

Conduct of Inquiry:
POS 6736 Section 06GG

Spring 2013
Monday Periods 5-7 (11:45 am – 2:45 pm)
Dr. Benjamin Smith
002 Anderson
352-273-2345
bbsmith@ufl.edu
benjaminbsmith.net

Office Hours: MF 8-9:30 am

Your job as a Ph.D. student in political science is to write a good dissertation. What is a good Ph.D. dissertation, and how do we know one when we see it? First, it must accomplish what Theda Skocpol describes to her own graduate students as “product differentiation.” That is, your dissertation project must establish you as an innovative scholar who has given the world a new piece of knowledge. Second, it must convince us that your flashy new product in fact provides what it promises; it does so by making clear the means by which your data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted and to some degree by sticking to accepted strategies of social scientific inquiry. More on what I mean by that later.

In short, you need an interesting and researchable question to answer, and you need the tools to answer the question feasibly and convincingly. In this course you will learn something about developing doable research questions and figuring out how best to answer them. I want to put my own methodological biases on the table by stating that to my mind research problems or questions come first. The appropriate methods to answer those questions come second. And all research methods contain their own specific logics, strengths, and weaknesses; whether scholars employ one method or multiple ones, they need to understand all three aspects and choose thoughtfully rather than to follow fads or trends. Following this course, you will begin to fill your toolbox with research skills in specialized methods classes.

You will also learn something about numerous research methods, from formal/mathematical logic to aggregate statistical data analysis to case studies and structured comparisons to reflexive critical inquiry and textual interpretation. My primary goal (and job) here is not to stuff your heads with knowledge, but to teach you a) how to recognize various strategies that scholars use to “create” or organize knowledge, b) to critique different research approaches thoughtfully and on their own terms, and c) to lay the groundwork for becoming a knowledge producer in your own right. This last one is our collective job as faculty; to help you acquire the tools to craft your own scholarly work, find meaningful employment, and go away with your Ph.D in hand.

We will spend a good portion of the semester addressing “big” questions from the three major empirical subfields of political science: American politics, comparative politics, and international relations. We will look, for a start, at how Americanists study political representation, how comparativists investigate the causes of ethnic violence, and how IR scholars explore the democratic peace thesis (i.e. that democracies don’t fight one another).

Finally, you'll learn something about some of the nuts and bolts involved in doing social science research, such as evaluating the external vs. internal validity of research, appropriate levels of analysis for inquiry, inference vs. explanation in social inquiry, and so on. Some of it is rather mechanistic and technical; that is unavoidable but worth working through.

The bulk of your grade in this course (50%) will be based on your research design, which you will develop in consultation with me according to your own research interests. Statistically speaking, most of you will not write what becomes your dissertation prospectus; that is fine. What I expect from the exercise is that you will find a viable research question that hopefully hasn't been definitively answered already (although there will probably be multiple competing answers), think long and hard about what kind of logic of inquiry your question is likely to demand, and construct a plan of action for building theory, collecting data and analyzing it. This assignment will take shape in parts. On **January 21**, you'll submit a statement of intent, outlining the topic and question based on prior consultation with me. On **March 11**, you will submit a draft of your literature review. On **March 29**, you will submit a draft of the research design itself for feedback from me and your fellow students. The "final" version is due on **April 29** at noon.

The remaining 50% of the grade will come from participation in seminar discussions (30%) and from periodic smaller assignments as indicated on the syllabus (20%). **I want to be very clear that participation grades are not a giveaway. Completion of all readings before we meet to discuss them, evidence of having read and thought about them, a willingness to engage the materials and the ideas of your colleagues, are all mandatory.** Please, take this seriously. You could write a brilliant prospectus, turn in splendid short assignments, and fail the course (i.e. earn a C, a failing graduate grade) by not actively participating in discussion. Plagiarism on any assignment will result in a failing grade for the course. If you are unclear what constitutes plagiarism, consult the UF Honor Code and this website: <http://plagiarism.org/>. All assignments other than weekly questions will be submitted in hard copy to me and electronically via turnitin.com. The course id # is 5864065 and the enrollment password is conduct. Late assignments accrue a 20% penalty the first day and 10% each additional day except in documented emergencies.

While I have endeavored to keep the readings within the bounds of an acceptably heavy graduate workload, this course is going to demand much of you, so be prepared. You should come to each class meeting with all readings and assignments completed beforehand, with your own written or typed summary of the readings, three questions to bring to the discussion (to be emailed to me by 8am each Monday morning), and a general willingness to engage the materials. Students who come unprepared are likely to be asked to leave; this is a seminar, therefore a team effort, and there is no free riding.

The following books are required and are available at local bookstores and online:

Henry Brady and David Collier, eds. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, 2nd edition (RSI)

Gary King, Robert Keohane, Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (DSI)

Steven Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*

Steward Tolnay and E.M. Beck *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930*

John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*, 2nd edition (SSM)

As you will discover in reading these books, DSI, RSI and SSM present quite different ways of thinking about social science research. This kind of spirited disagreement is simply what characterizes political science today, even within the broad approach to explanation that we call positivism.

Note: Van Evera's book, in my opinion, is at its most valuable as a guide to writing a proposal. That in mind, I've only asked you to read 2 chapters from it for discussion, but I hope that in developing your research designs you'll find it a useful reference.

A note of assurance: yes, these are all (with the exception of Tolnay and Beck) books about doing research, not books about the product of actual research, the latter of which are much more enjoyable to read. As you peruse the syllabus, you'll see that we'll consume these books in pieces alongside many article- and chapter-length examples of actual research that I hope you'll find interesting.

There are also many additional readings, drawn from academic journals and edited volumes. Since this is your first graduate seminar (at UF, at least) in research design, one important skill to learn is tracking down the materials that define the parameters of different research programs. To that end, you will need to access many of the readings through the UF libraries online system. In addition to saving you money, you'll acquire a good sense of what is available through our libraries and how to get it.

Schedule of Readings.

Readings noted as "online" can be found on the UF libraries' online access system. Reading noted as "reader" will be made available in pdf format in advance of the week during which we discuss them.

January 7. What Does it Mean to Study Politics Scientifically?

Why do we become scientists, or social scientists, and what does being a social scientist entail? How much does it seem like what we thought we were getting ourselves into when applying to grad school? An introduction to the course, the PhD program, the computer lab, and all of the rest of us. And a simple survey.

- Alan, Lightman, "A Sense of the Mysterious," *Daedalus* Fall 2003, 5-21. Online.
- Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," online at: <http://tems.umn.edu/pdf/WeberScienceVocation.pdf>
- KKV, Chapter 1.
- Brady and Collier, Chapter 2.
- Kimmo Eriksson, "The Nonsense Math Effect," *Judgment and Decision Making* 7, 6 (November 2012): 746-49.

January 14. A Primer on How to Do It, with Examples.

Today we look at some arguments about what social science actually is and take a brief look at a big question in international and comparative political economy: do oil-rich countries suffer political instability that other countries do not? What led us to think they do/do not?

- Van Evera, Chapter 1.
- John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*. Preface and Chapters 1 and 2.

- Terry Karl, "Reflections on the Paradox of Plenty," *Journal of International Affairs*, 53, 1, 31-48 Fall 1999. Online.
- Terry Karl, pre-publication communication with me (to be sent by email)
- Benjamin Smith, "Oil Wealth and Regime Survival in the Developing World, 1960-1999," *American Journal of Political Science* (2004): 232-46. Available on the research page of my website.

January 21

NOTE: Your statements of research design topic and question are due today.

Today we'll discuss conceptions of what it means to do social scientific research, beginning with what has become, rightly or wrongly, the dominant statement on the subject: King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*. We'll also take a look at a provocative statement from the field of international relations, and some efforts to subject it to serious testing.

- Gerring, chapters 3-4.
- Samuel Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* Summer 1993. Online.
- Mungiu-Pippidi and Mindruta, "Was Huntington Right? Testing Cultural Legacies and the Civilization Border," *International Politics* June 2002, 193-213. Online.
- Russett et al. "Clash of Civilizations, or Realism and Liberalism Déjà vu? Some Evidence," *Journal of Peace Research* September 2000, 583-608. Online.

January 28. Concepts and Measures: the Building Blocks of Research.

- Gerring, Chapters 5-7.
- KKV, Section 5.1
- Brady and Collier, Chapter 3.
- Michael McDonald and Samuel Popkin, "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter," *American Political Science Review* 95, 4, December 2001: 963-74. Online at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3117725>

February 4: Building Theories: Inferring vs. Explaining and Other Problems.

- Gerring, Chapters 8-10.
- Brady and Collier, Chapter 5.
- KKV, Chapter 3.

February 11. Some of the "Greatest Hits" of Research Pitfalls: Selection Bias, Validity Issues, and Choosing Levels of Analysis.

- Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, Chapter 1. Reader
- Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get," in Geddes, *Paradigms and Sand Castles* (Michigan 2003), 89-129. Reader
- Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, "Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods," *Annual Reviews of Political Science*, to be emailed.
- KKV, Section 1.2.3
- James Caporaso, "Research Design, Falsification, and the Qualitative-Quantitative Divide," *American Political Science Review* 89, 2 (June 1995), 457-60. Online

- Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 106-115. Reader
- Stephen Majeski and Shane Fricks, "Conflict and Cooperation in International Relations," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 39, No. 4. (Dec., 1995), pp. 622-645. Online.

February 18. Research Designs, Part I. Statistical Studies. The Why and How.
Meet in Computer Lab for the 2nd half of class.

- Peter Kennedy, *A Guide to Econometrics*, Introduction pp. 1-9. Reader.
- Daniel Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science*, Chapter 8 (pp 159-79). Reader.
- Jon R. Bond, "The Scientification of the Study of Politics: Some Observations on the Behavioral Evolution in Political Science," *Journal of Politics* 69, 4 (Nov. 2007), 897-907. Online.

Research workshop I. Select a research question from outside your primary field and develop a statistical mini-research design to answer that question. Be sure to state the question clearly and give compelling reasons for your choice of sample, your choice of concepts, measures and variables and for why the specific research design will answer the question. This is due in class in hard copy and by the start of class to turnitin.com.

February 25. Research Designs, Part II. Case Study and "Small-N" Studies. The Why and How.

- Van Evera, Chapter 2.
- KKV, Chapter 6.
- Brady and Collier, Chapters 10 and 11.
- Bernhard, Michael. 1993. Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central Europe," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 108, No. 2 (Summer, 1993), pp. 307-326

Research workshop II. Select a research question from outside your primary field and develop a case-driven or small-N research design to answer the question. Be sure to state the question clearly and give compelling reasons for your choice of sample, your choice of concepts, measures and variables and for why the specific research design will answer the question.

March 4: No class. Spring Break.

March 11. Research Designs, Part III. Formal Theory and Applications.
Please submit the draft literature review at the start of class.

- Kenneth Shepsle and Mark Bonchek, *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*, Chapter 2. Reader
- James Morrow, *Game Theory for Political Scientists*, Chapter 2. Reader

Research workshop III. IN CLASS we will address a number of research questions, assessing whether certain kinds of questions are amenable to formal modeling approaches and why or why not. We will develop some simple models as well.

March 18. Big Questions in American Politics: What is Representation, and How Does it Happen?

- Richard Fenno, "US House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration," *American Political Science Review* 71, 3 (Sep. 1977): 883-917. Online.
- Morris Fiorina, *Representatives, Roll Calls, and Constituencies*, Chapters 2 and 3. Reader
- Bartels, Larry 1991. Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policy Making: The Reagan Defense Buildup. *American Political Science Review* 85, 2 (June 1991):457-474. Online
- John Kingdon, *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*, Chapter 1. Reader

March 25: No class. Writing Week. Draft of Research Design due March 29, by email to me and to turnitin.com.

April 1. Big Questions in Comparative Politics: Why do some locales suffer endemic ethnic violence while others are peaceful?

- Tanja Ellingsen, "Colorful Community or Ethnic Witches' Brew?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44, 2 (2000): 228-49. Online.
- Rizal Panggabean and Benjamin Smith, "Explaining anti-Chinese Violence in Late-20th Century Indonesia," available on my research page.
- James Fearon and David Laitin, "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation," *American Political Science Review* 90, 4 (1996): 715-35. Online.

April 8. Big Questions in International Relations: Is There a Democratic Peace?

- John Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace," *International Security* 19, 2 (Autumn 1994), 87-125. Online.
- Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946-1986," *American Political Science Review* 87, 3 (September 1993), 624-38. Online.
- Henry Farber and Joanne Gowa, "Politics and Peace," *International Security* 20, 2 (Autumn 1995), 123-46. Online.
- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Randolph Siverson, "War and the Survival of Political Leaders," *American Political Science Review*, December 1995: 841-55. Online.
- Ido Oren, "The Subjectivity of the Democratic Peace: Changing U.S. Perceptions of Imperial Germany," *International Security* 20, 2 (Autumn 1995), 147-84. Online.

April 15. Safety Inspections: Putting Our Toolboxes to Use.

- Tolnay and Beck, *A Festival of Violence*.

April 22. Course conclusion.

April 29: Final draft of Research Design due by noon, both to turnitin.com and by hard copy to me at Anderson 234.