

L32-3002: Research Methods for the Social Sciences

This course provides an introduction to qualitative and quantitative research methods in the social sciences. Topics address issues related to both theory building (eg, case studies and formal models) and theory testing (eg, observational studies, experiments, and simulations). The central focus of this course is on theoretical and practical issues regarding the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to original research. The goals of this course are: 1) to enable students to critically analyze scholarly articles with particular attention to issues arising from the research design; and 2) to guide students in the construction of an optimal research design for a project they will or might complete in subsequent semesters (such as a senior honors thesis or an independent research project).

EXPECTATIONS/REQUIREMENTS:

Students are expected to come to each class having read the assignments for that day ahead of time and to participate in the class discussions. All students must submit their assignments on time. Powerpoint slides will be made available to students.

READINGS

Reading assignments include two types: (1) methodological readings, and (2) applied readings in the social sciences. The applied readings initially specified on this syllabus will be replaced by ones chosen to match the interests of the participants in the class.

WRITTEN REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

The course requires the submission of the following papers by the class Sessions indicated. They will be weighted in the final grade as indicated:

A. Problem Statement (1-2 pages):	Session 2	0%
B. Background Paper (2-3 pages):	Session 4	5%
C. Bibliography (1-2 pages):	Session 6	5%
D. Critique of One Article (1-2 pages):	Session 8	10%
E. Literature Review (5-6 new pages):	Session 10	25%
F. Research Design, General (1-2 pages):	Session 12	15%
G. Research Design, Complete (3-4 new pages):	End of Semester	30%

OR

D. Literature Review (6-8 pages)	Session 8	15%
E. Research Design, Complete (6-8 pages)	Session 11	25%
F. Data Analysis, Draft (5-10 pages)	Session 14	15%
G. Research Paper, Complete	End of Semester	25%

Participation will account for the remaining 10% of the grade.

NOTE: Readings on this syllabus are tentative, and largely drawn from the exceptional syllabus developed by Prof. Dawn Brascati for Political Science 495 for the Spring 2011 semester. As the semester unfolds, the readings may change, but the topics will not, and the over-all reading load will not increase materially.

Session 1: RESEARCH METHODS: PURPOSE AND GOALS

Topics/Questions: What is methodology? Why does it matter? How does the method we use shape the answers that we get? Is there a best method? What is the scientific method?

Method Readings:

***Almond, Gabriel and Stephen Genco. 1977. Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of World Politics. *World Politics* 29:(4): 489-522. Read pp. 489-511.

***Rehfeld, Andrew. 2010. "Offensive Political Theory." *Perspectives on Politics* (2010), 8:465-486

Session 2: RESEARCH TOPIC/QUESTION SELECTION

Topics/Questions: What is the difference between a research question and a research puzzle? What makes a good topic? How to find a good topic? What are the differences between problem-driven versus method-driven approaches? Which is superior?

Method Readings:

***Krugman, Paul. 1993. How I Work. *The American Economist*. 37(2): 25-31. Biography:

http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economics/laureates/2008/krugman.html

***Zinnes, Dina A. 1980. Three Puzzles in Search of a Researcher: Presidential Address. *International Studies Quarterly* 24 (3): 315-342. Read only pp. 319-326.

***Steven I Jackson, *Doing Research Right (Rough Draft)*, Chapters 3, 4, and 8

Applied Readings:

***Gilbert Thomas Stephenson, "Racial Distinctions in Southern Law," *The American Political Science Review*, (1,1), Nov. 1906.

Session 3: CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT

Topics/Questions: What is the difference between a concept and a measure? What is concept overstretching? When is a measure valid?

Method Readings:

***Best, Joel. *Damned Lies and Statistics: Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politicians and Activists*. University of California Press. Chapter 5.

***Steven I Jackson, *Doing Research Right (Rough Draft)*, Chapter 5

Applied Readings:

***Lijphart, Arend. 1996. Puzzle of Indian Democracy. *American Political Science Review* 90 (June): pp. 258-268.

Session 4: CAUSALITY

Topics/Questions: What is causality? Can we demonstrate it in social science research and how? What are the following terms: tautology, spuriousness and endogeneity?

Method Readings:

- ***Davis, James. 1985. *The Logic of Causal Order*. London: Sage Publications. Read pp. 1-34.
- ***King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton University Press. Read pp 99-107.
- ***Steven I Jackson, *Doing Research Right (Rough Draft)*, Chapter 6.

Applied Readings:

- ***Boyd, Christina L., Lee Epstein, and Andrew D. Martin. "Untangling the Causal Effects of Sex on Judging." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(2): 389-411.

Session 5: FORMAL MODELS/GAME THEORY

Topics/Questions: What are the assumptions of rational choice theory? Are these assumptions realistic? Does it matter if they are not? When are formal models most/least effective?

Method Readings:

- ***Binmore, Ken. 1999. *Fun and Games*. 1992. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Read pp 3-13 and 16-19.
- ***Opp, Karl-Dieter. 1999. *Contending Conceptions of the Theory of Rational Action*. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 11(2) 171-202
- ***Steven I Jackson, *Doing Research Right (Rough Draft)*, Chapter 7

Applied Readings:

- ***Dixit, Avinash and Susan Skeath. 1999. *Games of Strategy*. W.W.Norton Company. Read pp. 471-487.

Session 6: CASE STUDY METHODS

Topics/Questions: How are qualitative methods and case studies useful? What are their limitations? What is the best case study method?

Method Readings:

- ***Caramani, David. 2008. *Introduction to Comparative Method with Boolean Algebra*. Sage Publications. Read pp. 16-24; pp. 45-49; pp.52-55.
- ***Steven I Jackson, *Doing Research Right (Rough Draft)*, Chapters 11-12

Applied Readings:

- ***Berman, Sheri. 1997. *Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic*, *World Politics*, 49 (3): 401-429.

Session 7: CASE SELECTION, SELECTION BIAS AND COUNTERFACTUALS

Topics/Questions: What are the best principals to follow when choosing case studies to examine? What does the term selection bias mean and what problems arise from it? What is a counterfactual? What purpose can counterfactuals serve in research? When are counterfactuals useful and what constitutes a good counterfactual?

Method Readings:

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

***Fearon. James. 1991. Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science *World Politics* 43(2): 169-195.

Applied Readings:

***Fosse, Ethan and Neill Gross. 2010. "Why are Professors Liberal?," Unpublished Manuscript.

***Stewart, Charles and Barry Weingast. 1992. "Stacking the Senate, Changing the Nation: Republican Rotten Boroughs, Statehood Politics, and American Political Development," *Studies* American Political Development 6: 223-27.

Session 8: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS, INTERVIEWS AND FIELD RESEARCH

Topics/Questions: Why do IRBs exist? What kind of research will they approve? What kind of research does not need IRB approval? Why interview people? How should I structure and approach an interview so that it is most effective? How to obtain interviews?

***You must complete the Human Subjects Training Module. Bring CITI certificate to class.
http://hrpohome.wustl.edu/study_team/CITI/HRPO_CITI.aspx.

Method Readings:

***Lilleker, Darren G.. 2003 "Interviewing the Political Elite: Navigating a Potential Minefield". *Politics*. 23(3), 207-214

***Lieberman, Evan S. et al. 2004. "Symposium: Field Research". *Qualitative Methods*.IR 2(1): 2-14.

Applied Readings:

***Arapac, Ozlem and Graham Bird. 2009. "Turkey and the IMF: A Case Study in the Political Economy of Policy Implementation," *Review of International Organization*, 4(2): 135-157.

Session 9: OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES

Topics/Questions: What are the advantages of observational studies and when are they appropriate? To what does the term generalizability refer? What are the shortcomings of observational studies and how can they be overcome?

Method Readings:

***Jackman, Robert W. 1985. "Cross-national Statistical Research and the Study of Comparative Politics." *American Journal of Political Science*. 29:161-182.

Applied Readings:

***Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2003. *Ethnic Insurgency and Civil War*. *American Political Science Review* 97.1 (February): 75-90.

Session 10: CONTENT ANALYSIS

Topics/Questions: What is content analysis? When is it appropriate? What are its benefits and shortcomings? What are the advantages and disadvantages of computer-aided content analysis?

Method Readings:

***Gray, Paul S., Williamson, J.B., Karp, D.A., and Dalphin, J.R. 2007. *The Research Imagination*. Cambridge University Press. Read Chp. 11.

Applied Readings:

***Huber, John D. and Charles R. Shipan. 2002. *Deliberative Discretion? The Institutional Foundations of Bureaucratic Autonomy*. Cambridge University Press. Read pp. 1-13 and 44-77.

Session 11: SURVEYS AND LABORATORY/SURVEY EXPERIMENTS

Topics/Questions: What kinds of things can you learn from surveys that you cannot learn from other methods? How to effect design a survey from the instrument design to sampling and response rates? How can lab/survey experiments be applied to political science? How to experiments allow researchers to establish causality? What is external validity?

Method Readings:

***Iarrosi, Giuseppe. 2006. *The Power of Survey Design*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. Read. Chapter 3.

***King, Gary, Christopher J. L. Murray, Joshua A. Salomon, and Ajay Tandon. 2004. "Enhancing the Validity and Cross-Cultural Comparability of Measurement in Survey Research", *American Political Science Review*, 98: 191-207

***McDermott, Rose. 2002. *Experimental Methods in Political Science*. *Annual Review of Political Science* (5): 31-61.

Applied Readings:

***Hopkins, Dan. 2009. "Wilder Effect". *The Journal of Politics*. 71(3): 769-781.

***Tomz, Michael. 2007. *Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach*. *International Organization* 61(4): 821-840.

Session 12: NATURAL AND FIELD EXPERIMENTS

Topics/Questions: How to natural/field experiments differ from lab experiments? What are their advantages and disadvantages compared to lab experiments? How can they natural/field experiments be applied to political science?

Method Readings:

***Dunning, Thad. 2008. *Improving Causal Inference*. *Political Research Science Quarterly*, 61 (2): 282-293.

Applied Readings:

***Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. *Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment* *American Political Science Review* 102 (1): 33-48.

Session 13: SIMULATIONS

Method Readings

***Steven I Jackson, *Doing Research Right (Rough Draft)*, chapter 14

Applied Readings:

**Alice Rivlin, David Cutler, Len Nichols. "Financing, Estimation and Economic Effects," Health Affairs. Vol. 13, #1 [Spring (I)1994], pp. 30-49.

**John Sheils and Lawrence Lewin, "Perspective: Alternative Estimate: No Pain, No Gain." Health Affairs. Vol. 13, #1 [Spring (I) 1994], pp. 50-55.

Session 14: CONCLUSION: COMPARISON OF RESEARCH METHODS

No Readings Assigned

Presentation and Discussion of Research Designs and/or Research Results