

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY,
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

POLS 383 (CRN 9910) — 2004

Researching Politics

Teaching staff:

The course coordinator and lecturer for POLS 383 is Nigel S. Roberts, an Associate Professor of Political Science in the School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations at Victoria University. His office is room 108, 90 Fairlie Terrace, where his telephone number is 463-5288. The Political Science and International Relations fax number is 463-5414. Nigel Roberts' email address is <Nigel.Roberts88vuw.ac.nz>. Please note that any emails to Professor Roberts about POLS 383 must have POLS 383 in the subject line; if they don't, they may well be deleted by the University's "spam assassin" system.

During the first trimester in 2004, Nigel Roberts' office hours will be on:

- Wednesdays from 9:00 to 10:00 am; and
- Fridays from 9:00 to 10:00 am.

Class times and room number:

POLS 383 is a first trimester (*i.e.*, 1/3) course in 2004. Lectures will be from 3:00 to 5:00 pm on Tuesdays in Lecture Theatre 001 in the Hugh Mackenzie Building (*i.e.*, HM LT001).

Additional information:

When necessary, additional information about POLS 383 will be posted on the Political Science and International Relations undergraduate noticeboard, which is next to room 107, 90 Fairlie Terrace.

Course aims and objectives:

The course aims to explore the tools and design of research in politics and government. These include defining research questions, building a bibliography, learning about how to use different sorts of sources, understanding the uses of quantitative and qualitative methods, and finding out about games and simulation.

By the end of the course, you should have acquired:

- Knowledge of the basic research methods in political science and understanding of their uses and purposes;
- Knowledge of the sources available to students of government and politics, including the resources available in Wellington, and an understanding of how they can be used;
- Confidence in the use of relevant materials and techniques;
- The skills needed to design a research project; and
- Experience in writing up research findings for a defined audience or client.

Course content:

An outline of the structure and contents of the course can be found on page 4.

Textbooks:

The textbooks for the course are:

Lisa Harrison, *Political Research: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2001); and

POLS 383 Researching Politics 2004 (available from Student Notes)

Assessment:

The course will be assessed on the following basis:

- Written assignment 1: A policy submission to a parliamentary select committee (or to a government agency or non-governmental organization) (20%);
- Poster presentation (20%);
- Written assignment 2: research proposal (30%);
- Open-book test (30%);

The aims of the assessment are:

- to summarise the state of knowledge on a defined topic in a literate, clear and persuasive manner for a particular audience or client;
- to present an oral presentation based on a poster, explaining your research aims, strategies and sources;
- to design a research project, developing questions and hypotheses and using appropriate research methods and sources; and
- to write test answers that show your overall grasp of the different research methods and sources employed in the study of politics, government and public policy.

The written assignments and the poster presentations must be submitted by the due dates. Extensions will be granted only to those who meet the University's *aegrotat* rules (e.g., students with a medical certificate, a family bereavement, or critical personal circumstances beyond their control). Late assignments must be handed directly either to Professor Roberts or to a Political Science and International Relations Administration Assistant who will record on the essays the date and time they were received. Late work will lose 5% per day for a maximum of five days; thereafter it is unacceptable and will get no marks. These are Political Science and International Relations regulations designed to ensure that students who hand in work on time are not disadvantaged. At the same time, however, the School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations will comply with the University's stated reasonable accommodation policy with respect to assessment procedures for students with disabilities.

Workload:

Including class contact hours, the standard University guideline for an appropriate amount of work to maintain satisfactory progress in this course is 18 hours per week.

Mandatory course requirements:

The mandatory course requirements for POLS 383 are (1) attending at least ten of the twelve POLS 383 seminars; (2) completing and submitting both written assignments for the course; (3) completing and submitting a satisfactory poster display; and (4) obtaining at least a D-grade in the POLS 383 end-of-trimester open-book in-class test.

General university policies and statutes:

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly those regarding assessment and course of study requirements, and formal academic grievance procedures contained in the statutes in the VUW website.

The university statute on student conduct and policy on staff conduct:

The Statute on Student Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the University community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University's life in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps can be taken if there is a complaint. For queries about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor. This Statute is available in the Faculty Student Administration Office or on the website at <www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StudentConduct>. The policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at <www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StaffConduct>.

Academic grievances:

If you have any academic problems with your paper you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned or, if you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the Associate Dean (Students) of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Class

representatives are available to assist you with this process. If, after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievances Statute which is published on the VUW website: <www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/AcademicGrievances>.

Plagiarism:

Victoria University defines plagiarism as the copying of ideas, organisation, wording or anything else from another source without appropriate reference or acknowledgement so that it appears to be one's own work. This includes published and unpublished work, the Internet and the work of other students and staff. Plagiarism is an example of misconduct in the Statute of Student Conduct. Students who have plagiarised are subject to a range of penalties under the Statute. See the website: <www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StudentConduct>.

Reasonable accommodation policy:

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities an equal opportunity with all other students to demonstrate their abilities. If you have a disability, impairment or chronic medical condition (temporary, permanent or recurring) that may impact on your ability to participate, learn and/or achieve in lectures and tutorials or in meeting the course requirements, then please contact the Course Coordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services to confidentially discuss your individual needs and the options and support that are available. Disability Support Services are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building, or phoning 463-6070, email <disability@vuw.ac.nz>. The name of the School's Disability Liaison Person can be obtained from the Administrative Assistant or the School Prospectus.

COURSE OUTLINE AND WEEK-BY-WEEK READING LIST

WEEK ONE: 2 March

Course introduction (Harrison, pp. 1-10)

Library visits and poster sessions

Asking research questions, considering our assumptions, and defining and redefining topics

Preparing Parliamentary submissions (Coursebook, pp. 41-65)

WEEK TWO: 9 March

Using existing resources (Harrison, pp. 105-138)

- Books and manuscripts (Dr Pat Moloney);
- Biographies and autobiographies (Dr Jon Johansson)

Qualitative (vs. quantitative) research (Harrison, pp. 73-87)

WEEK THREE: 16 March

Using existing resources

- The VUW library and its data-bases (Justin Cargill)
- The internet (Coursebook, pp. 5-16)

Note that proposed topics for written assignment 1 are to be handed in today

WEEK FOUR: 23 March

Using existing resources (Harrison, pp. 124-138)

- Government papers: how to use the Official Information Act effectively (Steven Price)
- The mass media (Dr Kate McMillan)
- Observation and participant observation

WEEK FIVE: 30 March

Approaches and resources beyond New Zealand

- Comparative research (Coursebook, pp. 117-144)
- Research in international relations (Jana von Stein)
- Using the VUW Library's UN Room (Corinna de Wolff)

WEEK SIX: 6 April

Quantitative (vs. qualitative) research (Harrison, pp. 13-37)

What is the difference?

Using quantitative analysis (Harrison, pp. 39-55)

The do's and don'ts of survey research (Coursebook, pp. 93-108)

Note that the poster presentations will be organized today

Note that the first written assignment is due in today

MID-TRIMESTER BREAK 13 and 20 April

WEEK SEVEN: 27 April

Visits

- either to the Turnbull and National Libraries
- or to Archives New Zealand

WEEK EIGHT: 4 May

Visits

- either to the Turnbull and National Libraries
- or to Archives New Zealand

WEEK NINE: 11 May

Official statistics: access, interpretation, rewards and pitfalls (Harrison, pp. 57-70; Coursebook, pp. 67-82)

Qualitative research: interviewing (Harrison, pp. 89-104; Coursebook, pp. 109-115)

Poster session number 1

WEEK TEN: 18 May

Games and simulation in political and policy analysis

Researching politics: the ethical issues (Dr Alison Kirkman) (Coursebook, pp. 17-39)

Poster session number 2

WEEK ELEVEN 25 May

Poster session number 3

Discussion about the second written assignment

Discussion about the in-class test

WEEK TWELVE 1 June

90-minute in-class test

THE ASSIGNMENTS

Written Assignment 1: A Policy Proposal/Submission to a Select Committee (20%)

Imagine that you are in a position where you need to present a brief written report to Parliament, a government department, ministry, crown agency, state enterprise, local government, or an international or national NGO. You are required to summarise the research findings in an area of your interest (it *either* may or may not be in the same general area as your research design essay), and make some recommendations for implementation. Remember that you have either been asked to recommend a particular set of actions or, alternatively, that you are trying to persuade decision-makers about the validity of your viewpoint. A brief executive summary and a brief bibliography must be included.

Please give submit half a page describing what you intend to do on (or before) *Tuesday, 16 March*. The final report should be about 800 to 1000 words long and must be submitted on or before **Tuesday, 6 April 2004**. Note that you are not permitted to interview politicians or any other persons without first obtaining permission from the VUW Ethics Committee.

The Presentation and Submission of a Poster (20%)

This is the first part of your major assignment: designing a research project.

Choose an area in politics, government, or public policy (preferably a topic that really interests you) and work out what question or questions you are asking and how you would go about finding the answers. The idea is that you will then try out your preliminary ideas in 'poster' form. Posters are visual displays that summarise key aspects of a research project. They may include diagrams and pictures. The poster will be presented to your colleagues and then submitted to the Course Organiser. Thus you will receive feedback on your research proposal before you finally submit it for assessment. *The dates for students' poster presentations will be finalised on Tuesday, 6 April.*

Please present your poster as follows:

- The poster will consist of A4 pages fixed onto sheets of A3 paper;
- The material presented on your poster must include the following:
 - Title page and your name (and please do *not* include your student ID number);
 - Your main hypotheses or questions;
 - A brief statement of your overall approach to the topic (for example whether you are basing your research on any particular theory or body of work);
 - A brief statement of what your proposed research will contribute to our knowledge about politics and public policy; and
 - A list of the key secondary sources (about ten should suffice).
- During your turn to present a poster, you will sit beside it and discuss and explain it to your class colleagues and your lecturer, who will move around the posters being displayed at that session, reading and asking questions.

Written Assignment 2: A Research Proposal (30%)

You are required to submit this assignment on or before **Friday, 11 June 2004**. This will be an expanded and revised version of your poster. The assignment must either be given to Nigel Roberts directly or, alternatively, placed in his pigeonhole outside the Political Science and International Relations office.

The proposal should be between 1,000 and 1,200 words. It must include:

- a title;
- a statement of the main research question and/or hypothesis;
- an outline of any subsidiary questions and/or hypotheses;
- a brief discussion of any ethical issues raised by the research, and how you would deal with these;
- an outline of the structure of the finished research report;
- a discussion of the methods you would use, and why you think they are appropriate;
- a bibliography, correctly set out, containing at least 20 references relevant to the topic you are studying, including a range of sources (e.g. books, journal articles and internet sites).

Please refer to the Political Science and International Relations *Essay Writing Guide* for help with acknowledging sources.

The Open-Book Test (30%)

There will be a 90-minute, open-book test on **Tuesday, 1 June 2004**. This will test your knowledge of sources and methods. You will be required to answer five questions. Each will be in the form of a short essay; and there will be a choice of questions.

The Assignments

Here are a few ideas to get you thinking. You may develop your own topics. All in cases, though, remember that one of the basic rules is to choose a topic that is feasible in terms of time, space and resources.

Written Assignment 1: Policy/Parliamentary submission

Think in terms of the type of issue you might be interested in working on, and then narrow it down. Remember that you are aiming to make clear recommendations. Here are some ideas:

- Recommendations to a select committee or a government department on a constitutional or structural issue: e.g. an aspect of the electoral system, proposals concerning the funding of political parties, or to lower the voting age, to change Maori representation, to institute a second chamber, to change an aspect of the structure of the public sector, to become a state of Australia, etc.
- Recommendations to a select committee or a government department on a domestic policy issue: e.g. proposals on student housing, student loans/grants, an aspect of environmental policy (noise in the inner city, water rationing), etc.
- Recommendations to a select committee or a government department on an international issue: e.g. banning land mines, saving whales, admitting nuclear powered vessels to New Zealand, proposals on aspects of NZ's defence or trade relationship with Australia, restructuring the UN Security Council, etc.
- Recommendations to a political party on, e.g., how it could improve its campaigning, its selection of women or Maori (or any other group); or how it might communicate more effectively with voters, and so forth.
- Recommendations to a lobby group on how it might best target its messages, and to whom.

Written Assignment 2: Research Design

Here are some examples (in no particular order) of the sorts of research projects that would be appropriate. Of course, having identified the area you think would make an interesting and feasible project, you then need to generate suitable questions/hypotheses.

- Young people and knowledge about the political system
- Young people and political participation
- Retired people and their involvement in groups such as Grey Power
- Case-study of the formulation of a piece of legislation (historical or contemporary)
- State tenants and length of tenure in their accommodation
- Women in Parliament in New Zealand compared with another country
- Causes of political corruption in particular countries
- Public attitudes towards the USA
- Operation of cabinet committees in selected countries
- New Zealand's defence relationship with the United States (or any other country)

Bibliography

Many of these books are on Three-Day Loan or Closed Reserve.

Books on Three-Day Loan are marked with a dagger (†)

and those on Closed Reserve with a double-dagger (‡).

Remember that there are also many useful sources in your textbook and POLS 383 Coursebook.

Books and Articles about Research Methods

Social Science Research in General

†Creswell, John W. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches*. Second edition. H62 C919 R 2ed

Gash, Sarah. *Effective literature searching for research*. Second edition. Aldershot, Hamps. & Brookfield, Vt.: Gower, 1999. Z710 G246 E 2ed

Katzer, Jeffrey, Kenneth H. Cook, and Wayne W. Crouch. *Evaluating information: a guide for users of social science research*. Fourth edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998. H62 K19 E 4ED

†‡Leedy, Paul D., and Jeane Ellis Ormrod. *Practical research: planning and design*. Sixth edition. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2001. (Big book) Q180.55 M4 L484 P 6ed

McPherson, Glen. *Applying and interpreting statistics: a comprehensive guide*. Second edition. New York: Springer, 2001. Q180.55 M113 A 2ed

‡Silverman, David. *Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook*. London & Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2000. H61 S587 D

- Sproull, Natalie L. *Handbook of research methods: a guide for practitioners and students in the social sciences*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1995. Q180.55 M4 S771 H 2ed
- †Stern, Paul C., and Linda Kalof. *Evaluating social science research*. Second edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. H62 S839 E 2ED
- ‡Tolich, Martin, and Carl Davidson. *Starting fieldwork: an introduction to qualitative research in New Zealand*. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998. H62 T649 S
- Yin, Robert K. *Applications of case study research*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2003. H61 Y51 A 2ED

Researching Politics and Government

- Bernstein, Robert and James Dyer. *An introduction to political science methods*. Second edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984. JA73B5311
- Burnham, Peter. *Research methods in politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002.
- Glaser, James M. 'The challenge of campaign-watching: seven lessons of participant-observation research.' In *PS*, v. 29, no. 3 (September 1996), pp. 533-7. p JA28 P769
- Johnson, Janet and Richard Joslin. *Political science research methods* Third edition. Washington DC: CQ, 1994. JA73J67P.
- Johnson, Paul E. 'Simulation modeling in political science.' In *The American Behavioral Scientist*, v. 42, no. 10 (August 1999), pp. 1509-30. p H1 A512
- Manheim Jarol and Richard Rich' *Empirical political analysis: research methods in political science*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1981. JA86M277E
- †Marsh, David and Gerry Stoker. *Theory and methods in political science*. Second edition. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. JA71T396
- Pennings, Paul, Hans Keman, and J. Kleinnijenhuis. *Doing research in political science: an introduction to comparative methods and statistics*. London & Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 1999. JA71 P414 D
- Peters, B. Guy. *Comparative politics: theory and methods*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998. JF51P481C
- Roberts, Geoffrey and Alistair Edwards. *A new dictionary of political analysis*. London and New York: E. Arnold, 1991. JA61RC44N
- Silburgh, David M. *Doing dissertations in politics: a student guide*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. JA86S582D
- Simon, Adam F., and Shanto Iyengar. 'Toward theory-based research in political communication.' In *PS*, v. 29, no. 1 (March 1996), pp. 29-33. p JA28 P769

Sources and Guides to Sources

- †Boston, Jonathan, Nigel S. Roberts, E. M. McLeay, and Stephen I. Levine, eds. *Electoral and constitutional change in New Zealand: an MMP source book*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1999. JF1075 N5 E37
- Craig, John. *Australian politics: a source book*. Second edition. Sydney: Harcourt Brace, 1993. JQ4011 C866 A 2ED
- Kurian, George, L. Longley and T. Melia. *World encyclopaedia of parliaments and legislatures*. Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1998. JF211W927
- †Levine, Stephen I., and Paul Harris, eds. *The New Zealand politics source book*. Third edition. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1999. JQ5811 N532 Z 3ed
- †Ringer, J. B. *An introduction to New Zealand government: a guide to finding out about government in New Zealand, its institutions, structures, and activities*. Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1991. JQ5811 R581 I

†‡Wood, G. A. *Studying New Zealand: a guide to sources*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999. DU408 W875 S

MLIS Annotated Bibliographies

These bibliographies have been assembled by Librarianship students at VUW as part of their Master's degree. They are all held at the Closed Reserve desk and can only be used within the library. Those listed here represent only a few of the most recent, intended to give you a taste of what is available; there are many more on topics of interest to political scientists. Staff at the Reference Desk in the Library can show you how to browse a list of all the bibliographies held by the library.

Bridge, Elizabeth Joy. *New Zealand government consultation with Maori, 1980-2000: a selective bibliography*. Unpublished MLIS research paper, Victoria University of Wellington, 2001. AS741 VUW A55 B851 N

Ellison, Melissa Karen. *A preliminary annotated bibliography of biographical information on Maori members of Parliament, 1868 to 1911*. Unpublished MLIS research paper, Victoria University of Wellington, 1999. AS741 VUW A55 E47 P

Fitzsimmons, Ellen Patricia. *MMP: a fair and representative electoral system?: annotated bibliography*. Unpublished MLIS research paper, Victoria University of Wellington, 2000. AS741 VUW A55 F5

Macdonald, Angus. *A conservation issue in the public eye: a selective bibliography covering conflict between logging and conservation interests over the fate of Timberlands' indigenous forest estate 1997 – November 1998 in the print media and pamphlet type material*. Unpublished MLIS research paper, Victoria University of Wellington, 1999. AS741 VUW A55 M135 C

Mills, Guy J. *Rob's mob: a selective annotated bibliography on Sir Robert Muldoon 1975-1984*. Unpublished MLIS research paper, Victoria University of Wellington, 2000. AS741 VUW A55 M661 R

Park, Linda Jane. *A selective annotated bibliography of the structural reform of the New Zealand health care system: 1991-96*. Unpublished MLIS research paper, Victoria University of Wellington, 1999. AS741 VUW A55 P235 S

Nigel S. Roberts
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