

17681 & 16533:: Metodología de la ciencia política

Grado: Historia y Política; Filosofía, Política y Economía

Francisca Castro

2º Cuatrimestre 2025/2026

Current Version of the syllabus: 06/02/26

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Class Hours for **Historia y Política**: Mondays, 9:00-10:30 Room 17.0.05
Class Hours for **Filosofía, Política y Economía**: Thursdays, 16:15-17:45 Room 15.1.03

Course Description

This course provides a comprehensive introduction to the methodological foundations of political science research. It guides students through the essential components of the research process, from formulating research questions to presenting findings. The course explores the logic of scientific inquiry in political science, addressing fundamental challenges such as causality, case selection, and comparative analysis. Students will engage with both the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of research design, learning to navigate the relationship between theory, hypotheses, and empirical evidence.

The curriculum covers key methodological approaches including case studies, comparative methods, and variable-oriented research, while examining various techniques for data collection and analysis. Students will develop critical skills in designing research projects, selecting appropriate methodologies, and evaluating the strengths and limitations of different analytical approaches. Through practical exercises and workshops, the course emphasizes hands-on experience in applying research methods to real-world political phenomena. By the end of the course, students will be equipped with the tools necessary to conduct rigorous, systematic research and to critically assess existing scholarship in political science, preparing them for independent research and advanced study in the field.

This course combines theoretical instruction with practical application. Students are expected to read the assigned mandatory texts before each class and actively participate. Classes will include both lectures on methodological concepts and hands-on practice in applying research techniques. Learning depends on the active engagement of students throughout the semester, both in completing individual assignments and collaborating on group exercises that develop practical research skills.

Course Objectives

This course equips students with the fundamental methodological tools for conducting rigorous political science research. By the end of this course, students are expected to:

- Formulate clear research questions and develop appropriate concepts and typologies to analyze political phenomena.
- Understand causal inference in political science and the relationship between theory, hypotheses, and empirical evidence.
- Master diverse research methodologies (including case studies, comparative methods, and quantitative and qualitative techniques) and select the most appropriate approach for different research contexts.
- Design research projects that integrate theory, data collection, and analytical strategies to address substantive political questions.
- Critically analyze information and present findings clearly in both written and oral formats.

Evaluation

The final grade for this course is composed of:

- **50% Final Exam:** The exam consists of multiple-choice questions (60%) and short-answer questions (40%), including definitions, lists of concepts, and one analytical question.
- **50% Continuous Assessment:** Consisting of two components:
 1. A research project in groups of 3 or 4 (30%)
 2. Exercises and activities during *prácticas* (20%)

Both components are required to pass the course. There is no minimum grade required on the final exam to calculate the average.

Bonus Points

Students can earn up to **1 bonus point** by completing a total of **three** short review exercises based on the questions at the end of each topic. These exercises are organized into three blocks:

- Block I: Theory
- Block II: Research Design
- Block III: Methods

During designated lectures, students will have 15-20 minutes to complete a brief written exercise with questions from the corresponding block. Students must be present in class to complete these exercises. This bonus system is designed to encourage content review and attendance at lectures.

Housekeeping Rules

Some general information regarding overall requirements and rules during class:

- Anything that is communicated in person during class will be considered an official communication (this relates to the following point).
- I will not reply to emails with organizational questions (deadlines, readings, requirements, etc.) that I have already answered during class or that can be answered by reading the syllabus.

Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

For take-home exercises (i.e., the research project), you may use AI tools to help understand concepts or check your work, but all submitted work must be your own. You must be able to explain any analysis, code, or methodological decisions in your assignments. We may ask you to explain your work in class. Submissions you cannot adequately explain will receive a failing grade. **The goal of this course is to develop your own methodological thinking. AI cannot do this for you.**

Schedule and weekly contents

Week 01, 26/01: Introduction: The Art and Science of Social Research

Mandatory reading: Carr, D., Boyle, E.H., Cornwell, B., Correll, S., Crosnoe, R., Freese, J. and Waters, M.C. 2017. 'Chapter 1', in *The art and science of social research*. 1st edn. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Complementary readings:

- Eidlin, F. 2011. The Method of Problems versus the Method of Topics. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 44(4), pp. 758-761. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511001260>

Week 02, 02/02: Research Foundations

Mandatory reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 2', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings:

- Huntington-Klein, N. 2021. *The Effect*. Chapter 1: Designing Research. <https://theeffectbook.net/ch-TheDesignofResearch.html>
- Huntington-Klein, N. 2021. *The Effect*. Chapter 2: Research Questions. <https://theeffectbook.net/ch-ResearchQuestions.html>

Week 03, 09/02: Ethical Issues in Social Science Research

Mandatory reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 3', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings :

- IJzerman, H., Lewis, N.A., Przybylski, A.K. et al. 2020. 'Use caution when applying behavioural science to policy', *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4, pp. 1092–1094. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-00990-w>

Week 04, 16/02: From concepts to models: Hypotheses, operationalization, and measurement

Mandatory reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 4', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings:

- Falleti, T. G., & Lynch, J. F. 2009. Context and Causal Mechanisms in Political Analysis. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42(9), 1143-1166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009331724>
- Huntington-Klein, N. 2021. *The Effect*. Chapter 3: Describing Variables. <https://theeffectbook.net/ch-DescribingVariables.html>
- Huntington-Klein, N. 2021. *The Effect*. Chapter 4: Describing Relationships. <https://theeffectbook.net/ch-DescribingRelationships.html>
- Wild, S. 2024. Causal inference, social media, and mental health, part 3. <https://sjwild.github.io/blog/2024/11/30/causal-inference-social-media-mental-health-part-3.html>

Week 05, 23/02: Evaluating Research: Reliability and Validity

Mandatory reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 5', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings:

- Adcock, R. & Collier, D. 2001. 'Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research', *American Political Science Review*, 95(3), pp. 529–546. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055401003100>
- Geddes, B. 1990. 'How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics', *Political Analysis*, 2, pp. 131–150. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/2.1.131>.

Week 06, 02/03: Sampling Strategies

Mandatory reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 6', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings:

- Jäger, K. 2017. The potential of online sampling for studying political activists around the world and across time. *Political Analysis*, 25(3), pp. 329 – 343. <https://doi.org/10.1017/pan.2017.13>

Week 07, 09/03: Survey Research

Mandatory reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 7', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings:

- Jennings, W. & Wlezien, C. 2018. Election polling errors across time and space. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 2, pp. 276–283. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-018-0315-6>.
- Lewis, C. 2024. *Data Management in Large-Scale Education Research*. Chapter 11: Data Collection. <https://datamgmtinedresearch.com/collect>
- Prosser C. & Mellon J. 2018. The Twilight of the Polls? A Review of Trends in Polling Accuracy and the Causes of Polling Misses. *Government and Opposition*, 53(4), pp. 757-790. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2018.7>
- Stantcheva, S. 2023. How to Run Surveys: A Guide to Creating Your Own Identifying Variation and Revealing the Invisible. *Annual Review of Economics*. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-091622-010157>

Week 08, 16/03: Experimental Research

Mandatory Reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 8', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings:

- Angrist, J.D. & Pischke, J.-S. 2008. 'The Experimental Ideal', in *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Scacco, A. & Warren, S.S. 2018. 'Can Social Contact Reduce Prejudice and Discrimination? Evidence from a Field Experiment in Nigeria', *American Political Science Review*, 112(3), pp. 654–677. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055418000151>

Week 09, 23/03: Evaluation Research

Mandatory reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 9', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings:

- Gertler, P. J., Martinez, S., Premand, P., Rawlings, L. B. & Vermeersch, C. 2016. *Impact Evaluation in Practice*, Chapter 11: 'Choosing an Impact Evaluation Method.' Second Edition. <https://hdl.handle.net/10986/25030>
- Huntington-Klein, N. 2021. *The Effect*. Chapter 10: Treatment Effects. <https://theeffectbook.net/ch-TreatmentEffects.html>

Week 10, 30/03: Easter Holidays (no lectures nor prácticas)

Week 11, 06/04: Ethnography and In-depth interviewing

Mandatory reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 10' and 'Chapter 11', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings:

- Dunning, T. 2012. 'The central role of qualitative evidence', in *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences: A Design-Based Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Strategies for Social Inquiry), pp. 208–232.
- Bayard Lo Volo, L. & y Schatz, E. 2004. 'From the Inside Out: Ethnographic Methods in Political Research'. pp. 267–271. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 37(2). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096504004214>
- Jha, S., Rao, V. & Woolcock, M. 2007. 'Governance in the Gullies: Democratic Responsiveness and Leadership in Delhi's Slums', *World Development*, 35(2), pp. 230–246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2005.10.018>
- Della Porta, D. 2014. Chapter 10: In-Depth Interviews *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Week 12, 13/04: Materials-based methods

Mandatory reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 12', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings:

- Subotić, J. 2020. Ethics of archival research on political violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 58(3), 342-354. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343319898735>

Week 13, 20/04: Univariate and bivariate analysis of quantitative data

Mandatory Reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 13', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings:

- Schuessler, J., & Selb, P. 2023. Graphical Causal Models for Survey Inference. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 54(1), pp. 74-105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00491241231176851>

Week 14, 27/04: Communicating research findings

Mandatory reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 14', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings:

- Rohrer, J. 2024. Writing about technical topics in an accessible manner. In *The 100% CI*. <https://www.the100.ci/2024/12/01/writing-about-technical-topics-in-an-accessible-manner/>

Week 15, 04/05: Multivariate and advanced quantitative methods

Mandatory reading: Carr et al. 2017. 'Chapter 16', in *The art and science of social research*.

Complementary readings:

- Cunningham, S. 2021. Chapter 3: Directed Acyclic Graphs. In *Causal Inference: The Mixtape*. https://mixtape.scunning.com/03-directed_acyclical_graphs