
PSCI 6350: Logic, Scope and Methodology of Political Science

Course Information

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Fall 2013

GR 3.606

Professor Contact Information

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Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

(including required prior knowledge or skills)

None. Admission to the M.A. or Ph.D. program is qualification since this is considered one of the foundational courses for the Political Science graduate program.

Course Description

This course introduces graduate and professional level political science research processes. It covers how and why research projects are conducted, and when and why research programs cease to contribute to knowledge production. Students are introduced to how the research process can be developed using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

By the end of this course students should master the following research-related tasks:

- Be able to define and classify political science research into the major traditions and approaches used in the literature.
- Define and specify a research question, testable set of hypotheses related to this question, and establish a research design that can be executed to evaluate the question and hypotheses.
- Describe, defend, and explain a relevant research design and approach to test, validate or generate predictions based on the hypotheses related to a research design in political science.

- Write a research review and proposal that presents the student's main research question and the design to address it. Further, this research should be presented orally with both written and oral feedback.
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Required Textbooks and Materials

KKV: King, Gary, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

CS: Campbell, Donald and Julian Stanley. 1963. *Experimental and Quasi-experimental Design For Research*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

BC: Brady, Henry and David Collier, eds. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Diesing: Diesing, Paul. 1991. *How Does Social Science Work? Reflections on Practice*.

Assignments & Academic Calendar

(Topics, Reading Assignments, Due Dates, Exam Dates)

August 27: Initial Organizational Class

We will spend the first week getting to know each other and talk about research interests. Also, we will outline how the class is going to work and what we will be doing and covering over the course of the term.

September 3: What is Social Science and Political Science?

This we will review what the social sciences, broadly, and what political science in particular are about. This is the "scope" part of the class since we will look at discuss the boundaries of what political inquiry covers and how we should be thinking about as relevant to political science.

Almond, G. 1988. "Separate Tables: Schools and Sects in Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 21(4):828-42.

Grant, J. Tobin. 2005. "What Divides Us? The Image and Organization of Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 28(July): 379-86.

Gunnell, J.G. 2005. "Political Science on the Cusp: Rediscovering a Discipline's Past." *American Political Science Review*. 99(4):597-610.

September 10: Asking Questions

How do you ask good questions about politics? This is one of the hardest parts of social science inquiry, since badly formed research questions doom an inquiry. Is the question interesting? Why and how? Is the question about process or outcome? How does good research develop questions and how are these related to real world problems?

Lawrence Mead, "Scholasticism in Political Science," *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 2 (June 2010), 453-64

September 17: Kinds of Political Research

What makes political research compelling and interesting? How does it vary from simple arm-chair analysis or punditry? Here we think about how methodologists think about these questions and how they apply their tools to style and craft political research.

KKV: Chapter 1.

BC: Chapters 3 & 5.

Shively, W. "Chapter 2: Political Theories and Research Topics" *The Craft of Political Research*. 9th Edition. Pearson.

September 24: Causal Thinking and Models

Many political inquiries are studies of how and why political behaviors and outcomes occur. This is a call for evaluating explanations or what causes something to happen. What is causal inference? How else might we think about judging political studies? Is causality even a useful standard for political research?

KKV: Chapter 3

BC: pp 205-312.

Ward, Michael D., Brian D. Greenhill, and Kristin M. Bakke. "The perils of policy by p-value: Predicting civil conflicts." *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 4 (2010): 363-375.

October 1: Theory and Hypotheses

So question in hand, how do you answer it? You normally come up with a theory and some hypotheses that offer an explanation for your question. This goes from a general theory or approach to a possible explanation via the hypotheses. These are then "testable implications" of your theory or model. This week we look at how you think about hypotheses and start to think about getting data to evaluate them.

Clarke, K.A. and D.M. Primo. 2007. "Modernizing Political Science: A Model-Based Approach." *Perspectives on Politics*. 5(4):741-55.

Lave, C. and J. March. "Chapter 2: An Introduction to Speculation." *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975. 7

Lave, C. and J. March. "Chapter 3: The Evaluation of Speculations." *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.

October 8: Concepts and Measurement

What is a concept? How do you develop it and turn it into a measure of the data you need to test hypotheses? How are concepts and variables connected to each other? This week looks at how theories and concepts and measurement are related to each other.

Shively, P. "Chapter 3: The Importance of Dimensional Thinking." *The Craft of Political Research*. 9th Edition. Pearson.

Collier, D. and J. Mahon, Jr. 1993. "Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Review*. 87(4): 845-55.

KKV: Chapter 2

Adcock, R. and D. Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review*. 95(3):529-46.

Bollen, K. and R. Jackman. 1989. "Democracy, Stabilities, and Dichotomies." *American Sociological Review*. 54:612-21.

Elkins, Z. 2000. "Gradations of Democracy? Empirical Tests of Alternative Conceptualizations." *American Journal of Political Science*. 44:293-300.

POLITY Codebook: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>

Marshall, Monty G. "The Measurement of Democracy and the Means of History." *Society* 48, no. 1 (2011): 24-35.

Trier, Shawn, and Simon Jackman. (2008) Democracy as a Latent Variable. *American Journal of Political Science* **52**: 201–217.

October 15: Research Design I, Experiments and Internal Validity

So you have a question and measures of the variables in your hypotheses. How do you test the hypotheses? Determining the causal linkages across data is related to what is known as experimental design. The experimental design approach allows one to maximize control via randomization. This is rarely possible in political science. But political science can and should draw on this tradition and it informs standard research practice in important ways.

CS: pp. 1-33.

Druckman, J.N., D.P. Green, J.H. Kuklinski, and A. Luipa. 2006. "The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science." *American Political*

Science Review. 100(4):627-36.

McDermott, R. 2002. "Experimental Methodology in Political Science." *Political Analysis*. 10(4):325- 61.

October 22: Research Design II, Quasiexperiments and observational design

So how does one design the collective of quantitative or qualitative studies that use observational or quasi-experimental designs? This week we focus on the more commonly used "non" experimental approach to social science research. We will look at several design choices and talk about how data can be collected and observed for causal model inferences.

BC: Part F, pages 245—312.

CS, pp. 34-71.

KKV: Chapters 4 and 5

Imbens, Guido and Thomas Lemieux. 2007. "REGRESSION DISCONTINUITY DESIGNS: A GUIDE TO PRACTICE" Technical Working Paper 337. NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH. <http://www.nber.org/papers/t0337.pdf>

October 29: Case Selection and Data Gathering

How do you decide which cases should go into your analyses? That is which observations should you use and which (rightly or wrongly) should be excluded from a study? How do these choices affect the validity, biases, and efficiency of your research and affect the hypotheses you can test and evaluate?

KKV: Chapter 6

Slantchev, B., A. Alexandrova, and E. Gartzke. 2005. "Probabilistic Causality, Selection Bias, and the Logic of the Democratic Peace." *American Political Science Review*. 99(3):459-62.

Geddes, B. 1990. "How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics." *Political Analysis*. 2: 131-50.

Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz. 2004. "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review*. 98(4):633-52.

Brandt, Patrick T., John R. Freeman, Tse-min Lin, and Phillip A. Schrodtt. 2013. "Forecasting Conflict in the Cross-Straits: Long Term and Short Term Predictions." Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, August 2013.

November 5: Quantitative Studies

How does one begin designing the collection of quantitative data? How do you make selection decisions for existing quantitative data? How does one assess whether a given dataset actually measures the concepts and variables specified?

BC: Chapter 4

Prior, M., and A. Lupia. 2008. "Money, Time, and Political Knowledge: Distinguishing Quick Recall and Political Learning Skills." *American Journal of Political Science*. 52(1):169-83.

GDELT: <http://gdelt.utdallas.edu>

CAMEO Codebook:

<http://gdelt.utdallas.edu/data/documentation/CAMEO.Manual.1.1b3.pdf>

November 12: Qualitative Studies

Qualitative studies also use data. The nature of the data and observations may not often be fully quantifiable however. What are best practices for qualitative studies and gathering qualitative impressions? How does one engage in qualitative study that has the rigor to then be called scientific?

BC: Chapters 6 & 7.

Fenno, R. "Appendix - Notes on Method: Participant Observation." *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. pp. 249-55, 274-95.

Geertz, C. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

November 19: Epistemology and Philosophy of Social Science

Social sciences do not operate in a vacuum, but rather they inform each other and play a broader role in societal and academic debates. How has the history of science informed what we do and where does political science and the social sciences fit into this framework?

Diesing, all.

November 26: No class, Fall Break**December 3: Research Presentations****December 10: Research Presentations**

Grading Policy

(including percentages for assignments, grade scale, etc.)

Grades for this course are based on the following components

- 15% Participation (every week)
- 20% Exam (Likely to be in late October, take-home)
- 5% Research assignment 1: Research article summary, September 17
- 5% Research assignment 2: Question identification, September 24
- 5% Research assignment 3: Theory and research hypotheses, October 8
- 5% Research assignment 4: Testing the hypotheses, October 15
- 5% Research assignment 5: Research technique selection, November 12
- 5% Research assignment 6: Rough draft of paper, November 19
- 10% Presentation, December 3 or 10
- 25% Research Design Paper, December 11

The dates the assignment due dates and assignment descriptions are given above. Each of the 5% components are around a 2-5 page written assignment (double-spaced with references in addition.) The Research Design Paper will be a 20-25 page research proposal that mimics a dissertation or thesis proposal. Writing the components of the assignments should give you most of the materials for your final research paper (and of course you should have edited and revised this to reflect the comments you receive during the term!)

Course & Instructor Policies

(make-up exams, extra credit, late work, special assignments, class attendance, classroom citizenship, etc.)

The following rules apply in class:

1. Turn off your cell phone. It is VERY distracting to others. "Off" means that it does not ring OR vibrate. I will ask you to leave if your phone rings. (Exceptions to this policy can be made, come to talk to me.)
2. Do not fall asleep. It is rude and distracting. Bring coffee if you need it (I do.)
3. Be polite and courteous to your fellow students.
4. You are responsible for things: therefore if you miss something I announced or fail to complete an assignment, my response will be "How is this my problem?"
5. Note that this syllabus is not a contract. It is subject to change at my discretion.
6. Class starts at 4:00pm. Not 4:15. Be here on time.
7. Respect my time and I will respect yours. We are both busy. (I run two websites, contribute to a blog, tweet research, and run four research servers for my work.)
8. *You are expected to be pro-active in anticipating and planning for any absences or problems you will have in completing course work.* Make arrangements for possibly missed work prior to the due date is preferable and more likely to be

successful than doing it after the due date.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.