

**The Undergraduate Methods Experience:
Short-Changing the Future of Political Science**

Jeffrey Doyle, Washington State University
Ann Mezzell, University of Georgia

Paper prepared for the APSA Teaching and Learning Conference
Charlotte, North Carolina
February 9-11, 2007

Abstract

Within the range of undergraduate political science coursework, research methods classes are often afforded minimal priority, as many professors opt to devote the bulk of their teaching efforts to more “substantive” areas. This trend is reflected in the comparatively small number of methods courses offered to undergraduates in a considerable portion of the political science programs at colleges and universities nationwide. While earlier works have addressed this pattern and its implications with respect to graduate level coursework, we contend that the short shrift given to the teaching of methodology at the undergraduate level can also have negative and far-reaching effects on the discipline. In this study, we examine the discrepancy between the number of methods courses taught at the undergraduate level and the expectation that students at the graduate level should be familiar with political science research methods (as is often exemplified in admission requirements). A cursory review of political science course offerings and requirements at one hundred U.S. colleges and universities suggests that American political science programs are seemingly hypocritical in their stand on the importance of research methodology; they expect that incoming graduate students should be well versed in research methods, yet are simultaneously unwilling to provide sufficient methods courses for their undergraduate students. This paper not only provides evidence that such a pattern exists, but makes an attempt to draw attention to the potential obstacles it may present to the future of political science.

Introduction

Within the range of undergraduate political science coursework, research methods classes are often afforded minimal priority, as many professors opt to devote the bulk of their teaching efforts to more “substantive” areas. This trend is reflected in the comparatively small number of methods courses offered to undergraduates in a considerable portion of the political science programs at colleges and universities nationwide. While earlier works have addressed this pattern and its implications with respect to graduate level coursework, we contend that the short shrift given to the teaching of methodology at the undergraduate level can also have negative and far-reaching effects on the discipline. In this study, we examine the discrepancy between the number of methods courses taught at the undergraduate level and the expectation that students at the graduate level should be familiar with political science research methods (as is often exemplified in admission requirements). A cursory review of political science course offerings and requirements at one hundred U.S. colleges and universities suggests that American political science programs are seemingly hypocritical in their stand on the importance of research methodology; they expect that incoming graduate students should be well versed in research methods, yet are simultaneously unwilling to provide sufficient methods courses for their undergraduate students. This paper not only provides evidence that such a pattern exists, but makes an attempt to draw attention to the potential obstacles it may present to the future of political science.

Literature Review

Shortcomings of Research Methodology Instruction

The question of how research methodology should be taught to social science students, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels, has been a subject of debate for a number of years.

This debate stems from the seemingly broad acknowledgment that methods courses pose significant obstacles to students and instructors alike. As the convention goes, students at the undergraduate level find the material to be difficult to comprehend and irrelevant to their ultimate career objectives. Professors, in turn, are faced with the necessary challenge of devoting a good deal of their teaching efforts to allaying these concerns. At the graduate level, students may not only be ill-prepared for the introduction to advanced (particularly quantitative) methodological techniques, but may find themselves in an environment in which broad-scope research skills (particularly qualitative) are largely overlooked.

The scope of the problem is considerable. Issues of methodology play an increasingly prevalent role in contemporary social science research. Further, the past several years have witnessed continued calls for the re-orientation of educational goals toward problem-solving and math-science skill sets. Yet, as Markham (1991) notes, these are not the types of skills that students are able to easily acquire during the course of their undergraduate work. The development of such skill sets requires at least some degree of formal instruction at the introductory level – without exposure to research methods classes, many students will have neither the opportunity nor the impetus to attain them at all.

It is precisely in this area that many undergraduate programs fall short. With respect to the field of political science, there appears to be an ever-widening gap between those calling for solutions to the problem, and those tasked with the actual implementation of proposed solutions to the problem. In the wake of the behavioral revolution and subsequent attempts at “quantification” of the field, political scientists have struggled to find ways of coping with the fact that research methodology, and particularly quantitative methodology, had become a cornerstone, if not the “core curriculum” of the discipline (Schwartz-Shea 2003). The APSA

Task Force on the Political Science Major offers the following guidelines for undergraduate programs: “every political science major (should) gain familiarity with the different assumptions, methods, and analytical approaches used by political science and cognate disciplines.” While these are certainly worthy goals, the Task Force had considerably less to say about how these objectives should be balanced and achieved in actual classroom settings.

Barriers to Teaching Methodology

Participants in discussions about the struggles to successfully integrate methodology courses into graduate and undergraduate social science curricula have identified any number of potential sources of the problem. Some suggest that the neglect of research methods in introductory courses may stem from a variety of institutionalized shortcomings. These can range from the difficulty of overcoming the tendency to favor traditional “substantive” material over research methods, to students’ anxieties about methods and efforts to avoid taking such classes, to the apparent lack of emphasis on social science research in mainstream textbooks, to the fact that many instructors of lower level methods courses are provided with little direction about how to best introduce such topics to students (Markham 1991). Others point to the persistence of the quantitative-qualitative debate as a key cause of the difficulties inherent in establishing curriculum requirements and providing proper instruction for methodology coursework. As Rodgers and Manrique note (1992), continued calls for the incorporation of quantitatively-driven research in political science have left programs in the discipline to deal with the question of how to achieve an appropriate balance between teaching methods content, teaching statistical analysis, and teaching the relevant computer applications. There are those who contend that social science departments encounter similar struggles with respect to teaching qualitative research. U.S. cultural constructs and some institutions’ increasing propensity towards touting

quantitative methods (and even advising student against conducting qualitative research due to the supposed difficulty of defending it to their respective disciplines) have left students with little ability to engage in theoretical interpretation of qualitative work (Navarro 2005). Instructors, in turn, not only face the question of how to overcome these trends, but considerable barriers in seeking to alleviate their effects.

Implications of the quantitative-qualitative debate are particularly relevant to the field of political science. In a study of 57 U.S. political science graduate programs, Schwartz-Shea (2003) finds that although the field is characterized by both the extensive range of subjects studied and the scope of its “research communities,” the key feature of doctoral curricular requirements is that they are typically geared primarily towards quantitative analysis. According to Schwartz-Shea, “the closest political science comes to a core curriculum is...quantitative methods” (2003, 381). Given the variety of topics addressed and research tools employed in the discipline, some note, the short shrift given to course requirements other than quantitative methods may not bode well for future political scientists. Schwartz-Shea (2003) cites any number of scholars who contend that such methodological biases in doctoral instruction contribute to a lack of “field neutrality” (Van Evera 1997, 3), an erosion of the study of political theory (Walsh and Bahnisch 2000), and the generation of “trivial” research driven by little more than methods alone (Theodoulou and O’Brien 1999).

Proposed Solutions to the Problems of Teaching Methods

Concern for the difficulties of teaching research methodology in the social sciences has yielded a good deal in the way of proposed techniques for addressing the problem. With respect to the graduate level, Schwartz-Shea (2003) advises that departments should re-evaluate their course requirements with an eye towards the following: recognizing political science as a

comprehensive discipline rather than an assortment of sub-fields, attempting to overcome “epistemological divides” that can inhibit the exchange of ideas between the hard sciences and the social sciences, and seeking to establish the need for training in both quantitative and qualitative methodology rather than leaping to judgments about the relative value of one over the other. Suggestions for dealing with methods at the undergraduate level are decidedly more hands-on in orientation, though they are largely similar in terms of basic message. According to Hubbell, for example, students will be more likely to find research methods to be relevant when courses are taught in ways that are broadly focused and heterodoxical in their coverage of research techniques; they will be more likely to find research methods to be interesting when courses are taught in ways that actively engage them in participation-based exercises (1994). Booth (1984), in turn, notes that students are often better adapted for dealing with methods when the material is introduced through assignments geared towards the interpretation rather than the actual production of research. McBurney (1995), finally, contends that instruction in research methods is most beneficial to students when it requires them to engage in problem-solving activities; that they are more likely to benefit from course material when they are asked to apply that information to a specific case, using it to solve the puzzle at hand.

Gaps in the Literature

The growth of scholarship on the subject of the need to acknowledge and address the difficulties of teaching research methods has yielded a number of contributions to both the social sciences generally and the political science discipline in particular. The literature discussed above is valuable in that it directs us to recognize the need for solutions that account for the increasing importance of research skills in the contemporary academic (and practitioner) environment, as well as for practical and classroom-applicable instruction techniques. Yet, one

way in which the literature seems to fall short of approaching the achievement of these objectives is that it fails to adequately draw ties between the problems stemming from the differences in methodology course offerings and requirements at the undergraduate and graduate levels. This seems to be particularly true of the scholarship on political science research methods.

Most political science graduate programs in the U.S. expect that incoming students have received some basic level of instruction in research methodology. Further, most require that students be sufficiently familiar with methods that they will be able to complete a “methods series,” or set of courses designed to prepare the student for research work as a professional political scientist. Yet, many of these same programs fail to offer adequate numbers or variety of methods courses at the undergraduate level to prepare those students for graduate level research. The implications of this pattern may be greater than is predicted in any of the previous literature. The trend would seem to indicate that political science programs short-change their undergraduate students in ways that create problems for those students in their graduate careers, and in turn, that inhibit the development of political science research and the discipline as a whole.

The Study of Political Methods Courses

The points addressed in the aforementioned literature lead us to question the value of the way in which research methods courses are currently offered to and required of political science students. In this study, we hope to both highlight the importance of methodology within the political science curriculum, as well as to provide some preliminary answers to the question posed above. We should note that this work is not intended to serve as a hypothesis driven study so much as it is to act as a descriptive examination of the state of the field at the end of the year 2006. In this paper, we seek to depict some of the shortcomings of the field with respect to

methodological instruction by looking to the following units of analysis: the courses being taught, the departments offering such courses, and the groups of students enrolled in the courses. We make no attempt to assess the manner in which classes are taught or the quality of that instruction, as such questions fall well beyond the scope of our primary research agenda.

Research Design

Cases Studied: Political Science Departments Included for Research

In seeking to determine the state of research instruction within the field, we begin by looking to a selection of departmental methods course offerings at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. We include both undergraduate and graduate departments as a means of determining, by comparison, if there is a lack of methodological training available to many undergraduate political science students; if a diametric relationship exists in terms of the expectations of our undergraduate and graduate students.

With respect to the choice of the departments included in the study, we drew specifically from the one hundred twenty-two departments listed by the American Political Science Association (APSA) as those offering both an undergraduate major in political science as well as PhDs in the discipline (APSA 2006). The original group of 122 was ultimately narrowed down to a smaller set of one hundred graduate departments. The twenty-two excluded cases were dropped for a variety of reasons, the most prevalent two being that some university web pages did not provide sufficient data with which to study their departments, and that not all of the APSA-listed departments actually offered PhDs in political science (rather, many of them only offer PhDs in one of the political science sub-fields such a public administration; Auburn University, for example, was removed from the pool of cases for this reason).

The authors feel that it is important to note that the universities included for research in this study are not named within the paper itself. We have opted to omit university names in the body of the work, as we hope to avoid the appearance of casting a negative or disparaging light on any departments. A complete list of the universities used is included in Appendix #1.

Types of Courses

General Methods Courses

The groups included in the analysis described are further divided into sets according to the type of courses taught in the various departments. We classify those courses that provide a basic introduction to or overview of political research as general methods courses. These courses, within their self-descriptions, purport to afford students with either a broad introduction to political research techniques, interpretation of methodology employed in political science journal articles, or the construction of a research design project.

Quantitative Method Courses

Second, we classify courses according to whether or not they are geared towards quantitative analysis. We include in the group of quantitative methods courses those which explicitly use the term quantitative to describe the content of the class, and those which are self-described as being statistically based. This classification schema encompasses a broad range of offerings: formal modeling, game theory, mathematical data analysis, etc.

Qualitative Method Courses

Finally, we classify methods courses according to the degree to which they are oriented towards qualitative research. We include in the group of qualitative methods courses those which are specifically designated as “qualitative” in the course title, or those which are generally focused on the comparative method. While the validity of this means of categorization may be

subject to speculation, the limited frequency with which this type of class is taught within the discipline means that there are few alternate options for studying qualitative courses as a group.

Statistical Analysis

As this study is directed towards base-level investigation rather than explicit hypothesis testing, we rely on descriptive statistics as our primary analytical tool. While more sophisticated statistical techniques may be employed in future versions of this work, we hope that our current approach will help to provide for a more comprehensive and easily accessible overview of the state of methodology in the discipline.

Empirical Results:

Undergraduate versus Graduate Methods Requirements

In general terms, our research design is comprised of a content analysis of the course offerings of the 100 departments studied. These findings, in turn, are presented in basic descriptive statistical terms. In the first section of analysis, we examine how the methods courses discussed above are dispersed between undergraduate and graduate programs, focusing in particular on the number of methods classes offered at the respective levels. In the second section of analysis, we assess the degree to which methods courses are required for various political science degrees (Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and Doctor of Philosophy).¹ In this section, we include only those requirements for a general degree in political science at the undergraduate level. This provides us with a means of standardizing the data, as most departments offer sub-field concentrations with varying levels and types of methods requirements. For example, it would make little sense to compare the methods requirements for an undergraduate political

¹ The commonly used abbreviations for these degrees will be used throughout the remainder of the text of this study. These abbreviations are BA for Bachelor of Arts, MA for Master of Arts, and PhD for Doctor of Philosophy.

science degree with a concentration in international relations to the methods requirements for a graduate degree in the broader field of political science.

Undergraduate Political Science Education

Table #1 - Undergraduate

79%-General Methods Course

37%-Quantitative Methods Course

5%-Qualitative Methods Course

31%-Require a Methods Course for Major

10%-Require a Methods Course for Minor

Table #1 provides an analysis of data from the 100 political science departments at the undergraduate level. Perhaps the most noteworthy component of this table is the fact that only 79% of political science departments that offer doctoral degrees offer a general methods course at the undergraduate level. An assessment of the quantitative and qualitative course offerings shows that only 37% of the programs studied afford their undergraduates the opportunity to take a quantitative methods class and only 5% afford them the chance to take a qualitative class. The table also reveals that only 31% of PhD departments with methods requirements also require methods courses of their undergraduate majors. Only 10% of those programs require that their undergraduate minors take a methods course.

Graduate Political Science Education

Table #2 - Graduate

96%-General Methods Course

85%-Quantitative Methods Course

23%-Qualitative Methods Course

73%-Require a Methods Course for MA

87%-Require a Methods Course for PhD

Table #2 would seem to suggest that the discipline does a considerably better job of providing its graduate students with a background in methodology, particularly with respect to the general and quantitative courses. All but four doctoral programs offer a general methods course, and all but fifteen offer a quantitative research course. In spite of this, there may yet be cause for concern about methodological requirements at the MA and PhD levels. As Table #2 demonstrates, 27% and 13% of MA and PhD programs, respectively, do not require a methods course.

Discussion

The results of Table #1 and Table #2 would seem to suggest that there is a good deal of disparity between the expectations of methodological training for undergraduate and graduate political science students. 21% of the departments studied fail to offer general methods courses to the undergraduate majors and minors, whereas all but 4% of doctoral programs offer methods courses. The disparity between expectations of undergraduate and graduate students' methods training becomes even more stark when looking at differences between quantitative courses taught at both levels. Forty-eight departments that teach graduate level quantitative methods course do not offer introductory level (or any) quantitative research classes to their undergraduates.

Given the disparities illustrated above, it seems pertinent to ask: how can the discipline plausibly expect to produce graduate students skilled in research methods when a considerable percentage of its programs do not provide their undergraduates with adequate course preparation? While there may be any number of reasonable explanations for these discrepancies (the arguments that undergraduates are best served by exposure to the "substantive" coursework of the field, that there is an inherent difficulty to teaching classes that many undergraduates find

to be difficult and irrelevant, that there is a need to carefully allot sometimes limited departmental resources, that many political science undergraduates will not go on to be professional political scientists and will thus have limited need for rigorous social science research training, etc.), we believe that they still hold potentially damaging consequences for the progression of the discipline.

Perhaps most significantly, the findings addressed in this study seem to conflict with one of the basic tenets of education, which is that learning, particularly process-based learning, is best achieved at younger ages. Thus, if we can reasonably assume that it is easier for students to acquire new knowledge and skill sets (especially quantitatively-based knowledge and skill sets) at the lower levels of their educational training, then it makes little sense that so many political science programs would be willing to dismiss or delay methods requirements for their undergraduates. Given that we have chosen to look at schools that offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees in political science, and that most of these departments offer methods courses at the upper level, it seems illogical that graduate methods instructors would not also teach (if only in some limited capacity) methods at the undergraduate level.

Beyond the apparent lack of logic to the trend of cheating undergraduates in their methods training, the failure to prepare political science undergraduates for at least rudimentary proficiency in research skills may hold longer-term consequences as well. One might surmise that an incoming graduate student with limited exposure to research methods would be less likely to pursue a rigorous methods series than would an incoming student whose undergraduate program had provided him with a strong background in methods. Not only does this pattern present problems for graduate methods instructors (the need to play “catch up” on methods training), but for the future of the discipline in general. It hardly seems logical to expect that

students of political science should become skilled researchers who contribute to the scholarly development of the discipline, or that they should become skilled professors of political science capable of teaching methods courses themselves, when so many of them are short-changed in methodological training in the early stages of their curriculum.

Additional Findings and Discussion

In the following two sections, we explore and discuss findings that do not fall directly under the purview of our research agenda, but that lend supporting evidence to the theme of the paper, and that highlight other methodological shortcomings in the field. First, we address the degree to which language proficiency requirements stack up against research methods requirements. Second, we compare the state of methodology in the political science discipline to the state of methodology in related fields. Finally, we look to the question of whether political science departments are more likely to assign junior faculty than senior faculty members to teach methods courses, and how this trend may influence the state of methods instruction in the discipline.

Comparing Methods and Language Requirements

Table #3 - Methods and Foreign Language PhD Requirements

87%-Require a Methods Course for PhD

20%-Require a Foreign Language for PhD

6%-Require a Foreign Language but no Method Course for PhD

Table #3 provides a cursory overview of methods requirements as compared to foreign language requirements at the graduate level. As the table reveals, the degree to which the sub-field of comparative politics, and its emphasis on knowledge of foreign languages (see Almond and Verba's *Civic Culture*) holds influence on the field as a whole, is substantial. The fact that 26% of political science PhD programs require foreign language proficiency, and that 6% of

those require foreign language proficiency but no methods courses, may raise questions regarding the appropriate balance of courses to be taught to political science students.² We willingly acknowledge that there is no “one way” to teach or learn political science, and that language requirements may certainly be relevant to those departments in which comparative politics are dominant. Yet, it seems troublesome that even a few departments would be willing to entirely forego methods teaching in favor of foreign language proficiency alone.

Cross-Field Methods Comparison: Political Science and History

It is not uncommon for political scientists to suggest that research within the discipline should be modeled on that of the “hard sciences,” as has been done in the field of economics during the past several decades. Key actors within the field have geared their research efforts towards economic-style research, and in many ways, the discipline has made considerable progress in advancing the sophistication and variety of research methods employed. Yet, there is also evidence to suggest that these advancements have not been as substantial as is commonly accepted.

In this section, we compare the way in which political science methods requirements stack up against those of the related arts and sciences field of history. We randomly select ten history departments from the list of one hundred PhD-granting programs used earlier in this study (for comparison with the ten political science departments at those universities). We then compare the undergraduate methods course (for the purposes of this study, any history course which is specifically geared toward research, rather than towards substantive or era-specific material) offerings and requirements with those of the undergraduate political science programs studied.

² The six departments are not counting the seven programs that allow for either methods or language requirements, thus raising the total of PhD programs that essentially do not require students to take a methods course while earning their PhD to thirteen percent.

Table #4 - Comparing Methods Requirements: Political Science and History

79% of Political Science Departments offer at least one General Methods Course

70% of History Departments offer at least one Historical Methods Course

31% of Political Science Departments require at least one Methods Course for their Major

40% of History Departments require at least one Methods Course for their Major

10% of Political Science Departments require at least one Methods Course for their Minor

20% of History Departments require at least one Methods Course for their Minor

The results presented in Table #4 seem to indicate that the degree to which political science has “moved ahead” of its related arts and science field is less than remarkable. Clearly, the results of this table need to be improved upon in future developments of this study; there is an obvious need for the use of a larger-*n* with respect to the history programs included. Further, we willingly acknowledge that the types of research methods being taught diverge significantly between the two fields. Nonetheless, this preliminary assessment suggests that the gap between methods training within the two fields is negligible. While political science has a slight edge in terms of the percent that offer general methods courses, history takes the lead in terms of the percent of programs that require such courses. When we compare the percentage of required methods courses for those departments offering at least one methods course, we can see that only 39.2% of political science departments make such requirements of their undergraduates, whereas 57.1% of history departments do so.³

We further compare methods courses within the two fields for degree of systematization. In looking to the seven methods courses offered in the field of history, we analyze the content of course descriptions for key words. This content analysis yields one phrase common to each description: “historical writing.” This phrase is used in two key ways: first, to designate that

³ The authors acknowledge that small sample groups are used for this section of the paper. We hope to advance the preliminary results of this portion of the study in the future, and will expand the sample sizes for later revisions.

historical writings will be analyzed in the class for the purpose of learning to better write historical literature, and second, to denote that the class will be focused on historical writing techniques that will enable students to better conduct original research. The content analysis also yields one word common to the majority of course descriptions: “research.” The term is most frequently used to indicate that the course is oriented towards the development of a research plan or the production of original historical research. The content analysis would seem to indicate that there is a good deal of systematic similarity between the types of methods courses offered in the ten history departments examined.

In a similar assessment of the same ten schools’ political science department methods courses, in which we look for systematic overlap between general methods course offerings, we look to six introductory methods courses for a content analysis of their titles and descriptions.⁴ Though the term “research” is included in five of the six class descriptions, it is used to indicate that there is a research paper requirement for the course (a requirement of many non-methods as well as methods political science classes), making it difficult to determine whether this represents a systematic similarity. In descriptions of three of the courses, the phrase “data analysis” can be found. However, the phrase is not sufficiently discussed in any of the course descriptions to provide a basis for assessing the degree of likeness between the three classes. Based on this cursory review, it appears as though there may be a fairly limited degree of systematic overlap among the political science methods courses.

⁴ We only look to general methods courses for this portion of the study, as we expect that quantitative and qualitative courses would have limited overlap by virtue of the fact that they are both regarded and taught as largely different forms of research. Further, they represent more “advanced” versions or sub-sets of general introductory research courses.

*Comparing Professors of Political Methods Courses:
Junior and Senior Faculty Members*

Though evidence on the point is largely anecdotal, it is commonly observed that many professors of political methods are junior faculty members.⁵ In order to determine whether or not this observation holds any validity, we randomly sample professors from the one hundred political science programs. We calculate the average length of time from the receipt of PhD for those professors that have taught methods courses during the last two academic years as well as for those that have not taught methods courses during the same two year time period. The data reveals that there is an average difference of 7.73 years from receipt of the doctoral degree between those professors tasked with teaching methods and those that are not. This might be interpreted to suggest that new and perhaps little-experienced (junior) faculty members are assigned the unenviable job of teaching difficult material to largely uninterested students.

We conduct the same test for graduate methods courses. The results of this random sample (with which there is no overlap with the previous sample group) show that the average time (years since the receipt of PhD) difference between methods-teaching faculty and non-methods-teaching faculty is 4.23 years.⁶ It appears that even at the graduate level, junior professors are asked to carry the methods teaching responsibilities for their departments.

⁵ While attending the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) this past year, I participated in a study group in which many of the members were junior faculty professors. During one study session, we came to the realization that some of the group members were the only professors that taught research methods at their respective universities, and that many of them had opted to attend the ICPSR for the sole purpose of “catching up” on their research skills, as none of them had attended programs in which methods was offered as a sub-field of concentration. I was faced with the question of whether junior faculty, as a rule, are tasked with teaching methods courses, or whether the pattern of the study group was simply an anomaly.

⁶ We do not suggest that this pattern is typical of all political science departments. In fact, one department within the sample of ten actually had more senior than junior faculty members teaching methods courses (with an average difference of -8.38 years). Though we view this department as something of an anomaly, as it is one of the few programs to offer a PhD in political science methodological studies, we have opted to leave it in the sample. It is worth noting, however, that removing this outlier from the sample results in an increase in the average seniority difference between methods and non-methods instructors to 9.52 years.

The foreseeable rationale for this finding is that the sub-field of methodology has become much more prevalent within the discipline during the past several decades due to such trends as research-related technological advancements (the introduction of the personal computer and statistical software) and the “quantification” of political scholarship. Accordingly, logic would dictate that younger faculty members would be best suited for teaching methodology courses. Yet, the fact that these trends have taken place throughout the course of the past several decades - the past two decades at the very least - would seem to indicate that there has been sufficient time for upper-level faculty members to have been exposed to such developments during their own education, and for them to take on a greater share of the workload for methods instruction in their respective programs.

Conclusions

Based on the findings presented and discussed in this work, we conclude that the field of political science appears to fall short of providing a sufficiently standardized methodological curriculum at the undergraduate level (and to some extent, the graduate level). In no other sub-field of political science are the requirements for undergraduate degrees as low as they are for research methodology. Though we believe that universities should be free to design their curriculum and degree requirements in the absence of outside pressures, we are troubled by the seeming discrepancy between the methodological requirements at the graduate level and the limited degree of methods course offerings at the undergraduate level.⁷

Ideally, methods courses should be designed to provide students with a foundation for understanding the means by which political science is studied; to serve as an introduction to the development of research questions, the framing of those questions in theoretical terms, and the

⁷ The authors recognize that departments are limited by budgetary and other resource constraints. This statement is meant to designate the ability of departments to reasonably act within the bounds of academic freedom.

application of appropriate research design and methodological techniques to those questions.

Simply put, methods classes should provide students with basic knowledge of how to study political phenomena. Given the results of this study, though, we have reason to suspect that many institutions have yet to fully recognize the importance of this component of the undergraduate political science experience. Until this shortcoming is addressed, political science as a discipline will continue to short-change its future scholars.

Appendix #1 – Universities Included in this Study

University of Alabama	Indiana University
American University	University of Iowa
Arizona State University	Johns Hopkins University
University of Arizona	University of Kansas
Boston College	University of Kentucky
Boston University	Louisiana State University
Brandeis University	Loyola University Chicago
Brown University	University of Maryland
University of California-Berkeley	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
University of California-Davis	Michigan State University
University of California-Irvine	University of Minnesota
University of California-Los Angeles	University of Mississippi
University of California-Riverside	University of Missouri
University of California-San Diego	University of Nebraska
University of California-Santa Barbara	University of Nevada-Reno
Carnegie Mellon University	University of New Orleans
Case Western University	New York University
University of Chicago	University of North Carolina
Clark Atlanta University	University of North Texas
University of Colorado-Boulder	Northeastern University
Colorado State University	Northern Arizona University
Columbia University	North Illinois University
University Connecticut	Northwestern University
Cornell University	University of Notre Dame
University of Delaware	Ohio State University
Duke University	University of Oklahoma
Emory University	University of Oregon
Florida International University	Pennsylvania State University
Florida State University	University of Pennsylvania
University of Florida	University of Pittsburgh
George Washington University	Princeton University
Georgetown University	Purdue University
Georgia State University	Rice University
University of Georgia	University of Rochester
Harvard University	Rutgers University
University of Hawaii	University of South California
Idaho State University	University of South Carolina
University of Idaho	Southern of Illinois University
University Illinois-Chicago	Stanford University

State University New York-Binghamton
State University New York-Stony Brook
State University New York-Albany
State University New York-Buffalo
Syracuse University
Temple University
University of Tennessee
University of Texas-Austin
University of Texas-Dallas
Texas A&M
Texas Technological University
University of Utah
Vanderbilt University
University Virginia
Washington State University
University of Washington
Wayne State University
West Virginia University
Western Michigan University
University of Wisconsin-Madison
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Yale University

Works Cited / Works Consulted

- Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba. *The Civic Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Booth, David B. "Studying Research Methods by Examining Changing Research Strategies." *Teaching Sociology* 11: 2 (January 1984), 205-212.
- Dannerbeck, Francis J. "Toward a Methods Course Requirement at the Graduate Level." *The Modern Language Journal* 50: 5 (May 1966), 273-274.
- Hubbell, Larry. "Teaching Research Methods: An Experiential and Heterodoxical Approach." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27: 1 (March 1994), 60-64.
- Kaufman-Osborn, Timothy V. "From the Science to the Art of Politics." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 24: 2 (June 1991), 204-205.
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Lester, Frank K., and Donald R. Kerr. "Some Ideas about Research Methodologies in Mathematics Education." *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education* 10: 3 (May 1979), 228-232.
- Markham, William T. "Research Methods in the Introductory Course: To Be or Not to Be?" *Teaching Sociology* 19: 4 (October 1991), 464-471.
- McBurney, Donald. "The Problem Method of Teaching Research Methods." *Teaching of Psychology* 22: 1 (February 1995), 36-38.
- Navarro, Virginia. "Constructing a Teacher of Qualitative Methods: A Reflection." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 8: 5 (2005), 419-435.
- "Ranking Research Doctorate Programs in Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 29: 2 (June 1996), 144-148.
- Reynolds, Leon F. "A Teacher's Course in Methods." *The Modern Language Journal* 36: 4 (April 1952), 184-185.
- Rodgers, Pamela H., and Cecilia Manrique. "The Dilemma of Teaching Political Science Research Methods: How Much Computers? How Much Statistics? How Much Methods?" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 25: 2 (June 1992), 234-237.
- Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine. "Is This the Curriculum We Want? Doctoral Requirements and Offerings in Methods and Methodology." *PSOnline* (July 2003), 379-386.

- Shapiro, Ian. "Problems, Methods, and Theories in the Study of Politics, or What's Wrong with Political Science and What to do About It." *Political Theory* 30: 4, 588-611.
- Theodoulou, Stella Z., and Rory O'Brien, eds. *Methods for Political Inquiry: The Discipline, Philosophy, and Analysis of Politics*. Upper Saddle Rive, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999.
- "U.S. News and World Report Ranking of Graduate Political Science Programs." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 29: 2 (June 1996), 148.
- Van Evera, Stephen. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- Walsh, Mary, and Mark Bahnisch. "The Politics of Political Theorizing in the New Millenium." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 2000.
- Zablotsky, Diane. "Why Do I Have to Learn This if I'm Not Going to Graduate School? Teaching Research Methods in a Social Psychology of Aging Course." *Educational Gerontology* 27 (2001), 609-622.