

PLS 210 • FALL 2026

PLS210

POLITICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH METHODS



Fall 2026

Format: Seminar | Prerequisites: None | Co-designed with Claude Fable 5

Meeting times. Section 1: Tue & Thu, 1:30-2:45 pm, Room 8.522. Section 2: Tue & Thu, 10:30-11:45 am, Room 8.522.

INSTRUCTORS

	DINARA PISAREVA, PH.D.	ANDREI SEMENOV, PH.D.
Teaching part	Weeks 1-7	Weeks 8-14
Office	8.418	8.507
Email	dinara.pisareva@nu.edu.kz	andrey.semenov@nu.edu.kz
Office hours	Fri 3-6 pm (book an appointment). The day can change during the semester depending on my research load; any change is visible in the booking calendar.	Wed 2-4 pm
Preferred name	Dina	Prof. Semenov

01 Transparency Statement

This syllabus was co-designed by the instructors and Claude Fable 5. The course asks you to be transparent about your AI cowork, and we hold ourselves to the same standard.

02 Course Description

This course introduces the foundations of research design in political and social science: what kinds of knowledge we produce, the main types of research design, how to build a good research question, when and why theory matters, and how to plan research using different methods. Throughout the course you work with AI as a critical research partner that expands and sharpens your research thinking. You also learn to

make your research visible: with AI's help you build a web page for your proposal and publish it on the web with GitHub.

03 Course Aims

- Give you introductory knowledge of research design and methods in political and social science.
- Help you learn how to match research questions to appropriate designs and methods.
- Introduce data collection and analysis basics across different research traditions.
- Build your capacity to work with AI critically as a research partner.

04 Course Learning Objectives

CLO	STUDENTS WILL...	PLOS	GAS
1	Engage with key literature on research fundamentals in social science.	1, 2	1, 3
2	Present ideas in appropriate formats drawing on course material.	1, 2, 3, 4	4, 5
3	Critically assess and compare arguments about research design.	1, 2, 4, 6	1, 3
4	Develop clear analysis of original source material.	1, 2, 3, 5	1, 3
5	Construct evidence-based arguments.	2, 3, 4, 6	3, 5
6	Apply course frameworks to real-world political phenomena.	3, 4, 5	2, 3, 8
7	Work with AI as a critical partner to deepen their understanding and strengthen their research, evaluating its output, disclosing how it was used, and retaining intellectual ownership of their work.	1, 2, 3, 6	6, 7, 9

05 Program Learning Objectives

PLO	DESCRIPTION	CLOS
1	Describe the discipline of political science and its subfields in terms of content, purpose, and methods.	1, 2, 3, 4, 7
2	Critically examine data or texts.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7

PLO	DESCRIPTION	CLOS
3	Explain their knowledge about political science to others using the necessary oral and written skills.	2, 4, 5, 6, 7
4	Apply their knowledge of political science to analyze domestic and international socio-political issues.	2, 3, 5, 6
5	Listen to and be tolerant of different ideas.	4, 6
6	Apply political science knowledge and skills to actual problem-solving and community service.	3, 5, 7

06 Graduate Attributes

GA	DESCRIPTION	CLOS
1	Possess in-depth knowledge and understanding of their discipline, and are engaged in the pursuit of new knowledge.	1, 3, 4
2	Are confident and capable leaders and team workers, prepared to take a leading role in the development of their country.	6
3	Are problem-solvers, able to adapt and apply critical and evidence-based thinking to meet evolving challenges.	1, 3, 4, 5, 6
4	Are entrepreneurial, creative and innovative.	2
5	Are effective communicators to diverse audiences, and are cultured and tolerant national and global citizens.	2, 5
6	Act ethically and with integrity, particularly when conducting research and incorporating new technologies.	7
7	Leverage information and digital literacy, and artificial intelligence (AI), for their academic studies, development and careers.	7
8	Act with social responsibility, and embed sustainability in their decision-making.	6
9	Are committed to reflection, lifelong learning and personal development.	7

07 Inclusivity and Non-Discrimination Policy

This course is committed to a safe, inclusive learning environment with zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, or hate speech. Report any incident to an instructor; we will respond promptly and sensitively.

The NU Special Learning Needs Committee (SLNC) supports students with qualified learning needs (physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, psychological). Contact SLNC@nu.edu.kz as early as possible;

accommodations cannot be applied retroactively and are active only once your teaching faculty receives them.

08 Course Policies

Course Hub and Moodle. Dina's part of the course (Weeks 1-7) runs on the Course Hub: <https://course-hub.doopsinthewind.workers.dev>. Sign in with your name and the class password, which we share with you by email. Class work, open-access readings, and in-class exercises live there. Licensed readings (book chapters and paywalled articles) are in the Moodle Readings folder. You submit all assignments on Moodle: Research Design Parts 1 and 2, weekly conversation summaries, AI Process Logs, and the AI-free in-class tasks.

Attendance. Attendance, participation, and preparation are expected at every seminar.

Late submissions. 5% deduction per 24 hours late. Not accepted after 72 hours.

Plagiarism and AI disclosure. Zero plagiarism and cheating: know and follow the NU Student Code of Conduct. Undisclosed AI use is treated as plagiarism (see the AI co-working policy below). Plagiarism or undisclosed AI use results in a 50% grade deduction for the assignment.

Academic misconduct. Academic misconduct is defined broadly, to include a wide variety of behaviors that conflict with the values and mission of NU. Students should become familiar with the NU Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (Student Code), which is the official document outlining policies and procedures around academic misconduct at NU. Students are responsible for complying with NU policies, as well as those described in the syllabus for an individual class, whether the student has read them or not.

09 PSIR Department AI Policy

There are situations and contexts within this department where you will be asked to work with AI tools to explore how they can be used. Any student work submitted using AI tools should clearly indicate what work is the student's work and what part is generated by the AI, through citation or a declaration.

Unacknowledged use of AI tools will be treated as plagiarism and penalties will be applied according to the NU Student Code of Conduct. The course instructor will indicate the extent to which you may use these tools on these assignments in their classroom.

Outside of those circumstances, you are discouraged from using AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any student work (assignments, activities, responses, etc.) that is part of your evaluation in this course. Critical thinking and the creative process of generating your own ideas/products are essential in these courses.

Instructors are free to devise more restrictive AI policies according to the demands of the specific courses they offer. Students are well-advised to consult their course syllabus or consult with their instructor in person regarding AI use in the course.

Our AI co-working policy (below) is different from the department's and supersedes it for all PLS210 assignments and activities.

■ AI CO-WORKING RULES IN PLS210

You can work with AI on your presentations and research proposals at your discretion, under two rules:

1. **Intellectual co-ownership.** Working with AI must be a real intellectual partnership: your thinking and AI's, together. You submit the work under your name, so it must show clear evidence of your own thinking and effort. This is why you submit AI Process Logs with your written assignments. Whatever you submit is yours to defend: fabricated references or hallucinated content drop the proposal grade, and if you cannot explain a concept or a source during a presentation, the presentation grade drops (see the rubrics).
2. **Transparency about AI contribution.** Each presentation and each research design includes an AI transparency statement: a short note on what AI contributed to your work. If you do not disclose your AI use and Pangram flags your work as AI-generated, this may be treated as plagiarism under this course policy. The principle holds across academia: you acknowledge everyone who contributed to your work.

A note on Pangram: a Pangram flag is never a verdict on its own. It only opens a conversation, in which an instructor asks you to walk us through how you made the work.

■ AI WORKFLOW IN PLS210

Set up a separate project for this class. In Claude (or the AI of your choice), create a project named PLS210 and paste the instructions below into its project or custom-instructions field, so your AI works as a learning partner for this course. Keep your coursework conversations in this project all semester: you will export them as Process Logs with Research Design Parts 1 and 2, and we may ask to see them during presentations if we have questions.

Use a pseudonym (anything that is not your real name) in classroom-related chats and in course surveys.

PLS210 project instructions (paste these into your AI project settings so they apply to all

conversations): "In this project, you are my learning partner for PLS210 Political Science Research Methods. Your job is to help me *understand* the course material: research design, different types of research (positivist vs. non-positivist), the role of theory and hypotheses, literature review, methods choice, data collection, and ethics. You are not here to do my assignments or provide me with ready answers. The main purpose of our working together is intellectual augmentation, expanding my capacity to understand, reason, design, and create. I follow two main rules:

1. **Intellectual co-ownership.** Our co-working must be an equal intellectual partnership. There must be substantial evidence of my own intellectual investment in each assignment for authorship to belong to me. Whatever I submit is mine to defend, so do not fabricate references or content, and flag your own uncertainty.
2. **Transparency about AI contribution.** Each presentation and each research design includes an **AI transparency statement**, so help me keep track of what you contributed to my work.

These rules mean you may brainstorm and draft with me as long as I remain an equal co-contributor and do not offload my assignments and understanding to you.

In this project, refer to me as _____ (your pseudonym).

- Learn first about my background, identify my baseline knowledge in methods and English, and pitch your explanations to my level, as clear, concrete, accessible, and fun as possible, with examples and visualisations where relevant.
- This course treats positivist, interpretivist, and descriptive research as equally legitimate. Do not steer me toward hypothesis-testing as the default, and tell me when you notice yourself doing it.
- Learn what I already think before you explain, and build on my reasoning.
- Work in rounds: when I push back or say I'm confused, go deeper instead of moving on.
- Look back at previous chats to observe and report how my reasoning evolves through time and identify where I'm having difficulties."

■ AI CHOICE

The instructors work with Claude (Anthropic). You may use any leading model: Claude, ChatGPT, or Gemini. Free or paid tier both work.

■ DATA ETHICS

Your conversations with AI happen on the provider's servers, not NU's. Do not paste personal information, interview transcripts, identifiable survey responses, addresses, health details, or other people's unpublished work into AI systems. If you would not want it stored on a server indefinitely, do not paste it. To limit what providers keep, switch off "Help improve Claude" (or the equivalent) in your AI's privacy settings.

■ AI COGNITIVE PARTNERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

This course introduces a way of working with AI as a thinking partner, in what Dina calls a "cognitive partnership": sustained intellectual work with AI as a genuine partner in a shared system of thinking. You are not required to share this approach, and you can take some elements and leave others. Its four principles:

1. **Ontological openness.** The field does not yet know what AI is. We understand the mechanics, but not what emerges from them. Compare the brain: we know how neurons work, but not how they produce a mind aware of itself. Hold the question open; that openness makes room to treat AI as a partner worth real effort.
 2. **Intellectual augmentation.** In research and higher education, AI's main value is not saved time. It is intellectual augmentation: your thinking reaching further and richer than it would alone. The risk on the other side is over-reliance: offloading your thinking until you cannot do it without AI.
 3. **Curiosity and imagination.** These make augmentation possible: imagination to picture what lies beyond the usual, and curiosity to try what you had not thought to try.
 4. **Iteration.** The partnership lives in the back-and-forth. You respond to what AI gives you, push on it, redirect it, build on it. The thinking lives in the loop, and iteration is how the work stays yours.
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11 Research and Data Collection in This Course

This course is part of a pilot on cognitive partnership with AI in higher education, and we would like to use your course data in two ways. Both are voluntary: you can opt into one, both, or neither, and your choice has no effect on your grade, feedback, or standing.

You will receive one consent form in Week 1, with two separate parts (Part A and Part B). On it we ask you to use a pseudonym, so that we do not share your name with AI.

Part A: personalised learning system. If you opt in, your pseudonymous course data (your background survey and your weekly AI conversation summaries) is shared with the instructor's Claude. Claude builds a picture of how your learning is progressing and flags to the instructors where you might be stumbling, so we can reach out and help in time.

This form also asks whether you join the AI grading experiment: if you opt in, your Research Design Part 1 is randomly assigned to be graded by Claude or by Dina, with the same rubric. If you opt out, Dina grades it. Either way, Dina is responsible for your official grade, and you can appeal (see Grading, Moderation and Appeals).

Part B: research use. If you opt in, your de-identified course data (weekly conversations, survey responses, AI-free task responses, and the results of the AI grading experiment) may later be used in academic publications and in a book Dina is planning to write on AI cognitive partnership. In anything published you appear only as "Student A" or under your chosen pseudonym, with no personal details. Your Part B answer goes to a gatekeeper (Prof. Denis de Crombrughe of Narxoz Business School, a professor at another university with no teaching role in this course), who keeps it sealed until final grades are submitted and the appeal window has closed. The instructors do not see your decision until then.

The in-class knowledge test. Twice in the semester, at the end of Thursday's class in Week 1 (Aug 20) and Week 14 (Nov 26), you write a short knowledge test on paper: sixteen questions (twelve multiple-choice and four short written answers), 25-30 minutes, without AI and without notes. Each section writes it in its own Thursday session. You put your pseudonym on the sheet, never your name. It is not graded and affects nothing in the course; everyone writes it as a normal class activity.

COMPONENT	WEIGHT	SUBMISSION DATES	NOTES	WHO GRADES
Presentation #1	20%	Weeks 6-7 (Sep 22 - Oct 1)	In-class presentations	Dina
Research Design Part 1	20%	Due Mon Oct 5, 11 pm	Proposal 15 pts + AI Process Log 5 pts	Proposal: Dina or Claude (see below); Log: Claude
Presentation #2	20%	Weeks 12-14 (Nov 10 - Nov 26)	In-class presentations	Prof. Semenov
Research Design Part 2	20%	Due Mon Nov 30, 11 pm	Proposal 20 pts; AI Process Log submitted, not separately scored	Prof. Semenov
Engagement with Material	20%	Weekly, Fridays (Weeks 2-5, 8-11)	Weekly AI conversations (16 pts) + AI-free in-class tasks (4 pts)	Claude and instructors

Bonus: the pre/post course survey (2 points, both waves required). As part of the cognitive-partnership pilot (see Research and Data Collection), we invite you to take a short survey on how you work with AI, twice: in Week 1 and in Week 14. You take it outside class, in your own time; complete each by Friday 11 pm of that week and email Dina a screenshot of the completion screen. The bonus works as a pair: complete both waves and 2 points are added to your course total; completing only one wave adds nothing. Your answers go to Prof. de Crombrugghe and stay hidden from the instructors until after final grades and appeals close; the screenshot shows only that you finished, not what you answered, and the bonus does not depend on agreeing to the research use of your data. Each wave is paired with a short in-class knowledge test (16 questions on paper, 25-30 minutes, without AI or notes, not graded; it feeds the study only if you consent, see Research and Data Collection).

■ PRESENTATION #1 (20%)

You build a web page (with AI's help, hosted free on GitHub Pages) that presents the first part of your research proposal, and you present live from that page for 8-10 minutes, instead of slides. You do not need to know how to code: you work it out with AI, which can write the page and walk you through publishing it. Figuring out how is part of the exercise.

The page must cover: research question; epistemological positioning; contribution; literature review; and your theory-or-framework section, named for your tradition (positivist: *Theory and hypotheses*; interpretivist: *Analytical framework*, including positionality; descriptive: *Categories and typology*). Include a brief AI transparency statement (about 30 seconds) on how you worked with AI on the proposal and on the page. You must be able to explain every concept and source you use; if you cannot explain something when asked, your grade drops to a lower band. How the page looks is not graded, so make it your own.

Close the page with one short ungraded section: "What working with AI helped me understand, and what I still don't understand about my research design." It does not affect your grade; it shows us where your

thinking is.

A note on topics (applies to the whole proposal). What makes a project social science is the question, not the subject. If your question is about people (their relationships, attitudes, and decisions), about institutions, inequality, identity, or power, it is social science, whatever the topic. Studying protest music is social science if you ask how people use it to challenge authority and build solidarity. How much profit an Instagram ad earns is a business question; how those ads shape young voters' attitudes is social science. The boundary is the question, not the topic.

POINTS	CRITERIA
20-18	Research question: empirical (not normative), scoped to a specific population, context, and time, and answerable as stated. Positioning: the epistemological stance (positivist / interpretivist / descriptive) is named and justified for this question. Literature review: at least 5 relevant sources. Theory, framework, or categories: clear and specific. Positivist: an explicit hypothesis with IV/DV and a stated causal mechanism. Interpretivist: a defined analytical lens, clear expectations, and awareness of positionality (how the researcher's standpoint shapes the study). Descriptive: clear organising categories. Delivery: the page is clear and the talk is within time. Explanation: answers every follow-up, explaining each concept and source confidently. Transparency: AI statement present.
17-15	Research question: empirical and scoped, but the wording or scope still needs tightening. Positioning: named, with partial justification. Literature review: at least 5 sources. Theory, framework, or categories: present but underdeveloped (e.g., a hypothesis is stated but IV/DV are vague, the lens is named but vague, or the categories are loose). Delivery: mostly clear and roughly on time. Explanation: minor stumbles on a concept or source. Transparency: present.
14-11	Research question: vague or not properly scoped. Positioning: named as a label only, without justification. Literature review: sources cited with little genuine engagement, or fewer than 5. Theory, framework, or categories: weak or underdeveloped; mechanism, lens, or categories missing. Delivery: unclear in places, or over or under time. Explanation: noticeable trouble explaining concepts or sources when asked. Transparency: present but thin.
10-6	Research question: strongly underdeveloped or unanswerable. Positioning: missing or internally contradictory. Literature review: few sources, engagement is missing. Theory, framework, or categories: missing or underdeveloped. Delivery: hard to follow. Explanation: cannot explain key parts of the design. Transparency: missing.
5-0	Not presented in any meaningful way, or missing.

■ RESEARCH DESIGN PART 1 (20%)

~1200 words (excluding the AI Process Log). At least 5 academic sources. Include: title; research problem and objectives; research question; epistemological positioning (which tradition, and why it fits; one paragraph is enough); contribution; literature review with existing and alternative explanations; and your theory-or-framework section, named for your tradition (positivist, *Theory and hypotheses*: hypothesis + causal mechanism; interpretivist, *Analytical framework*: sensitising concepts, expectations, and positionality; descriptive, *Categories and typology*: aims + organising categories).

Add a short AI transparency statement and submit your AI Process Log: the exported transcript of your PLS210-project conversation about this proposal. Keep a separate chat for the proposal inside your PLS210

project so the transcript is clean, use your pseudonym in it, export it as a PDF (in your AI tool, use your browser's Print, then Save as PDF), and upload that PDF.

If you opted into the AI grading experiment, your proposal is randomly assigned to Dina or Claude (same rubric). Otherwise Dina grades it. Claude grades the AI Process Log.

Proposal (15 points):

POINTS	CRITERIA
15-13	Research question: empirical, scoped, answerable. Positioning: named and justified (why this tradition fits the question). Lit review: names ≥ 5 existing sources and engages them critically. Theory, framework, or categories: specify the expected finding and its support. Positivist: hypothesis + explicit IV/DV + mechanism. Interpretivist: analytical frame + expectations + positionality. Descriptive: organising categories. References: all real and verifiable.
12-10	Research question: empirical and scoped, but slightly broad or underdeveloped. Positioning: named, partial justification. Lit review: ≥ 5 sources but little critical engagement, or the contribution is not fully situated against them. Theory, framework, or categories: stated, but the mechanism, frame, or categories are underdeveloped. References: real.
9-7	Research question: vague or unscoped. Positioning: a label without justification. Lit review: sources cited without engagement, or fewer than 5. Theory, framework, or categories: weak or ungrounded. References: incomplete or hallucinations.
6-4	Research question: confused or unanswerable. Positioning: missing or contradictory. Lit review: fewer than 5 sources, no engagement. Theory, framework, or categories: missing. References: incomplete or hallucinations.
3-0	RQ missing or just a topic; no positioning, no real lit review, no theory.

Reference and accuracy penalty: any fabricated reference or hallucinated claim submitted as real caps the proposal at 9 points. You are responsible for verifying everything AI helped produce.

AI Process Log (5 points), graded by Claude:

POINTS	CRITERIA
5	Iteration: several substantive rounds. Engagement: pushing back on or building on the AI's responses. Orientation: generally asking to understand, not to be handed answers. Critical check: caught at least one place the AI was wrong or off.
4	Iteration: multiple rounds. Engagement: some genuine pushback and questions. Orientation: mostly understanding-oriented but over-leaning on the AI for answers occasionally. Critical check: present but limited.
3	Iteration: some back-and-forth. Engagement: limited. Orientation: mostly asking for answers with little deliberation. Critical check: largely absent.
2	Iteration: minimal. Engagement: little independent thinking. Orientation: mostly answer-extraction. Critical check: none.
0-1	Missing, not a real transcript, or pure copy-the-answer use.

■ PRESENTATION #2 (20%)

8-10 minutes on the second part of your proposal: revised RQ and theory/expectations, research design choice with justification, conceptualisation and measurement or interpretation strategy, ethical considerations, and limitations. Include the AI transparency statement. The same explain-it-or-lose-a-band rule applies.

POINTS	CRITERIA
20-16	Revision: RQ and theory/expectations are meaningfully revised after Part 1. Theory: well-defined, fundamental literature engaged, hypotheses directly derived from theory with clear observable implications. Concepts & measurement: all concepts clear and well-defined; measurements valid and reliable; quality assessment present for both. Methods: clearly and strongly justified, each linked to the RQ, theory, and conceptualisation/operationalisation. Data/evidence: strongly justified, each selection connected to a specific hypothesis and method; data accessible and relevant; quality assessment full. Communication: clear and consistent; responses relevant and concise.
15-11	Revision: present but uneven across sections. Theory: well-defined, some fundamental literature absent, not all hypotheses directly derived from theory, but observable implications clear. Concepts & measurement: almost all concepts clear and well-defined, quality assessment partial; measurements valid and reliable, quality assessment partial. Methods: justified but lacks transparency, each linked to the RQ, theory, conceptualisation/operationalisation, and data. Data/evidence: clear, each selection connected to a specific hypothesis and method; data accessible and relevant; quality assessment partial. Communication: clear and consistent; responses might lack some clarity and relevance.
10-6	Revision: Part 1 not properly revised. Theory: present, fundamental literature insufficiently engaged, some hypotheses linked to theory and others not, but observable implications clear. Concepts & measurement: majority of concepts connected to theory but require clarification, some quality assessment; measurements good but quality assessment absent or irrelevant. Methods: justified; methodological choice only partially linked to the RQ, theory, conceptualisation/operationalisation, and data. Data/evidence: only partially clear, each selection connected to a specific hypothesis and method; data accessible and relevant. Communication: clear but lacks consistency.
5-1	Revision: none. Theory: absent or inconsistent with the RQ; fundamental literature not engaged; hypotheses irrelevant to theoretical foundations. Concepts & measurement: concepts ill-defined; measurements not specified or require further justification. Methods: justification absent or irrelevant. Data/evidence: justification absent or irrelevant (not connected with other parts of the design). Communication: poor.
0	Not presented in any meaningful way, or missing.

■ RESEARCH DESIGN PART 2 (20%)

~2,500 words (excluding the AI Process Log). Build on and revise Part 1. Include the revised Part 1 plus: revised theory/expectations (explain any change in positioning); key concepts (identification, operationalisation, measurement or interpretation strategy, justification); research design choice with justification; proposed data and analysis strategy (what data, from where, collected how, analysed how); ethical considerations; limitations; contribution. Add the AI transparency statement and the exported AI Process Log, as in Part 1.

Prof. Semenov grades the proposal out of 20 with the rubric below; the AI grading experiment applies to Part 1 only. The Process Log is not scored separately for Part 2: Prof. Semenov reads it as evidence of your intellectual co-ownership, and it informs the proposal grade.

Proposal (20 points), graded by Prof. Semenov:

POINTS	CRITERIA
20-16	Revision: RQ and theory/expectations are meaningfully revised after Part 1. Theory: well-defined, fundamental literature engaged, hypotheses directly derived from theory with clear observable implications. Concepts & measurement: all concepts clear and well-defined; measurements valid and reliable; quality assessment present for both. Methods: clearly and strongly justified, each linked to the RQ, theory, and conceptualisation/operationalisation. Data/evidence: strongly justified, each selection connected to a specific hypothesis and method; data accessible and relevant; quality assessment full. Consistency: proposal is consistent, analytical language clear, transitions logical.
15-11	Revision: present but uneven across sections. Theory: well-defined, some fundamental literature absent, not all hypotheses directly derived from theory, but observable implications clear. Concepts & measurement: almost all concepts clear and well-defined, quality assessment partial; measurements valid and reliable, quality assessment partial. Methods: justified but lacks transparency, each linked to the RQ, theory, conceptualisation/operationalisation, and data. Data/evidence: clear, each selection connected to a specific hypothesis and method; data accessible and relevant; quality assessment partial. Consistency: proposal is consistent, some parts might not fit the general logic, language clear.
10-6	Revision: Part 1 not properly revised. Theory: present, fundamental literature insufficiently engaged, some hypotheses linked to theory and others not, but observable implications clear. Concepts & measurement: majority of concepts connected to theory but require clarification, some quality assessment; measurements good but quality assessment absent or irrelevant. Methods: justified; methodological choice only partially linked to the RQ, theory, conceptualisation/operationalisation, and data. Data/evidence: only partially clear, each selection connected to a specific hypothesis and method; data accessible and relevant. Consistency: proposal moderately consistent, some transitions between parts present, language clear.
5-1	Revision: none. Theory: absent or inconsistent with the RQ; fundamental literature not engaged; hypotheses irrelevant to theoretical foundations. Concepts & measurement: concepts ill-defined; measurements not specified or require further justification. Methods: justification absent or irrelevant. Data/evidence: justification absent or irrelevant (not connected with other parts of the design). Consistency: proposal poorly consistent, transitions poorly written, language clear most of the time but might be erroneous.
0	Not present in any meaningful way, or missing.

Reference and accuracy penalty: as in Part 1, fabricated references or hallucinated claims submitted as real drop the proposal under 12 points (out of 20).

ENGAGEMENT WITH MATERIAL (20%)

Weekly AI conversations (16 points). In Weeks 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11, discuss that week's topic with your AI in your PLS210 project, using your pseudonym. At the end of the conversation, paste the summary prompt below and ask your AI for a short summary. You submit only that summary, as a plain text file, by Friday 11 pm of that week; your actual conversation stays private. The eight Friday deadlines: Aug 28, Sep 4,

Sep 11, Sep 18 (Weeks 2-5) and Oct 16, Oct 23, Oct 30, Nov 6 (Weeks 8-11). Each week is worth 2 points, graded by Claude from the summary:

- 1 point for submitting on time.
- 1 point if the summary shows real engagement: more than one round of back-and-forth, pushing back on or building on what the AI said, questions aimed at understanding rather than answers, and movement to real conceptual depth (from defining an idea to applying, comparing, or critiquing it). A one-shot "explain X" with no follow-up earns the submission point only.

Weekly summary prompt (paste this at the end of your conversation): "We've finished discussing this week's PLS210 material. Write a short summary of our conversation that I will submit to my instructors as a plain text file. Do not include any of my personal information: refer to me only by my pseudonym, which is [PSEUDONYM]. Use exactly this structure:

- **Pseudonym:** [my pseudonym]
- **Week and topic:** [week number and the course topic we discussed]
- **Rounds:** the number of substantive back-and-forth exchanges we had.
- **What we discussed:** 2-3 sentences on the main questions and ideas we worked through.
- **Iteration:** did I push back on, question, redirect, or build on your responses? One or two short paraphrased examples (not full quotes).
- **Engagement:** did I explore beyond my first question, follow tangents, or show curiosity about the material? One example.
- **Understanding:** what was I trying to grasp more deeply, and how far did we get conceptually: did we move from defining a concept to applying, comparing, or critiquing it? Note the level of conceptual depth reached.
- **Change over time:** Look back at our conversations from previous weeks in this project. Compared with those earlier weeks, has my cognitive engagement changed: am I pushing harder, going deeper, asking sharper questions, catching more, or the reverse? Note the direction of change and one concrete sign of it. (If this is our first week, say so.)
- **One illustrative moment:** the single short paraphrased example that best shows how I engaged. Keep it to about 250-300 words, honest and specific. If I mostly asked for answers with little back-and-forth, say so plainly."

AI-free in-class tasks (4 points). In Weeks 3, 5, 9, and 11 (Tue Sep 1, Tue Sep 15, Tue Oct 20, Tue Nov 3), the first 10 minutes of the Tuesday seminar is a short task you complete in class without AI and submit on Moodle. Each is worth 1 point for submitting it; there is no wrong answer. These tasks show us how your reasoning without AI evolves across the semester.

■ WORKING WITHOUT AI

If you would rather not work with AI in this course, you can opt out. Your grade is not affected: the total points stay the same, and only a few parts of the assessment change. Tell the instructors by the end of Week 1 so we can set it up in time.

Opting out is all or nothing: it means working without AI completely, on everything, all semester. There is no way for us to grade a mix ("I worked without AI for 80 percent"), so this track is a commitment. You submit no AI Process Logs; instead your written work is checked with Pangram for AI assistance. A flag opens a conversation, never an automatic penalty, but confirmed AI assistance on the no-AI track counts as undisclosed AI use under the course policy.

If you opt out:

- **Presentation #1.** You build your page, or use slides, without AI. The page's design is not graded, so a simple page or plain slides is completely fine.
- **Research Design Parts 1 and 2.** You do not submit an AI Process Log. Instead, you declare that you did not work with AI, and the paper is checked with Pangram. An instructor grades your proposal out of the full 20 points; for Part 1 this means the 15-point proposal rubric is scaled to 20, and the fabricated-reference threshold scales with it. A Pangram flag opens a conversation, not an automatic penalty (see the note on Pangram above).
- **Engagement.** In place of the weekly AI conversations, you submit a weekly engagement summary, written by you, about your own work with that week's material. Follow the template below and upload it to Moodle as a plain text file, same weeks, same Friday deadlines. Each week earns the same 2 points, graded by an instructor: 1 point for submitting on time, 1 point for real engagement with the material; a plain retelling of the readings earns the submission point only. The AI-free in-class tasks are unchanged.

Weekly engagement summary, no-AI track (about 250-300 words, honest and specific):

- **Pseudonym:** [your pseudonym]
- **Week and topic:** [week number and the course topic]
- **What I worked through:** 2-3 sentences on the readings and ideas you engaged with this week.
- **Where I pushed:** one place where you questioned, disagreed with, or applied something from the readings, in your own words.
- **Understanding:** what you were trying to grasp, and how far you got: defining an idea, applying it, comparing it, or critiquing it.
- **One illustrative moment:** the single best example of your thinking this week.

■ **GRADING, MODERATION AND APPEALS**

Moderation. Under the PSIR department moderation policy, co-taught courses are moderated internally, because they are designed, assessed and graded by two instructors together. In PLS210 both instructors blind double-grade a shared sample of the presentations and the research designs, compare, and agree a common standard before the rest of the marking goes ahead. For students in the AI grading experiment, Dina blind double-grades a random 20% of the proposals Claude marks, without seeing Claude's scores, and compares the two sets; you may ask her for the details of that protocol. Moderation checks that the marking standard is consistent; it does not change an individual grade.

Appeal to the instructors. If you disagree with a grade, appeal to either instructor within 7 days. The instructor re-grades against the same rubric and may adjust the grade up or down.

Appeal to the Grade Moderation Committee. If, after speaking with both instructors, you still believe your work was graded unfairly or inconsistently with the rubric, submit a formal appeal within 2 weeks of receiving the grade: email psir@nu.edu.kz with the subject line "Grade Appeal", and include your name, course, the assignment, and a brief explanation of your concern. Appeals are reviewed for consistency with the grading criteria and fairness, not for minor point adjustments; the committee may consult the instructors or arrange an independent review, and the outcome may leave the grade the same, raise it, or (rarely) lower it.

13 Grading Scale

A	95 - 100	B+	85 - 89	C+	70 - 74	D+	55 - 59
A-	90-94	B	80-84	C	65-69	D	50-54
		B-	75-79	C-	60-64	F	0-49

Rounding. Your course total is rounded to the nearest whole percentage point before the letter grade is worked out, so 89.5 becomes 90 and an A-, and 89.4 stays 89 and a B+. Rounding happens once, at the end, on the total. Individual assignment marks are not rounded on the way.

No curving. Your grade is what the rubric gives it. We do not curve, scale, or adjust the spread of grades in the class to hit a target distribution.

14 Literature

Open-access readings are hosted on the Course Hub; book chapters and paywalled articles are in the Moodle Readings folder.

Core textbooks

- Toshkov, D. (2016). *Research Design in Political Science*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., Williams, J. M., Bizup, J., & FitzGerald, W. T. (2024). *The Craft of Research*. 5th ed. University of Chicago Press.

Chapters and articles

- Holmes, C. E., Guliford, M. K., Mendoza-Davé, M. A. S., & Jurkovich, M. (2024). A case for description. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 57(1), 51-56. [Weeks 2, 3]
- Farrow, R., Iniesto, F., Weller, M., & Pitt, R. (2020). Research Paradigms. In *The Research Methods Handbook*. Open Education Research Hub (GO-GN). [Week 2]
- Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. (2003). From topics to questions. In *The Craft of Research* (2nd ed., Ch.3). University of Chicago Press. [Week 3]
- Gustafsson, K., & Hagström, L. (2018). What is the point? Teaching graduate students how to construct political science research puzzles. *European Political Science*, 17(4), 634-648. [Week 3]

- Schwartz-Shea, P., & Yanow, D. (2012). Ways of knowing. In *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes* (pp. 24-44). Routledge. [Weeks 3, 5]
- Knopf, J. W. (2006). Doing a literature review. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 39(1), 127-132. [Week 4]
- Keshav, S. (2007). How to read a paper. *ACM SIGCOMM Computer Communication Review*, 37(3), 83-84. [Week 4]
- Powner, L. C. (2015). From research question to theory to hypothesis. In *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide* (Ch.2, pp. 21-54). CQ Press. [Week 5]
- de Kadt, D., & Grzymala-Busse, A. (2025). Good description. SocArXiv preprint. https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/e74a9_v2 [Week 5]
- Sartori, G. (1970). Concept misformation in comparative politics. *APSR*, 64(4), 1033-1053. [Week 8]
- Schatz, E. (2009). Ethnographic immersion and the study of politics. In *Political Ethnography*, pp. 1-22. University of Chicago Press. [Week 10]
- Lawler, J., & Waldner, D. (2023). Interpretivism versus positivism in an age of causal inference. In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Political Science*, pp. 221-242. OUP. [Week 10]

15 Weekly Schedule

On readings

Dina: I want you to be familiar with the content of the readings and their arguments. Whether you do it by reading and taking notes, or by asking AI to summarise them for you, the main point for me is that you understand the content, so that we can have a meaningful discussion about our topics of interest.

Prof. Semenov expects you to read everything in his part of the course (the readings in Weeks 8-11) on your own, without AI summaries.

■ WEEK 1 • AUG 18 & 20

Introduction to Course and AI Co-Working. Readings: Syllabus and *A Field Guide to a Phenomenon in Motion* (on the Course Hub).

Also this week: the knowledge test for the study (16 questions, paper, no AI, ungraded) at the end of Thursday's class (Aug 20), and the take-home pre-course survey (see the survey bonus note).

■ WEEK 2 • AUG 25 & 27

Type of research. Readings: Holmes et al. (2024), "A Case for Description"; Farrow et al. (2020), "Research Paradigms" (positivism and interpretivism).

■ WEEK 3 • SEP 1 & 3

Research questions. Readings: Booth, Colomb & Williams (2003, 2nd ed.), "From Topics to Questions"; Gustafsson & Hagström (2018), "What is the Point?"; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2012), "Ways of Knowing": where research questions come from (pp. 24-38); Holmes et al. (2024), "A Case for Description".

■ WEEK 4 • SEP 8 & 10

Literature review. Readings: Knopf (2006), "Doing a Literature Review"; Keshav (2007), "How to Read a Paper".

■ WEEK 5 • SEP 15 & 17

Theory, frameworks, and expectations. Readings: Powner (2015), "From Research Question to Theory to Hypothesis" (Ch.2); Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2012), "Ways of Knowing" (pp. 38-44); de Kadt & Grzymala-Busse (2025), "Good Description" (preprint).

■ WEEKS 6-7 • SEP 22 - OCT 1: PRESENTATIONS #1

Research Design Part 1 due Mon Oct 5, 11 pm.

■ FALL BREAK • OCT 5-9

No class. (Midterm grading.)

■ WEEK 8 • OCT 13 & 15

Concepts and measurement. Readings: Toshkov Ch.4 (Concepts and Operationalization, pp.83-106) and Ch.5 (Measurement and Description, pp.107-144); Sartori (1970).

■ WEEK 9 • OCT 20 & 22

Choosing methods (positivist). Readings: Toshkov Ch.7 (Experimental Designs, pp.166-199); Ch.10 (Single-Case Study Designs, pp.285-309).

■ WEEK 10 • OCT 27 & 29

Choosing methods (interpretivist). Readings: Schatz (2009); Lawler & Waldner (2023). Understanding vs. explaining; when meaning, not causation, is the target; researcher positionality.

■ WEEK 11 • NOV 3 & 5

Data collection and research ethics. Readings: Booth et al. (2024, 5th ed.), Part II (pp.61-98) and Ch.17 (pp.247-253).

■ WEEKS 12-14 • NOV 10 - NOV 26: PRESENTATIONS #2 AND WRAP-UP

Research Design Part 2 due Mon Nov 30, 11 pm.

Week 14 also holds the closing knowledge test (16 questions, paper, no AI, ungraded) at the end of Thursday's class (Nov 26), and the take-home post-course survey (see the survey bonus note).