

Course Information

PSCI Logic, Scope, and Methodology in Political Science
Fall 2016, Th 1-4 pm
ROOM

Professor Contact Information

Instructor: Tom Brunell
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Office Hours:

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 qualifies as this is a foundational course 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 productions. 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.

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*.

Grading Policy

Participation 15%

Take home exam 20% (late Oct-early Nov)

Assignment #1 5%: article summary, Sept 15

Assignment #2 5%: question identification, Sept 22

Assignment #3 5%: Theory and research hypotheses, Oct 6

Assignment #4 5%: Testing the hypotheses, Oct 13

Assignment #5 5%: Research technique selection, Nov 10

Assignment #6 5%: Rough draft of paper, Nov 17

Presentation 10%, Nov 17 or Dec 1

Research Design Paper 25%, Dec 10

Assignments & Academic Calendar

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

August 25: 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.

Sept 1: 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.

Sept 8 Asking Questions

How do you come up with and ask good questions about politics? This can be difficult and a badly formulated question can ruin a project from the outset. Is the question interesting? Why and how? Is the question a process or an outcome? Is it related to a real world problem? Advanced pro-tip – will the resulting paper be published?

Lave and March, 1975, Ch 1-3

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

Getmansky, Anna, and Thomas Zeitzoff. "Terrorism and voting: The effect of rocket threat on voting in Israeli elections." *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 03 (2014): 588-604.

Sept 15 Different 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.

Sept 22 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.

Broockman, David E. (2009) "Do Congressional Candidates Have Reverse Coattails? Evidence from a Regression Discontinuity Design," *Political Analysis* 17(4): 18–434.

Sept 29 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.

Smith and Brunell. 2010. “Special Elections to the US House of Representatives: A General Election Barometer?” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 35(2): 283-297.

Boix and Rosenbluth. 2014. “Bones of Contention: The Political Economy of Height Inequality.” *American Political Science Review* 1-21.

Oct 6 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.

Ansolabehere, Hansen, Hirano, and Snyder. "The Decline of Competition in US Primary Elections, 1908-2004." Manuscript

Buchler, Justin. 2011. Chapter 2 of *Hiring and Firing of Public Officials*. Oxford University Press.

Oct 13 Research Design I, Experiments and Internal Validity and Replication

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.

Gary King. 1995. "[Replication, Replication](#)." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 28: 444-452, September. Copy at <http://j.mp/jCyfF1>

Oct 20 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

Oct 27 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.

Nov 3 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.

Nov 10 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.

Nov 17 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.

Nov 24 – No Class Thanksgiving break

Dec 1 – Student presentations

General rules:

1. Be prepared for each class (do the reading, be here on time).
 2. Turn your phone on vibrate.
 3. Be polite to your fellow students.
 4. The syllabus may change at my discretion.
 5. Try not to miss any classes, but if you do, be pro-active by completing your assignments and letting me know why you are missing class.
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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>