The purpose of this course is to train students in how to analyze social phenomena in a rigorous manner. This knowledge requires an understanding of two different components: research design and statistics, both skills that are essential within the discipline of political science, but also in many other fields.

This course is designed to be an introduction course to empirical research methods. In the first component, students will learn how to discriminate between theories, pose proper research questions, construct a relevant hypothesis, make valid causal inferences, operationalise concepts, and test their hypotheses. The latter component offers the student a “statistical toolbox” to use as he or she pursues the study of all things political. This component covers quantitative topics such as central tendency and dispersion as well as measures of association.

EVALUATION:
3 assignments + 1 exam
Project 1: Analyze a piece of literature and identify its main components. 10%
Project 2: Create your own survey design 20%
Project 3: Create your own empirical analysis using the ANES survey.  30%
1 Final exam:  40%

TEXT: Required (available at the bookstore):

And a course pack is also available at the bookstore.

I do not expect anyone to complete and understand all of the readings listed below (they often overlap considerably, so compare the readings and pick the ones that you find most helpful), but it is not possible to do the assignments without attending the lectures. The lectures will frequently cover matters related directly to the assignments which are not covered fully in the readings. Your grades will be determined by how well you have learned the methods of the course; consequently, the later assignments will be weighted more heavily than the earlier ones.

WEBSITE: You can access the course website by going to the McGill home page and following the links for WebCT. Instructions are provided on the WebCT home page. Any student who is
registered for the course can log on to the website. All PowerPoint slides presented in class will be available on the website. The communication tools can be used for contacting other students in the course, and for participating in discussion groups.

**TOPIC 1 The production of knowledge in social science and the Scientific Method**


**Recommended (not included in course pack):**

**TOPIC 2 Theories**


**TOPIC 3 Concepts, Variables and Hypotheses**


**Recommended :**


**TOPIC 4: From Concepts to Indicators**


**Recommended:**

**TOPIC 5 Research Problems and the Research Process**


**TOPIC 6 Control Variables**


Review: Van Evera, pp. 7-21.

**TOPIC 7: Content Analysis**


**Recommended:**

**TOPIC 8a Survey Research II: Designing a Questionnaire**


**Recommended:**

TOPIC 8b Survey Research


TOPIC 9 Observational Research


TOPIC 10: Case Studies


Recommended:
Stephen Van Evera ch.2

TOPIC 11: The Comparative Method


TOPIC 12 Measurement


TOPIC 13 Statistics: Describing Variables


Jeremy Wilson, Analyzing Politics: An Introduction to Empirical Methods, pp. 123-135


TOPIC 14 Statistics: Estimating Sampling Error and Sample Size


Jeremy Wilson, Analyzing Politics: An Introduction to Empirical Methods, pp. 70-83


TOPIC 15 Causal Thinking and Research Design


TOPIC 16 Statistics: Cross-Tabulations and Statistical Significance


TOPIC 17 Statistics: Nominal and Ordinal-Level Measures of Association

TOPIC 18 Statistics: Examining the Effects of Control Variables


TOPIC 19 Validity and Reliability


TOPIC 20 Scaling


TOPIC 21 Designing A Sample


TOPIC 22 Conducting Research Ethically


TOPIC 23 The "Traditional Critique"

Lawrence Mayer, Comparative Political Inquiry, chapter 5
TOPIC 24 The Feminist Critique
