

POP88051 — MSc Research Design B

Module Information	
Module Code	POP88051
Module Title	MSc Research Design B
Department	Political Science
Module Personnel	Alexander Held
Academic Year	2026–27
Credit Weighting	10 credits
Semester	Semester 1
Contact Hours	One 2-hour seminar per week

Module Content	
Module Description	This graduate seminar introduces students to the scientific inquiry of the political world. Students will learn how to identify compelling research questions and how to structure a study that contributes to an existing body of research. Moreover, we will discuss the problems of causal inference and multiple methodological approaches (statistical analysis, process tracing, case studies) to the empirical study of politics. The emphasis of the module will be on the development of novel, falsifiable, and empirically testable explanations of political phenomena.
Learning Outcomes	At the end of the course, students are expected to gain a greater understanding of the research process, problems associated with conducting social research, become familiar with different research methods, learn how to formulate research questions, hypotheses, and selecting appropriate research design and data sources to test their hypotheses. Students will gain first-hand experience by putting together a full research proposal, thus helping them to build the skills essential to conduct high quality research in the field of international relations and comparative politics.
Indicative Reading / Resources	The main texts for this module are:

Module Content

King, G., Keohane, R.O. and Verba, S., 1994. Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research. Princeton University Press.

Gerring, J., 2012. Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework. Cambridge University Press.

For those with a limited social science methods background, it might be helpful to start by reading chapters from an introductory text, such as:

Kellstedt, P.M. and Whitten, G. D., 2018. The Fundamentals of Political Science Research. 3rd Edition, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Manheim, J.B., Rich, R.C., Willnat, L., Brians, C.L. and Babb, J., 2012. Empirical Political Analysis. Pearson Higher Ed.

Shively, W.P., 2016. The Craft of Political Research. Routledge.

Assessment

Assessment Components

Participation 10%,
Research Question Paper 10%,
Project outline 30%,
Final research design 50%

Additional Information

Prerequisites

None

Co-requisites

None