politics* 31 (1): 127-146.

White, Jonathan. 2009. "Thematization and Collective Positioning in Everyday Political Talk." *British Journal of Political Science* 39 (4): 699-709.

Recommended further readings:

Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. 2012. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 253-86.

Prior, Lindsay. 2003. *Using Documents in Social Research*. London: Sage.

Lichbach, Mark I. 2013. *Democratic Theory and Causal Methodology in Comparative Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Beach, Derek, and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. 2013. *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

[For examples of relatively simple case studies:] Weldon, S. Laurel. 2011. *When Protest Makes Policy: How Social Movements Represent Disadvantaged Groups*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

[For an example of a focus group:] Akhtar, Parveen, Paul Fawcett, Tim Legrand, David Marsh, and Chloe Taylor. 2005. "Women in the Political Science Profession." *European Political Science* 4 (3): 242-255

Boix, Carles, and Susan Stokes, eds. 2009. *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, chapters 2-7.

In-class exercise: None

Take home writing assignment: Assignment 3 (Max. 500 words). Identify the research questions, the theories, and hypotheses (if any) in the studies reported in the mandatory readings and discuss whether and how their analysis really address these. Then add a paragraph describing an additional analysis that you think would be useful to provide further evidence on the research question of the authors of each reading. (Note that you are not expected to say what additional questions they could have explored but to suggest an additional analysis that could have probed the same question(s) in some other ways.)

PART III: RESEARCH IN PRACTICE

Session 9 (3 November): Practical issues in research design:

Recent experiences of MA thesis writing, working, and searching in the library

Some former MA students will join us for a discussion of the actual experience of writing an MA thesis at CEU and you will have an opportunity to ask them any question that you have about the topic. A CEU librarian may join us for this session to explore library search techniques and productivity enhancing tools available for you via the on- and offline facilities in our library.

Mandatory reading: none.

Recommended further readings:

For an overview of the field see:

Goodin, Robert E. 2009. "The State of the Discipline, the Discipline of the State." In *Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, edited by Robert E. Goodin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-57.

There is not that much written specifically about writing MA theses for some useful tips see:

Punch, Keith F. 2006. *Developing Effective Research Proposals*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dunleavy, Patrick. 2003. *Authoring a PhD Thesis: How to Plan, Draft, Write and Finish a Doctoral Dissertation*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Becker, Howard S. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Recommended further readings (using literature):

Cooper, Harris. 1998. *Synthesizing Research: A Guide for Literature Reviews*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.

Harmon, Joseph E., and Alan G. Gross, eds. 2007. *The Scientific Literature: A Guided Tour*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Lipsey, Mark W. and David B. Wilson. 2001. *Practical Meta-analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Take home writing assignment: none.

In-class exercise: none.

Session 10 (8 November): What makes for good theories, concepts, definitions, measures and tests? Making rigorous analysis relevant. A revision and extension of what we learnt

Mandatory reading:

Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. 2012. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 25-50.

Recommended further readings:

van Evera, Stephen. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Delamont, Sara, and Paul Atkinson. 2004. *Successful Research Careers: A Practical Guide*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

In-class exercise: none.

Take home writing assignment: Final Assignment (1,300 words). Submit your final proposal (following individual consultations with the course instructor and the Academic Writing Center). On expectations regarding the final proposal, see the e-learning site.

Session 11-12 (15-22 November): Individual consultations on final assignment