

Conduct of Inquiry

POS 6736 – Class 21726 – Spring 2026

Instructor

Michael D. Martinez

Class Periods: Wednesdays 11:45 am to 2:45 pm ET	Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00 to 4:00 pm ET
Location: Leigh Hall 0142	Office hours appointment:
Phone: (352) 273-2363	Microsoft Bookings link
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Office Location: 209 Anderson	https://ufl.zoom.us/my/mdmartinez

Catalog Description

Empirical research methodology in political science.

Course Pre-Requisites

None.

Course Materials

1. Gerring, J. (2012). *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press ***
2. King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (2021). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (New Edition). Princeton University Press ***
3. Brady, H. E., & Collier, D. (2010). *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers ***

Materials will be available through the following means:

Unless otherwise noted, all articles are available through electronic search with a UF VPN.

Special designations:

* On electronic reserve at UF Library

** Physical copy on reserve at UF Library West (two hour in-building use)

*** Available for purchase from UF Bookstore

Materials Fee

N/A

Course Goals

Course Objectives

This course provides graduate students with an introduction to research design in political science. We will cover the fundamentals of the research process starting with the formulation of research questions and the construction of research puzzles. We will then cover theory building, the derivation of hypotheses, and discuss methodological approaches.

The aim of most empirical research methods is to draw inferences, that is, use the things we know to learn about the things we do not know. We will discuss a variety of the methods social scientists use to draw inferences about politics. These include large-N quantitative analysis, small-n case studies, and experimental approaches. We will devote considerable attention to the strengths and weaknesses of the different methodological approaches we cover. This will better prepare you to critically evaluate scholarly work and equip you to undertake original research.

Student Learning Outcomes

A student who successfully completes this course will be able to

- identify theoretical approaches to the study of political science
- articulate the process of theory-building in political science
- distinguish between inference and explanation
- deduce and formulate testable hypotheses
- conceptualize abstract political phenomena and identify the implications of alternative conceptualizations
- assess the validity of measurements

- assess the internal and external validity of research designs
- identify levels of analysis in research
- craft a grant proposal to support a dissertation project

Graded Work

- Attend and participate in seminar (10% cumulative). Every person should come to seminar prepared to comment on the assigned readings. Expect to be asked for your contributions on a regular basis. Some time in seminar will be devoted to lecture, but your participation in this course should be that of an "active learner". Any absence from seminar requires a prompt explanation, and may be excused with documentation of illness, bereavement, or a University, military, or legal obligation. Students who can reasonably anticipate an absence must inform the instructor by email as soon as practical and prior to the anticipated absence. Participation is evaluated with respect to listening, preparation, quality of contributions, impact on the class, and frequency.
- Discussion questions and comments (10% cumulative) Each student will submit at least two questions or comments for discussion prior to each seminar meeting. These questions can (1) highlight an ambiguity or conflict in the readings, (2) comment on common topics addressed by multiple readings, or (3) suggest (or inquire about) an application of the readings to a particular field of political science. These are due on Canvas on 9 am on the day of seminar.
- Followup assignments (20% cumulative). These assignments will build on the concepts introduced in the previous class, and be due at 9 am on the day of seminar. In most weeks, the followup assignment will require that participants discuss how their one of their own research interests might be addressed with a different design.
- Present and Write a Research Proposal (60% total). Each participant will be required to submit a research proposal. Papers will be judged on readability, the appropriateness of the research question, and the suitability of the design for that question. Each proposal will consist of several parts. You must meet with me at least once prior to the due date for the statement of intent.
 - The initial statement of intent is due January 28 (5%).
 - The literature review is due March 4th (10%).
 - Brief presentation on research topic on March 25th (5%).
 - Presentations of research proposals will be in class on April 22 (5%).
 - Final research papers are due 6 pm Monday, April 27 (35%).

The proposal you develop for this class may not end up being the basis for your qualifying paper, dissertation prospectus, or a grant proposal – that is okay. By identifying an interesting puzzle, formulating a viable research question, evaluating existing research on the topic, proposing an explanation, and then developing a plan to collect and analyze data, you will develop critical research skills that will be valuable in the future.

Evaluation of participation

A	Strong in most categories	C	Unsatisfactory in some categories
A–	Strong in some categories	D	Unsatisfactory in nearly all categories
B	Need for development in most categories	E	Unsatisfactory in all categories

Listening

- *Strong* Actively and respectfully listens to peers and instructor
- *Needs Development* Respectful but not engaged by comments of others
- *Unsatisfactory* Projects lack of interest or disrespect for others (including browsing other materials during class, or leaving class without explanation)

Preparation

- *Strong* Arrives fully prepared with all assignments completed, and notes on reading, observations, and questions
- *Needs Development* Sometimes arrives with only superficial preparation
- *Unsatisfactory* Arrives unprepared, and little evidence of having completed or thought about assigned material

Quality of contributions

- *Strong* Comments are relevant and reflect understanding of assignments, previous remarks of other students, and insights about assigned material
- *Needs Development* Comments occasionally show lack of preparation or understanding
- *Unsatisfactory* Comments reflect little understanding of either the assignment or previous remarks in class

Impact on class

- *Strong* Comments frequently help move class discussion forward
- *Needs Development* Comments keep the conversation on track, but do little to move it forward
- *Unsatisfactory* Comments do not advance the conversation or are actively harmful to it

Frequency of participation

- *Strong* Actively participates at appropriate times
- *Needs Development* Participates when called upon, but no more
- *Unsatisfactory* Seldom participates and is generally disengaged or absent

Grading Scale

Percent	Grade	Grade Points	Percent	Grade	Grade Points
93.0 to 100.0	A	4.00	73.0 to 76.9	C	2.00
90.0 to 92.9	A-	3.67	70.0 to 72.9	C-	1.67
87.0 to 89.9	B+	3.33	67.0 to 69.9	D+	1.33
83.0 to 86.9	B	3.00	63.0 to 66.9	D	1.00
80.0 to 82.9	B-	2.67	60.0 to 62.9	D-	0.67
77.0 to 79.9	C+	2.33	0 to 59.9	E	0.00

Administrative stuff

Cell phones

Please silence and do not answer cell phones during seminar discussions. If a cell phone rings audibly during seminar discussion, the owner of the phone will be required to bring cookies or alternative healthy treats for all seminar participants at the next meeting of the seminar. (The instructor is partial to Publix Heath Bar cookies.)

General Academic Policies

For information on general academic policies, accommodations for disabilities, course evaluations, academic honesty, in-class recording, academic resources, and campus and wellness resources, click [here](#).

Weekly Reading Links

Week 1: January 14

Week 2: January 21

Week 3: January 28

Week 4: February 4

Week 5: February 11

Week 6: February 18

Week 7: February 25

Week 8: March 4

Week 9: March 11

Week 10: March 25

Week 11: April 1

Week 12: April 8

Week 13: April 15

Week 14: April 22

Course Schedule

January 14: Social Inquiry and the Scientific Method I

Readings

- Lightman, A. (2003). A Sense of the Mysterious. *Daedalus*, 132(4), 5–21
- 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
- Carsey, T. (2020). *Tom's Comments: Advice about Graduate School, Finding a Job, Reaching Tenure in Political Science and Other Social Sciences, and All of the Steps in Between**, Chapter 3.

Guest Speaker

Patricia Takacs, UF Political Science Librarian, will lead a review of general library basics (what we have and how to access), developing research questions, and some searching strategies in Library West 211 from 1:30 pm to 2:45 pm.

January 21: Social Inquiry and the Scientific Method II

Followup Assignment: Citations

For *two* of the following articles, find at least two articles published in political science journals that have cited that article. Provide the full bibliographic entry for the citing articles. (You don't have to actually read these articles. Just provide the citations. No essay explanation required.)

- Boettcher III, W. A., & Cobb, M. D. (2009). "Don't Let Them Die in Vain" Casualty Frames and Public Tolerance for Escalating Commitment in Iraq. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53(5), 677–697
- Koch, J. W. (2000). Do Citizens Apply Gender Stereotypes to Infer Candidates' Ideological Orientations? *Journal of Politics*, 62(2), 414–429
- Mitchell, S. M. (2002). A Kantian System? Democracy and Third-party Conflict Resolution. *American Journal of Political Science*, 749–759
- Shachar, A. (2000). On Citizenship and Multicultural Vulnerability. *Political Theory*, 28(1), 64–89

Readings

- Gerring, J. (2012). *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press ***, Chapters 1, 2.

- King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (2021). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (New Edition). Princeton University Press ***, Chapters 1, 2.
- Carsey, T. (2020). *Tom's Comments: Advice about Graduate School, Finding a Job, Reaching Tenure in Political Science and Other Social Sciences, and All of the Steps in Between**, Chapter 8.
- Most, B. A. (1990). Getting Started on Political Research. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 23(4), 592–596
- Hall, M. G. (1992). Electoral Politics and Strategic Voting in State Supreme Courts. *Journal of Politics*, 54(2), 427–446
- White, I. K., Laird, C. N., & Allen, T. D. (2014). Selling Out?: The Politics of Navigating Conflicts Between Racial Group Interest and Self-Interest. *American Political Science Review*, 108(4), 783–800

January 28: Concepts and Measures

Research Proposal Assignment: Statement of Intent

Your statement of intent for your research proposal should

- Introduce the topic
- State your research question clearly and concisely
- Describe the payoff from knowing the answer
- Provide an intuition about how you could advance the literature on the topic
- Suggest a theoretical link between the factors you see as consequential to the outcome of interest; and
- Provide an initial bibliography of at least 8 sources.

Readings

- Gerring, J. (2012). *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press ***, Chapters 5, 6, 7.
- King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (2021). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (New Edition). Princeton University Press ***, Section 5.1
- Adcock, R., & Collier, D. (2001). Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research. *American Political Science Review*, 95(3), 529–546
- Munck, G. L., & Verkuilen, J. (2002). Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices. *Comparative Political Studies*, 35(1), 5–34

Supplemental Readings

Each participant must read one of the following and report on its significance to the rest of the seminar.

- McDonald, M. P., & Popkin, S. L. (2001). The Myth of the Vanishing Voter. *American Political Science Review*, 95(4), 963–974
- Fariss, C. J. (2014). Respect for Human Rights Has Improved Over Time: Modeling the Changing Standard of Accountability. *American Political Science Review*, 108(2), 297–318
- Bailey, S. R., Loveman, M., & Muniz, J. O. (2013). Measures of “Race” and the Analysis of Racial Inequality in Brazil. *Social Science Research*, 42(1), 106–119
- Mondak, J. J. (1999). Reconsidering the Measurement of Political Knowledge. *Political Analysis*, 8(1), 57–82
- Postmes, T., Haslam, S. A., & Jans, L. (2013). A Single-item Measure of Social Identification: Reliability, Validity, and Utility. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(4), 597–617
- Benoit, K., Munger, K., & Spirling, A. (2019). Measuring and Explaining Political Sophistication through Textual Complexity. *American Journal of Political Science*, 63(2), 491–508
- Hamm, K. E., Hedlund, R. D., & Martorano, N. (2006). Measuring State Legislative Committee Power: Change and Chamber Differences in the 20th Century. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, 6(1), 88–111

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

Followup Assignment: Hypotheses I

1. Write an hypothesis with a non-elite individual as the unit of analysis. (Non-elites are ordinary people who do not hold leadership positions in government, business, or other major institutions. They may include voters, citizens, individual terrorists, homeless people, etc.)
2. Write an hypothesis with an elite individual as the unit of analysis. (Elites include people who hold government office, leaders of major business firms, major individual campaign contributors, heads of state and/or government, cabinet ministers/secretaries, judges, etc.)
3. Write an hypothesis with an institution as the unit of analysis. (Institutions are political or non-political organizations, and include legislatures (and their committees), national, subnational, and local governments, international organizations, churches, business firms, interest groups, parties, armies, TV stations, etc.)
4. Write an hypothesis with a country or subnational unit as the unit of analysis. (Subnational units include cities, municipalities, counties, subnational regions, states in the USA, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, and Australia, lander in Germany, provinces in Canada, cantons in Switzerland, and departments in France.)

Ideally, each of these hypotheses will be related to your statement of intent, though you should not expect that all of them will "survive" to the final research proposal.

Readings

- Gerring, J. (2012). *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press ***, Chapters 8, 9, 10.
- King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (2021). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (New Edition). Princeton University Press ***, Chapter 3
- Brady, H. E., & Collier, D. (2010). *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers ***, Chapter 5
- Lave, C. A., & March, J. G. (1993). *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC **, Chapter 2.

February 11: Pitfalls: Selection Bias, Validity Issues, and Choosing Levels of Analysis

Followup Assignment: Hypotheses II

1. Revise the hypotheses that you wrote for the previous class meeting, if necessary.
2. Write an hypothesis that includes a contextual variable.
3. Write an hypothesis that includes a conditioning variable (or implies an interaction term in a statistical model).

Readings

- Skocpol, T. (2015). *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge University Press *, Chapter 1
- Geddes, B. (2003). *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. University of Michigan Press *, pp. 89-129.
- Bennett, A., & Elman, C. (2006). Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.*, 9(1), 455–476, Chapter 5
- King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (2021). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (New Edition). Princeton University Press ***, Section 1.2.3
- Majeski, S. J., & Fricks, S. (1995). Conflict and Cooperation in International Relations. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 39(4), 622–645

February 18: Research Designs I: Experiments

Readings

- Kinder, D. R., & Palfrey, T. R. (1993). On Behalf of an Experimental Political Science. In D. R. Kinder & T. R. Palfrey (Eds.), *Experimental Foundations of Political Science* (pp. 1–39). University of Michigan Press **
- Bond, R. M., Fariss, C. J., Jones, J. J., Kramer, A. D., Marlow, C., Settle, J. E., & Fowler, J. H. (2012). A 61-million-person Experiment in Social Influence and Political Mobilization. *Nature*, 489(7415), 295–298
- Olken, B. A. (2007). Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia. *Journal of political Economy*, 115(2), 200–249
- Mattes, M., & Weeks, J. L. (2019). Hawks, Doves, and Peace: An Experimental Approach. *American Journal of Political Science*, 63(1), 53–66
- Alarian, H., & Zonszein, S. (2025). Conditional Enfranchisement: How Partisanship Determines Support for Noncitizen Voting Rights. *American Political Science Review*, 119(2), 1068–1075

February 25: Research Designs II: Observational Designs

Followup Assignment: Experiment

Re-state an hypothesis related to your statement of intent that would be testable with an experimental design. Propose an experiment to test it.

Good essays will be four to six pages. Provide a brief background on the research question, state the hypothesis, describe a proposed experiment that would test the hypothesis (sample, manipulation of the independent variable, measurement of the dependent variable), and comment on the internal and external validity of the research design.

Readings

- Bond, J. R. (2007). The Scientification of the Study of Politics: Some Observations on the Behavioral Evolution in Political Science. *Journal of Politics*, 69(4), 897–907
- Fuhrmann, M., & Horowitz, M. C. (2015). When Leaders Matter: Rebel Experience and Nuclear Proliferation. *Journal of Politics*, 77(1), 72–87
- Stratmann, T., & Baur, M. (2002). Plurality Rule, Proportional Representation, and the German Bundestag: How Incentives to Pork-barrel Differ across Electoral Systems. *American Journal of Political Science*, 46(3), 506–514
- Reller, C. (2025). How Ballot Access Laws Increase Primary Competition and Decrease Party Unity. *Party Politics*, 31(1), 112–122

- Schrodt, P. A. (2014). Seven Deadly Sins of Contemporary Quantitative Political Analysis. *Journal of Peace Research*, 51(2), 287–300

March 4: Research Designs III: Case Studies and Small Ns

Research Proposal Assignment: Literature Review

Review the literature relevant to your question. Include at least six sources, indicating how this literature has developed, and who is on which side of theoretical or methodological debates. Pay particular attention to concepts, measurements, case selection, and methods.

Readings

- Crasnow, S. (2012). The Role of Case Study Research in Political Science: Evidence for Causal Claims. *Philosophy of Science*, 79(5), 655–666
- Doner, R. F., Ritchie, B. K., & Slater, D. (2005). Systemic Vulnerability and The Origins of Developmental States: Northeast and Southeast Asia in Comparative Perspective. *International organization*, 59(2), 327–361
- Elman, C. (2004). Extending Offensive Realism: The Louisiana Purchase and America's Rise to Regional Hegemony. *American Political Science Review*, 98(4), 563–576
- Mahoney, J. (2003). Strategies of Causal Assessment in Comparative Historical Analysis. In J. Mahoney & D. Rueschemeyer (Eds.), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (pp. 337–372). Cambridge University Press *

March 11: What Does it Mean to be an (Un)Ethical Social Scientist?

Followup Assignment: Observational or Case Study (or “Small-N”) Analyses

Submit one of the following:

1. Propose a study that would be testable with an observational design. What control variables would be important? Would the inclusion of those control variables help to establish the internal validity, external validity, neither, or both?
2. Propose a study related to your statement of intent that would be testable with a case study or small N design. How would that study complement an experimental or observational study?

Readings

- Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioral Study of Obedience. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67(4), 371

- Johnson, J. B. (2018). Protecting the Community: Lessons from the Montana Flyer Project. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 51(3), 615–619
- Fujii, L. A. (2012). Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 45(4), 717–723
- Cronin-Furman, K., & Lake, M. (2018). Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 51(3), 607–614
- Michelson, M. R. (2016). The Risk of Over-reliance on the Institutional Review Board: An Approved Project is Not Always an Ethical Project. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 49(2), 299–303

Optional Readings

- Humphreys, M. (2015). Reflections on the Ethics of Social Experimentation. *Journal of Globalization and Development*, 6(1), 87–112
- Phillips, T. (2021). Ethics of field experiments. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 24(1), 277–300

March 18: Give Me a (Spring) Break!

March 25: Theory and Method Workshop

Followup Assignment: IRB Training

Complete Institutional Review Board training at <http://irb.ufl.edu/index/requiredtraining.html>

After completing the training, go to MyTraining, and select "training transcript". Select the icon to the left of the IRB Training course. When your certificate of completion pops up, export to pdf and upload that pdf file.

Research Proposal Assignment: Brief presentation on research topic

Each student will do a brief presentation (8-10 minutes). After introducing their research question, students will provide a theoretical statement about the political process they are studying, from which we can derive more expectations. In their presentation, students should identify scope conditions (to whom the theory applies, when, and why). Students should also explain what methodological approach they believe would be most conducive to testing their theory.

April 1: Diverse Approaches in American

Readings

- Fenno Jr, R. F. (1977). US House members in their Constituencies: An Exploration. *American Political Science Review*, 71(3), 883–917

- Kingdon, J. W. (1973). *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*. University of Michigan Press **, Chapter 1
- Cayton, A., & Dawkins, R. (2022). Incongruent Voting or Symbolic Representation? Asymmetrical Representation in Congress, 2008–2014. *Perspectives on Politics*, 20(3), 916–930
- Costa, M. (2021). Ideology, Not Affect: What Americans Want from Political Representation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 65(2), 342–358

April 8: Diverse Approaches in Comparative

Readings

- Cederman, L.-E., Wimmer, A., & Min, B. (2010). Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis. *World Politics*, 62(1), 87–119
- Varshney, A. (2001). Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond. *World Politics*, 53(3), 362–398
- McClendon, G. H. (2016). Race and Responsiveness: An Experiment with South African Politicians. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 3(1), 60–74
- Posner, D. N. (2004). The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi. *American Political Science Review*, 98(4), 529–545

April 15: Diverse Approaches in International Relations

Readings

- Owen, J. M. (1994). How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace. *International Security*, 19(2), 87–125
- Maoz, Z., & Russett, B. (1993). Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946–1986. *American Political Science Review*, 87(3), 624–638
- Tomz, M. R., & Weeks, J. L. (2013). Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace. *American Political Science Review*, 107(4), 849–865
- Oren, I. (1995). The Subjectivity of the "Democratic" Peace: Changing US Perceptions of Imperial Germany. *International Security*, 20(2), 147–184

April 22: Workshopping Research Designs

Research Proposal Assignment: Full presentation on research topic

Each participant will orally present the draft research proposal. The order of the presentations will be randomly determined, but announced before the presentation date.

Presentations may utilize the overhead projector and software of your choice (Adobe, Powerpoint, Prezi, or something else). Presentations should include

1. an introduction to the research question which grabs attention and quickly orients audience to the overall purpose of the study;
2. an orientation to the literature, which explains its development or sorts into “camps”;
3. a clearly defined, testable research question, which is placed in the context of the literature;
4. a research design that
 - states one or more testable hypotheses;
 - proposes the basic strategy for testing those hypotheses (experiment, field experiment, historical analysis, case study, etc.);
 - articulates strategies for sampling or case selection, measurement, observation, and causal inference;
 - highlights the strengths in internal validity, external validity, or both.
5. a conclusion that highlights the value of the research in the context of the academic literature or the practical value of the research, as well as the challenges

Presentations should be confident, well-structured, clear, and geared toward an intelligent audience of political scientists who are not experts in the subfield.

Each participant (and Martinez) will evaluate the other presentations, and offer suggestions for improvement before the final submission.

Monday, April 27

Research Proposal Assignment: Final papers due on Canvas at 6 pm

This paper should be in the form of a 10-page (single-spaced) research proposal that meets the requirements of a “project description” for an [APSA Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant](#).