Central European University  
Department of Political Science  
MA1 program, fall semester 2019, winter semester 2020

SCOPE AND METHODS
Instructor: Matthijs Bogaards ([Visbogaards@ceu.edu](mailto:Visbogaards@ceu.edu))
Office Budapest: Faculty Tower 806
Office hours Budapest (September: Wednesdays, 15.30-17.00; October-December: by appointment)
Office hours Vienna: Mondays, 15.30-17.00 & Tuesdays 11.00-12.00 (place TBA).

Class meetings
Fall 2019
Pre-session: Monday, 2 September, group 1 (11.00-12.30, FT809), group 2 (13.30-15.00, FT809).
Zero-week: Friday 13 September, group 1 (9.00-10.40, FT809), group 2 (11.00-12.40, N13 412A).
Fall semester, group 1: Monday, 16 September (9.00-10.40, FT309), Wednesday 18 September (13.30-15.10, FT309), Monday 23 September (9.00-10.40, FT309), Wednesday 25 September (13.30-15.10, FT509).
Fall semester, group 2: Monday, 16 September (11.00-12.40, FT309), Thursday 19 September (13.30-15.10, FT409), Monday, 23 September (11.00-12.40, FT309), Thursday, 26 September (13.30-15.10, FT409).

Winter 2020
Five sessions in total, one session each week from week 1 to week 5.

Course description
This course aims to introduce students to the logic and instruments of empirical research in political science. Themes covered include the essentials of a good research proposal and good research design, issues of measurement and causality, the need for replication, the menu of methods, and political science as science. The aim is to equip students with essential practical skills, to enhance their methodological literacy, to foster a critical reading and discussion of research, and to strengthen the capacity to identify possibilities for contributing to the collective knowledge of political phenomena.

Course format
This course is mandatory for all MA1 students. Sessions are organized as seminars, not lectures. To enable a seminar set-up, two groups are formed. Please note that the schedule of Scope and Methods is different from other courses and consists of two parts. The first part, with six sessions in four weeks, starts already in pre-session and ends in the last week of the fall semester spent in Budapest. This part is devoted to basic questions of doing empirical research. The second part of Scope and Methods starts in the first week of the winter semester. It consists of a total of five sessions, one per week, that are directly relevant to the process of writing your MA thesis.
**Learning outcomes**

By the end of the course, students should have acquired: 1) a clear idea of the nature of scientific inquiry; 2) 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; 3) an improved practical sense for the research process, from the exploratory phase to conceptualization, operationalization, observation, data collection, data analysis and write-up; 4) practical skills in crafting their own thesis proposal, including the formulation of a research question and making the ensuing decisions pertaining to the most appropriate methodological approach for conducting their studies; 5) written and oral experience in reviewing, discussing, and improving on empirical research in political science.

**Assessment and assignments**

*Participation (10%)*

Class attendance is mandatory. Failure to attend will lead to failing the course. Should you be unable to attend a class, please notify the instructor in advance. Active class participation is expected and graded.

*Exercise 1: Role models in comparative politics (5%)*

In session 4 we seek inspiration from influential political scientists. Be prepared to report on the reading you did and be prepared to share in class what you learned from these professional life stories.

*Exercise 2: Data transparency (5%)*

Session 11 is devoted to data transparency in empirical research. For the second reading, please select one of the final reports of the qualitative transparency deliberations of the American Political Science Association, available at: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p5aUrbXYSMAN6sRLOB8r2rnnQROHAhQ_WSXqt9de3Q/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1p5aUrbXYSMAN6sRLOB8r2rnnQROHAhQ_WSXqt9de3Q/edit). Be prepared to share in class what you learned from it.

*Assignment 1: Reflection paper (20%)*

Please select an article published in the *American Political Science Review* before 1940, identify the theory and method used, summarize the argument and conclusion, and reflect on how political science today might address the same question that informed the original article. In other words: imagine that a contemporary political scientist were writing about the same topic as in the historical article you selected: what would be different? And (how) would it be better? Size: 1,000-word maximum (everything included in the word count). Deadline: to be agreed in class. All written work should be submitted on Moodle and will be checked for plagiarism by Turnitin.

*Assignment 2: Methods paper (20%)*

Please select an article from the special issue of the journal *Democratization* (Vol. 26, no. 1, 2019) on different methods of democratization research and summarize the possibilities and limitations of the method discussed there, the pros and cons, and how it is done best. Size: 1,000-word maximum (everything included in the word count). Deadline: to be agreed in class. All written work should be submitted on Moodle and will be checked for plagiarism by Turnitin.
Assignments 3: Final paper (40%)
Using Schmitter (2002) as your template, please write a 1,500-word maximum (everything included in the word count) research proposal. It should demonstrate creative thinking, concise academic writing and an ability to link theories to empirical research while taking stock of what you learnt in the course. Ideally, this proposal should be linked to your MA thesis. Before submitting your research proposal, please make use of the services provided by the CEU Academic Writing Center. The deadline of the research proposal will be aligned with the MA thesis writing and preparation process. All written work should be submitted on Moodle and will be checked for plagiarism by Turnitin.

COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1 (Pre-session) Introduction
The introductory session of Scope and Methods has two aims: 1) to familiarize students with the course plan, expectations, and learning outcomes; 2) to provide background information on the course and its role in the curriculum.

Mandatory reading:

Session 2 (Zero week) A brief history of political science
Political science now is different from political science then. How much so can be appreciated in the first assignment of the course.

Mandatory reading:
Second reading: please see the description of assignment 1.

Session 3 (First week of fall semester, first session this week) Ideas, facts, numbers, and cases
This session we look at some of the main divisions that run through the profession.

Mandatory reading:
Session 4 (First week of fall semester, second session this week) Political scientists
Political science is done by people. This session we learn about influential political scientists. The readings are part of exercise 1.

Mandatory reading:
Second reading: Find an interview with or self-portrait by a non-Western and/or female political scientist.

Session 5 (Second week of fall semester, first session this week) Measurement and causation
This week we read two articles that deliberately bridge methodological gaps, showing how scholars have to deal with the same issues no matter whether they do qualitative or quantitative research, whether they are examining particular cases or investigating populations.

Mandatory reading:

Session 6 (Second week of fall semester, second session this week) Democratization research
Students of politics today have more choice in methods than ever. This session gives an overview of the state-of-the-art in democratization research and is connected to the second assignment.

Mandatory reading:
Second reading, please see the description of assignment 2.
Session 7 (Monday 6 January 2020) The research proposal
The first session of the winter session introduces students to the main expectations regarding research proposals and provides them with strategies to formulate a good research proposal.

Mandatory reading:

Session 8 (Monday 13 January 2020) Research design
There is no shortage of guides and guidelines on how to design your research. This week we reflect on the different ways in which researchers approach the social world and design their studies.

Mandatory reading:

Session 9 (Monday 20 January 2020) Your MA thesis proposal
This session is reserved for the discussion of your first ideas on the MA thesis proposal.

Session 10 (Monday 27 January 2020) How to read and what to read
The title of this session says it all.

Mandatory reading:

Session 11 (Monday 3 February) How to deal with data transparency
In Psychology there is talk about a “replication crisis”, as scholars are frequently unable to replicate the results of previous research. What is the situation in Political Science? What are the standards to follow and what are the opportunities for you to improve on prior published studies?

Mandatory reading:
Second reading: please see the description of exercise 2.
Other readings you might find helpful


