

POS 4734 Sec. 089G
Political Science Research Methods - Spring 2013
Tues. 8:30 - 10:25 & Thurs. 9:35 - 10:25
Room: MAT 0151

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Office Hours: Tues. 11:45 - 12:45 & Thurs. 10:30 - 11:30

Course Introduction & Objectives: In this course we will be examining the methods through which conclusions are reached in political science. This does not mean that these methods are useful exclusively for political science projects, as most methods we discuss are used commonly across the broad range of social science disciplines. However, we will be discussing methods as they pertain to analyzing political concepts. In doing so, students will be pushed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of current political science research and to develop (adequate and feasible) analytical strategies for researching empirical questions of their own interest. We will focus primarily on topics that include: theory development, conceptualization and measurement, hypothesis testing, and data analysis. While stressing the need for theories and hypotheses that are observable, we will also learn that methods used to collect and analyze data vary according to the research question.

By the end of the semester, students will learn: (1) “data analysis” can mean a variety of things, (2) the value of a research project depends on its ability to deliver a valid and reliable set of findings in response to a research question, and (3) valid and reliable findings require an adherence to particular rules of inference. The goal of political *science* is to make descriptive and explanatory inferences about the political world, using explicit and replicable methods. Inferences made about political objects are considered temporary, able to be rejected given countervailing evidence, and are valid only to the extent that they adhere to a set of rules. An intimate understanding of these rules not only allows a student to develop compelling critiques of existing research, but also to generate compelling findings of their own. Being a “good” political scientist, then, requires an intimate understanding of the methods of inquiry.

Textbooks:

- Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. 2012. *Political Science Research Methods. Seventh Edition*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1-60871-689-0
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. ISBN: 0-691-03471-0

I will be providing selected readings from a few additional books. For those of you who plan to pursue graduate school in a social science or are planning some form of advanced education, these books may be of some value to you. Among the selected readings, two books stand out. For those of you who would like to purchase them, which is of course optional, the citations are:

- Gerring, John. 2001. *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Pollock III, Phillip H. 2012. *An SPSS Companion To Political Analysis*. Fourth Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press

Course Grades

<i>Grading Scale</i>		<i>Grade Requirements</i>			
A+	100	C+	77-79	Participation	10 %
A	93-99	C	73-76	Assignments	15 %
A-	90-92	D+	67-69	Exams	20 %
B+	87-89	D	63-66	Statistics Project	20 %
B	83-86	D-	60-62	Research Design	35 %
B-	80-82	E	0-59		

- Participation
 - Students are expected to attend all classes, read all assigned materials, and contribute to class discussions. Each student’s participation grade will be based on his or her fulfillment of these tasks. Attendance will be taken randomly throughout the semester, and students will be credited for their contributions to class discussions.
- Assignments
 - Students are obligated to complete four short assignments throughout the semester. During a week of their choosing, students will read and critique research articles found in the syllabus. Students will be graded on their ability to critique concisely a given article’s conceptual model, data, or analysis.
- Exams
 - This course will have a midterm and final exam. The exams will focus mostly, though not exclusively, on the concepts and methods discussed in the main text, *Political Science Research Methods*. The first exam will focus on (1) the scientific method, (2) concepts, propositions, and variables, (3) measurement, and (4) research design, broadly. The second exam, which is *not* comprehensive, focuses on competing methods and strategies. That is to say, it will ask students to weigh the strengths and weaknesses of particular methods (e.g. experimental versus non-experimental) as they relate to particular research questions. The exams will be a mix of short and long essay.
- Statistics Project
 - Students will participate in a statistics project where they will evaluate a given research question with a dataset provided to them. Statistical analysis, though not the only method pursued in political science research, has become the central method through which conclusions are generated. This project is intended to teach students about the basics of hypothesis testing strategies in statistical analysis and its inherent limitations. I will make available to the students datasets related to the study of American politics, comparative politics, and international relations. These reflect the main sub-disciplines of political science. The three datasets are intended to be diverse enough to provide students with a short project related to their more specified interest in the discipline.

- Research Design

- All students will write a research design. The research design, developed throughout the entire semester, will provide solid grounding for those of you pursuing an honors thesis. Students will be charged with constructing a blueprint for answering a research question of their own interest. The first, and most important, step in pursuing a research design is the establishment of an empirical question. A question, that is, which is capable of being addressed with current methods focusing on observation and experience. The content of the design will consist of: (1) research question and introduction, (2) brief literature review, (3) theory and hypotheses, (4) method(s), and (5) conclusion. Although each part of the design is equally significant, emphasis will be placed on the methods section. This is where students will put to work the knowledge they have gained throughout the semester about the adequacy and feasibility of alternative methods.

General Course Outline:*

I Introduction
 II Research Questions & Literature Reviews
 III Concepts, Propositions, & Variables
 IV Measurement
 V Causation & Experimental Methods
 VI Non-Experimental Methods

Exam I, February 21

VII Sampling
 VIII Survey Research & Interviews
 IX Statistics I
 X Statistics II
 XI Direct and Indirect Observation
 XII Document Analysis
 XIII Qualitative v. Quantitative Methods

Exam II, April 18

Specific Course Outline:

Week 1. What does it mean to study politics scientifically?

January 8 Course Introduction

January 10 [Johnson and Reynolds \(2012: ch 2\)](#) &
[King, Keohane and Verba \(1994: ch 1\)](#)

Week 2. Why are some research questions “better” than others?

*Dates and topics are subject to change at instructor’s discretion.

January 15 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 3)

January 17 Knopf (2006)

Week 3. What are good hypotheses, and how are they generated?

January 22 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 4)

January 24 Parker and Dull (2009) &
Gerring (2001), selected readings

Week 4. How are social and political concepts measured?

January 29 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 5) &
King, Keohane and Verba (1994: pp 150-161)

January 31 Delli Carpini and Keeter (1993) &
Munck and Verkuilen (2002)

Week 5. What is causation? How do experimental methods establish its occurrence?

February 5 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: pp. 165-194) &
King, Keohane and Verba (1994: pp. 75-95)

February 7 Gerber, Green and Larimer (2008) &
Morton and Williams (2010), selected readings

Week 6. How can we investigate causal processes outside of the lab?

February 12 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: pp. 194-216)

February 14 Achen (1978), Miller and Stokes (1963) &
Gerring (2004)

Week 7. Catch Up, Review, & Exam I

February 19 Review

February 21 Exam I

Week 8. Why do social scientists study samples? How are valid and reliable samples constructed?

February 26 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 7)

February 28 Heaney and Rojas (2007) &
Lupia and Philpot (2005)

Week 9.

March 5 Spring Break

March 7 Spring Break

Week 10. How are surveys and interviews developed and administered?

March 12 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 10) &
Aberbach and Rockman (2002)

March 14 Carey et al. (2006) &
Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder (2008)

Week 11. Statistics I

March 19 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 11)

March 21 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 12)

Week 12. Statistics II

March 26 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 13)

March 28 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 14)

Week 13. How do social scientists directly or indirectly observe phenomena?

April 2 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 8)

April 4 Fenno (1978), selected readings

Week 14. How do social scientists systematically evaluate the written record?

April 9 Johnson and Reynolds (2012: ch 9)

April 11 Segal and Cover (1989) &
Druckman, Kifer and Parkin (2009)

Week 15. On what criteria might we choose one method over another?

April 16 Mahoney and Goertz (2006) &
Fearon and Laitin (2009)

April 18 Exam II

Week 16. Work on Research Designs

April 23 Discuss Research Designs

April 25 Reading Day

Academic Integrity & Student Conduct: Student conduct is governed by University of Florida’s *Academic Regulations* and *Student Honor Code*. All students are expected to complete their own work. Cheating of any form will not be tolerated, which of course extends to all forms of plagiarism. Questions related to course assignments, academic regulations, and the student honor code can be directed to the instructor. Students can also visit the following links for more information.

For Academic regulations, visit:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/Pages/academic-regulations.aspx>

For the Student Honor Code, visit:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/scr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Students with Disabilities: I am committed to accommodating students with disabilities. Please notify me early in the semester if you have a disability and require special accommodations. If you have questions about disability services, please consult the *Disability Resource Center* at the following website:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

References

- Aberbach, Joel D. and Bert A. Rockman. 2002. "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4):673–676.
- Achen, Christopher H. 1978. "Measuring Representation." *American Journal of Political Science* 22(3):475–510.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, Jonathan Rodden and James M. Snyder. 2008. "The Strength of Issues: Using Multiple Measures to Gauge Preference Stability, Ideological Constraint, and Issue Voting." *American Political Science Review* 102(2):215–232.
- Carey, John M., Richard G. Niemi, Lynda W. Powell and Gary F. Moncrief. 2006. "The Effects of Term Limits on State Legislatures: A New Survey of the 50 States." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 31(1):105–134.
- Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1993. "Measuring Political Knowledge: Putting First Things First." *American Journal of Political Science* 37(4):1179–1206.
- Druckman, James N., Martin J. Kifer and Michael Parkin. 2009. "Campaign Communications in U.S. Congressional Elections." *American Political Science Review* 103(3):343–366.
- Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2009. Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods. In *Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert E. Goodin. New York: Oxford University Press pp. 1166–1186.
- Fenno, Richard F. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, Inc.
- Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102(1):33–48.
- Gerring, John. 2001. *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Gerring, John. 2004. "What is a Case Study and What is it Good for?" *American Political Science Review* 98(2):341–354.
- Heaney, Michael T. and Fabio Rojas. 2007. "Partisans, Nonpartisans, and the Antiwar Movement in the United States." *American Politics Research* 35(4):431–464.
- Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. 2012. *Political Science Research Methods*. 7th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
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- Knopf, Jeffrey W. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39(1):127–132.
- Lupia, Arthur and Tasha S. Philpot. 2005. "Views from Inside the Net: How Websites Affect Young Adults' Political Interest." *The Journal of Politics* 67(4):1122–1142.

- Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz. 2006. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research." *Political Analysis* 14(3):227–249.
- Miller, Warren E. and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 57(1):45–56.
- Morton, Rebecca B. and Kenneth C. Williams. 2010. *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality: From Nature to the Lab*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Munck, Gerardo L. and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices." *Comparative Political Studies* 35(1):5–34.
- Parker, David C.W. and Matthew Dull. 2009. "Divided We Quarrel: The Politics of Congressional Investigations, 1947-2004." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 34(3):319–345.
- Segal, Jeffrey A. and Albert D. Cover. 1989. "Ideological Values and the Votes of U.S. Supreme Court Justices." *The American Political Science Review* 83(2):557–565.