Research Topics in Political Science

Titulaire
Jean-Benoît PILET (Coordonnateur)

Mnémonique du cours
POLI-D459

Crédits ECTS
5 crédits

Langue(s) d'enseignement
Anglais

Période du cours
Premier quadrimestre

Campus
Solbosch

Contenu du cours

The course combines conceptual content with the development of research skills. To this end, the course will provide a comprehensive explanation of key Political Science concepts and their practical application in current research. These concepts will be presented, discussed, and analyzed during course sessions. Furthermore, students will enhance their research and writing abilities through active participation in practical sessions and by completing two academic assignments. The course sessions will revolve around the following three essential elements:

1 Conceptual explanations.
2 Explanation and exercises on the research process.
3 Discussion and analysis of recent research.

Elements 1 (conceptual explanations) and 2 (explanation and exercises on the research process) will be identical across the three course groups. Element 3 (discussion and analysis of relevant research) will focus on one of the following topics: Issue Competition in Contemporary Europe: When, How, and Why Political Parties Alter Their Supply (Group 1), and Polarization in Contemporary Democracies: Causes, Consequences, and Remedies (Groups 2 and 3). Students will gain in-depth understanding of the specific research topic chosen.

The course assignments will consist of the practical application of the three course elements (concepts, research skills, and knowledge on recent academic publications) in relation to the topic of those research groups.

Objectifs (et/ou acquis d'apprentissages spécifiques)

The course aims to foster students' understanding of key concepts in political science as well as develop their research skills. To achieve these ends, students will learn those concepts by means of seminars; particularly, they will be exposed to key academic papers and be invited to engage in discussions on their contributions to the scientific literature as well as their limitations. In addition, students will develop their research skills by participating in practical sessions and by writing two academic assignments.

At the end of the course, students are expected to achieve the following outcomes:

> Understand and be able to critically assess key debates in political science.

> Develop a clear understanding of key concepts in political science.

> Understand the process of doing research, including how to come up with a research question and propose a novel argument/hypothesis.

> Be able to find, read, understand, and interpret research published in political science journals.

Pré-requis et co-requis

Connaissances et compétences pré-requises

Nothing else than the common requirements for the Master programme to which this course belongs.

Méthodes d'enseignement et activités d'apprentissages

The course counts on the active participation of the students and their preparation of the course material in advance, as well as their timely submission of the assignments and their review. The skills and knowledge gained during this course will be key for understanding the content of other courses and for preparing their final dissertation.

Students are required to prepare in advance for each class. This means reading the papers/book chapters listed as mandatory readings before each class. All texts are available on Université Virtuelle (UV). In addition, students are required to actively participate in the discussions in class, as well as to submit the assignments by their deadlines. PowerPoint presentations will also be uploaded on the UV each week after the class.

During the first weeks of class, students will be asked to choose a research topic that will need to be validated by the instructors. The final topic will have to be submitted by 26 October 2026. It is important to bear in mind that this topic will remain unchanged for the duration of the class and is personal to each student.

Support(s) de cours

Université virtuelle

Autres renseignements

Lieu(x) d'enseignement

Solbosch

Contact(s)

leonardo.puleo@ulb.befernando.feitosa@ulb.be

bjarn.eck@ulb.be

Méthode(s) d'évaluation

Autre

Méthode(s) d'évaluation (complément)

The course evaluation will rest on attendance and participation, as well as two assignments. See below, for the splitting of the final grade:

> Attendance (5%) and participation (15%) --> weekly

> Assignment 1 (40%) --> 9/11/23

> Assignment 2 (40%) --> 17/01/24

Assignment 1: Research question

The first assignment consists of a literature review of the relevant research done on the topic chosen by the student and the proposal of a research question. Grading will be assigned based on the quality of the literature review and research question. Specifically, students should show a broad understanding of the topic of their choice, as well as the capacity to critically discuss different argument presented in academic literature, identifying a relevant research gap. Additionally, attention will be paid to the quality of the academic writing and analytical depth of the arguments provided. Articles that have not passed a peer-review process will not be considered as valid references.

Assignment 2: Introduction to research project

The second assignment will consist of an introduction to the research project. This means that students must present a) their research question, emphasizing the gap within the existing literature and the relevance of exploring the question, and b) the main argument or hypothesis of their research, mobilizing the relevant literature. Students must show that they are aware of key findings within the relevant literature, and that they are able to critically assess this literature, identifying a relevant research gap and proposing a novel argument/hypothesis. Additionally, attention will be paid to the quality of the academic writing and analytical depth of the arguments provided. Articles that have not passed a peer-review process will not be considered as valid references.

Attendance and Participation

Students are required to attend all sessions. Only one unjustified absence is authorised. If the student is absent for more than one session, a medical certificate is mandatory and must be sent by e-mail to the group instructor.

Construction de la note (en ce compris, la pondération des notes partielles)

see above

Langue(s) d'évaluation principale(s)

Anglais

Programmes

Programmes proposant ce cours à la faculté de Philosophie et Sciences sociales

MA60-POLI | Master en sciences politiques (60 crédits) | option JOUR/bloc U