

Course description

This course will help you understand how we study politics and provide guidance on conducting original political science research. We will discuss the challenges that all political science researchers face with the core issues of research design. A research design is a plan that specifies how you plan to carry out a research project and how you expect to use your evidence to answer your research question. This course aims to provide an overview of potential research designs for establishing causal inference and their advantages and disadvantages. Students should understand the trade-offs involved in choosing a particular research design. Students are expected to develop their own ideas about potential research questions to be able to actively participate in seminars within this course. The language of this course is English, including all instruction, readings and assignments.

Course requirements

I expect you to prepare the readings in advance so that you can come to class with particular questions in mind. You will learn primarily by reading and then discussing that material with your instructor and classmates. The more actively you participate in the discussions the easier it will be to comprehend the material. All readings are provided in advance. In addition to regular attendance and active class participation, you are also required to write a research design suitable for a realisable research project, present this research design to your peers as well as read and provide feedback on the proposed research of others on the course. You must pass every assignment in order to pass the course.

1. Research Proposal

I expect you to devise a research question and write a short draft research proposal. This proposal should demonstrate your competence in applying some of the issues covered in this course to the design of a potential research project (one suitable for a Master's thesis) that will address your research question. This exercise should be of help for a future Master's thesis and I suggest emphasizing design, methods and potential analysis more than demonstrating an in-depth knowledge of the research area (i.e. try to avoid an overly long literature review). Note that this should be an original paper for this course and cannot overlap in any substantial way with a paper written for another course. For this class I will be looking for a project that is well defined and feasible as well as methodologically sound.

2. Research Design and feedback (Pass/Fail)

Besides reading and discussing the material, an effective way to gain a better understanding for issues relating to research design is to provide and receive constructive criticism. To this end you will write a summary of a research design, which will form the larger research proposal due later in the semester. This summary will be no more than three pages in length. These short research designs will then be circulated to the rest of the class and you will provide constructive criticism for a selection of your colleagues.

3. Presentation and feedback (Pass/Fail)

Presenting one's work is an essential part of not only academic life, but many other careers. Presenting ongoing research is one of the principal methods that academics use to communicate and improve their work. For the final few weeks of the semester, you will be presenting the work you are doing for the final paper for this course and receiving feedback from your peers on how you might improve your project. The short presentation will outline your research question, research design and strategy for realising the project. More details and a schedule will be given in class during the semester.

4. Collaborative reading assignments (ungraded)

While reading is probably the most valuable and frequent method by which we engage with new material, it can feel like rather a solitary way to learn. To try and counter this, we will attempt to make the usually solitary activity of reading for class more interactive by using Perusall. This allows class participants to annotate the class reading with questions, observations, criticism, etc. that can be read by all other members of the class. While you are reading you can ask and answer questions with your classmates preparing for the same class. While there will be no set assignments on Perusall, I will monitor its use regularly and we will discuss issues that emerge from the site each week. Students who engaged most extensively with Perusall over the past two years also tended to get better grades on the course than students who engaged less and far better than those who did not engage at all.

Reading

Week 1: Introduction

Kellstedt, Paul & Guy Whitten. 2018. The Scientific Study of Politics. In *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research* 3rd ed., Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1-22.

Kellstedt, Paul & Guy Whitten. 2013. Putting It All Together to Produce Effective Research. In *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research* 2nd ed., Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 273-293.

King, Gary. 2020. So You're a Grad Student Now? Maybe You Should Do This. In Franzese & Curini eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science and International Relations*, London, UK: Sage, 1-4.

Week 2: Developing Research Questions

Powner, Leanne. 2015. From Research Topic to Research Question. In *Empirical Research and Writing*, London, UK: Sage, 1-19.

Green, Nicola & Paul Stoneman. 2016. Formulating and Refining a Research Question. In Gilbert & Stoneman eds. *Researching Social Life* 4th ed., London, UK: Sage, 44-54.

King, Gary, Robert Keohane & Sidney Verba. 1994. The Science in Social Science. In *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 3-33.

Week 3: Conceptualization and Measurement

Gerring, John. 2011. Measurements. In *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 155-194.

Gerring, John & Dino Christenson. 2017. Concepts and Measures. In *Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 31-46.

Wonka, Arndt. 2007. Concept Specification in Political Science Research. In Gschwend & Schimmelfennig, eds. *Research Design in Political Science: How to Practice What They Preach*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 41-61.

Week 4: Case Selection

Abadie, Alberto, Alexis Diamond & Jens Hainmueller. 2015. Comparative Politics and the Synthetic Control Method. *American Journal of Political Science* 59(2): 495-510.

Geddes, Barbara. 1990. How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics. *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150.

King, Gary, Robert Keohane & Sidney Verba. 1994. Determining What to Observe. In *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 115-149.

Week 5: Causal Inference

De Vaus, David. 2001. Causation and the Logic of Research Design. In *Research Design in Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, USA: Sage, 34-52.

King, Gary; Robert Keohane & Sidney Verba. 1994. Causality and Causal Inference. In *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 75-91.

Peters, B. Guy. 2022. Can We Be Casual about Being Causal? *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis* 24(1): 73-86.

Week 6: Experimental Design

Bol, Damien. 2019. Putting Politics in the Lab: A Review of Lab Experiments in Political Science. *Government and Opposition* 54(1): 167-190.

McDermott, Rose. 2002. Experimental Methodology in Political Science. *Political Analysis* 10(4): 325-342.

McDermott, Rose, Dustin Tingley & Peter Hatemi. 2014. Assortative Mating on Ideology Could Operate Through Olfactory Cues. *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 997-1005.

Week 7: Quasi-experimental Design

Dunning, Thad. 2012. Regression-Discontinuity Designs. In *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences: A Design-based Approach*. Cambridge University Press, 63-86.

Green, Jane. 2010. Points of Intersection between Randomized Experiments and Quasi-Experiments. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 628(1): 97-111.

Sovey, Allison & Donald Green. 2011. Instrumental Variables Estimation in Political Science: A Readers' Guide. *American Journal of Political Science* 55(1): 188-200.

Week 8: Statistical Control

Clarke, Kevin. 2005. The Phantom Menace: Omitted Variable Bias in Econometric Research. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 22(4): 341-352.

Jacobsmeier, Matthew & Daniel Lewis. 2013. Barking up the Wrong Tree: Why Bo Didn't Fetch Many Votes for Barack Obama in 2012. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46(1): 49-59.

Sieberer, Ulrich. 2007. Selecting Independent Variables: Competing Recommendations for Factor-Centric and Outcome-Centric Research Designs. In Gschwend and Schimmelfennig, eds. *Research Design in Political Science*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 163-182.

Week 9: Case Studies

Gerring, John. 2004. What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for? *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 341-354.

Gerring, John & Rose McDermott. 2007. An Experimental Template for Case Study Research. *American Journal of Political Science* 51(3): 688-701.

Moses, Jonathon & Torbjørn Knutsen. 2012. The Comparative Method. In *Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research* 2nd ed. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 94-115.

Week 10: Mixed Methods

Lieberman, Evan. 2005. Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research. *American Political Science Review* 99(3): 435-452.

Rohlfing, Ingo. 2008. What You See and What You Get – Pitfalls and Principles of Nested Analysis in Comparative Research. *Comparative Political Studies* 41(11): 1492-1514.

Evertsson, Nubia. 2017. A Nested Analysis of Electoral Donations. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 11(1): 77-98.

Week 11: Replication & Publication

King, Gary. 1995. Replication, Replication. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 28(3): 444-452.

Herrnson, Paul. 1995. Replication, Verification, Secondary Analysis, and Data Collection in Political Science. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 28(3): 452-455.

Key, Ellen. 2016. How are we doing? Data Access and Replication in Political Science. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 49(2): 268-272.

King, Gary. 2006. Publication, Publication. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(1): 119-125.

Schwartz, Martin. 2008. The Importance of Stupidity in Scientific Research. *Journal of Cell Science* 121: 1771.

Thunder, David. 2004. Back to Basics: Twelve Rules for Writing a Publishable Article. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37(3): 493-495.

Zigerell, Lawrence. 2013. Rookie Mistakes: Preemptive Comments on Graduate Student Empirical Research Manuscripts. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46(1): 142-146.

Week 12-14: Research Design Presentations