Leiden University | Political Science

Bachelor Project 2014-2015
Political Psychology

BSc 2014-2015, Semester 2, Block 4
15 ECTS, Level 400
Course Code: 6443BPPP5W
Activiteit code: 6826

Formal Schedule
Tuesday, March 31 - May 19, 13:00-15:00 (Room 1B17)
Thursday, April 2 - May 21, 13:00-15:00 (Room 1B17)

Instructor: Michael F. Meffert
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Course Description

For general content, aims, rules, structure, and assessment of the bachelor project, please consult the general *Syllabus Bachelorproject 2014-2015* (available on Blackboard).

The bachelor project *Political Psychology* is devoted to the theme of political communication and media effects, with a substantive focus on the use and effects of social media on political attitudes and behavior. Students develop and pursue their own specific research questions but will usually contribute to and benefit from a joint data collection effort (exceptions possible).

General objectives
Students learn to formulate research questions, design research in order to answer those research questions, conduct research, analyze their data, and report their findings. The bachelor thesis is an individual end-product based on, at least in part, original empirical research.

Learning outcomes
- The ability to independently apply key concepts, theories and methods.
- The ability to independently design, conduct and report academic research.
- The development of academic writing skills.

Method of Instruction

Seminar-style group meetings and individual supervision.

Readings

All students are expected to read a selection of journal articles related to social media use and political participation (see Appendix *Core Literature List*) *before* the start of the project and submit a topical literature review based on (some of) these articles and any other source they might have found and submit it on Monday, March 30. While developing their individual research projects, students are expected to identify and read additional articles or books that are relevant for their individual topics.

Course Requirements & Assignments

The basic requirements and assignments include:
- Literature Review
- Proposal
- Bachelor Thesis (first & final version)
- Active Participation (short presentations, peer reviews, discussion, data collection)

While all components affect the course grade, the final grade is based primarily on the final version of the bachelor thesis. The latter is assessed using six criteria:
  A. Aims of the Research: Research goal, research question(s), answer of research question(s);
  B. Theory: Quantity & quality of literature (review), definition of concepts;
  C. Methods: Choice & development of method, data collection & analysis;
  D. References and Literature List;
  E. Legibility and Presentation/Lay-out: Structure, grammar & spelling, formatting;
  F. Preparation Process: Independence, originality, responsiveness to feedback.

The average grades for Parts A-C and D-F must be at least 6.0, respectively, with no individual part A-F scoring lower than 5.0.

Written Work

Format

Students may write their bachelor thesis in either Dutch or English. Unless stated otherwise, all written assignments use **12-point font** (Times New Roman), **1.5 or double line spacing**, and 3 cm page margins. Paragraphs should make logically coherent points, and a new paragraph (new line) should begin whenever a new argument starts. Note that the **first line of a paragraph is indented**, except directly after a heading. The use of a **consistent reference and citation style** (i.e. the Harvard system) is required. Footnotes should only be used to provide additional information that does not fit into the main body of the text. The main text of the thesis (excluding references and appendixes) should be no longer than 8000 words – it should essentially be very similar to an article in an academic journal. The basic structure of the final thesis should approximately look like this:

Section	Length
Title Page	1 page
Abstract (optional)	1 page, approx. 300 words
Table of Contents	1 page
Introduction (Research Question)	
Literature Review	
Theory, Concepts, & Hypotheses	max. 8.000 words
Research Methods	
Results	
Conclusion	
Literature List	as needed
Appendix	as needed

Important: All written assignments should list both the student's name and the instructor's name on the title page.

Submission

All major written assignments (literature review, proposal, first and final version of thesis) must be handed in three different formats, two directly to the instructor (**hardcopy** in office or via mailbox of administrative office and **electronic copy** by Email) as well as submitted via **Turnitin** on Blackboard. Some minor assignments are circulated by Email only (see *Seminar Schedule* below for details).

Deadlines

All deadlines are final. Written work handed in after the deadline will be considered as not submitted and will not be read or receive feedback (and receive a grade of 0, if applicable). If there are extenuating circumstances that prevent timely submission, students should immediately and *in advance* contact the instructor via Email and arrange alternatives (if available). Note that the four main deadlines for (1) literature review, (2) research proposal, and (3) first complete version and (4) final version of the bachelor thesis cannot be moved (please note the special conditions for the first complete version in the *Seminar Schedule* below). Any exemption from those cannot be given by the instructor and must be requested by the student from - and require the approval of - the examination committee.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is understood as presenting, intentionally or otherwise, someone else's words, thoughts, analyses, argumentations, pictures, techniques, computer programs, etc., as your own work. Plagiarism is not allowed and has serious consequences. Students must be familiar with Leiden University's and the Institute's rules about plagiarism. They are available at:

http://www.fsw.leidenuniv.nl/politicologie/studenten/bachelorleiden/regelingen/fraude.html

Important note: Plagiarism occurs in both of the following situations:
• Quoting and paraphrasing work from other (and outside) sources without attribution;
• Copying the work of others (i.e., other students) when completing individual assignments.

Seminar Schedule

Please note: The schedule is preliminary and subject to minor adjustments.

| Week 1 |

Mon, 30.03.15, 17:00   Deadline: Literature Review

Submission of 2000-word *Literature Review Essay* (see Appendix *Core Literature List* for details) in three formats required:
• Hardcopy to the instructor (office or mailbox).
• Electronic copy (MS Word via *Turnitin* on Blackboard)
• Electronic copy (MS Word or pdf) by Email to instructor (m.f.meffert@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)

Tue, 31.03.15   Overview & Presentation of Initial Ideas   Room: 1B17

Seminar overview, presentation of research ideas, and assessment of needs.

Thu, 02.04.15   Research Questions & Research Design   Room: 1B17

Presentation & discussion of individual research questions ("puzzle"), lecture on research design.

| Week 2 |

Tue, 07.04.15	**Workshop Theory (1): Lecture**	Room: 1B17

Lecture & discussion of development of specific research questions and hypotheses

Wed, 08.04.15, 15:00	**Deadline: Hypotheses**

Students submit short (2-3 pages) justification and statement of their research hypotheses (Submission: Blackboard)

Thu, 09.04.15	**Workshop Theory (2): Discussion**	Room: 1B17

Presentation, peer review, & discussion of individual research hypotheses

| Week 3 |

Tue, 14.04.15	**Workshop Methods (1): Lecture**	Room: 1B17

Lecture & discussion of research design, operationalization, and measurement

Wed, 15.04.15, 15:00	**Deadline: Research Design & Measurement**

Students submit short description how they operationalize and measure their key concepts incl. questionnaire (Submission: Blackboard)

Thu, 16.04.15	**Workshop Methods (2): Discussion**	Room: 1B17

Presentation, peer review, & discussion of individual research designs

Fri, 17.04.15, 17:00	**Deadline: Thesis Proposal**

Submission of 4000-word *Thesis Proposal* in three formats required:
- Hardcopy to the instructor (office or mailbox).
- Electronic copy (MS Word via *Turnitin* on Blackboard)
- Electronic copy (MS Word or pdf) by Email to instructor (m.f.meffert@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)

| Week 4 |

Tue, 21.04.15	**Coordination Meeting (1): Draft Questionnaire & Data Collection**	Room: 1B17

Development of joint questionnaire and planning of pretest and data collection

Thu, 23.04.15	**Coordination Meeting (2): Final Questionnaire & Individual Proposal Feedback**	Room: 1B17

Discussion of final questionnaire and individual proposal feedback meetings (by appointment)

| Week 5 |

Tue, 28.04.15	**Individual Meetings (by Appointment)**	Room: Office

Thu, 30.04.15	**Individual Meetings (by Appointment)**	Room: Office

| May |

Tue, 05.05.15	*Liberation Day* (university closed)

Wed, 06.05.15	**Workshop Data Analysis**	Room: 1B17

Lecture & discussion of data analysis & statistics (Note: Same time but different date compared to regular course schedule).

Thu, 07.05.15	**Individual Meetings (by Appointment)**	Room: Office

Tue, 12.05.15	**Individual Meetings (by Appointment)**	Room: Office

Thu, 14.05.15	*Ascension Day* (university closed)	

Tue, 19.05.15, 17:00	**Deadline: Bachelor Thesis (First Version)**

Important note: This deadline is one day before the official deadline in order to make timely feedback possible (due to a conference-related absence of the instructor). Submission by the official deadline is possible but will delay the feedback by a few days.

Submission of the first complete version of the 8000-word *Bachelor Thesis* in three formats is required:

- Hardcopy to the instructor (office or mailbox).
- Electronic copy (MS Word via *Turnitin* on Blackboard)
- Electronic copy (pdf) by Email to instructor (m.f.meffert@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)

Wed, 28.05.15	**Individual Feedback (by Appointment)**	Room: Office

| June |

Mon, 08.06.15, 17:00	**Deadline: Bachelor Thesis (Final Version)**

Submission of 8000-word *Bachelor Thesis* in three formats required:

- *Two* (!) hardcopies to the instructor (office or mailbox).
- Electronic copy (MS Word via *Turnitin* on Blackboard)
- Electronic copy (pdf) by Email to instructor (m.f.meffert@fsw.leidenuniv.nl)

Mon, 29.06.15 &	**Final Meeting with Instructor**	Room: Office
Tue, 30.06.15	**(by Appointment)**	

Note: Students can expect to receive an Email notification about the outcome at the latest on Monday, June 29. During a final meeting, the student receives feedback about their grade and signs the *plagiaatverklaring student* as well as the *repositoriumverklaring*.

Appendix: Core Literature List

Three important notes:
- The references listed below are all available online, usually through the Library website or in some cases freely without restrictions.
- Most of articles are empirical studies and often contain statistical analyses. You are **not** expected to understand especially the more complicated analyses in any detail, but should rather **focus on the substantive arguments** that the authors make in the text!
- Most of these articles provide details about how the research was conducted and how the key concepts were measured. This might be helpful later for your own research.

Theory: Detailed review of a key theory frequently used to explain media use.

> Ruggiero, Thomas E. 2000. "Uses and Gratifications Theory in the 21st Century." *Mass Communication and Society* 3 (1): 3–37.

Data: Two very recent studies with up-to-date data on Internet and social media use (and more) in the UK and the USA.

> Blank, Grant, and Darja Groselj. 2014. "Dimensions of Internet use: amount, variety, and types." *Information, Communication & Society* 17 (4): 417–435.

> Pew Research Center. 2014. *Political Polarization and Media Habits*. Available at: http://www.journalism.org/2014/10/21/political-polarization-media-habits/ [web & pdf].

Effects: Political and civic engagement.

> Xenos, Michael, and Patricia Moy. 2007. "Direct and Differential Effects of the Internet on Political and Civic Engagement." *Journal of Communication* 57 (4): 704–718.

Effects: Political self-efficacy and situational political involvement.

> Kushin, Matthew James, and Masahiro Yamamoto. 2010. "Did Social Media Really Matter? College Students' Use of Online Media and Political Decision Making in the 2008 Election." *Mass Communication and Society* 13 (5): 608–630.

Effects: Social capital and social media use.

> Gil de Zúñiga, Homero, Nakwon Jung, and Sebastián Valenzuela. 2012. "Social Media Use for News and Individuals' Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Political Participation." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 17 (3): 319–336.

Effects: Communication networks, strength of network ties, and civic engagement.

> Gil de Zúñiga, Homero, and Sebastián Valenzuela. 2011. "The Mediating Path to a Stronger Citizenship: Online and Offline Networks, Weak Ties, and Civic Engagement." *Communication Research* 38 (3): 397–421.

Effects: Blog readers and traditional and online forms of participation.

> Gil de Zúñiga, Homero, Aaron Veenstra, Emily Vraga, and Dhavan Shah. 2010. "Digital Democracy: Reimagining Pathways to Political Participation." *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 7 (1): 36–51.

Literature Review
Deadline: Monday, March 30, 2015

Your are expected to write a literature review based on the articles listed above and any other sources you may have found. It is important that this review is not a simple summary of each article but rather tries to evaluate the literature using one or more guiding questions such as:

- How useful is uses and gratification theory to explain the use of social media?
- Have social media changed the way citizens get political information?
- Are there effects of social media on political attitudes and political participation, and if yes, are they positive or negative?

The review can be written in English or Dutch, and the length should be around 2000 words, but this limit is more a rule of thumb than a precise requirement. What matters is the content, and more precisely, whether you are able to make a logical and compelling argument. This review should help you to develop a research question for your own research and, if done well, might already become part of your bachelor scriptie.