

# **POLS 7010: Research Methods in Political Science**

## **Fall 2016**

Dr. Shane P. Singh

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**Class Meeting Time:** Wednesdays, 3:35-6:35PM

**Class Location:** 304 Psychology Building

**Goal of the Course:** The goal of this course is to help you understand how we study politics and to provide guidance on conducting original political science research. The course will provide you with a general understanding of what science is and a foundation in the logic and practice of systematic political inquiry. In addition to discussing general questions about the philosophy of science, we will cover fundamental issues such as arriving at a research question, theory building, hypothesis development, variable measurement, and identifying and dealing with confounding factors. The topics covered in this course are crucial to any research project, but they will not provide you with all the tools needed to conduct your own research. The other classes in the research methods sequence are thus an essential companion to this course. Having a solid understanding the issues discussed in this course is necessary (but not sufficient) for writing original research.

### **Required Readings:**

Brady, Henry E., and David Collier. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. (BC)

Kellstedt, Paul M., and Guy D. Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (KW)

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

Putnam, Robert D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Putnam)

Several journal articles, all of which are available online

### **Student Responsibilities and Grade Breakdown:**

**Readings:** Students are required to do the readings for each class period ahead of time. Each week, students should write a short memo summarizing the readings for each class ahead of time. He or she should then refer to the memo during discussion.

**Participation:** As this is a graduate seminar, your participation is crucial and will count for 20% of your grade. Your involvement toward the end of the semester, when we will discuss the research designs of students in the class, is particularly important.

**Research Design and Presentation:** The primary assignment of the course is a research design, which includes a research question, theory and literature review, hypotheses, variable operationalization and measurement, dependent and independent variables, and what your expected findings would be if you were to actually conduct the research. You will present your design toward the end of the semester. Each presenter will be assigned a discussant, who will be responsible for constructively critiquing the research design. Papers should be made available to the discussant ahead of time. Your role as a discussant will count towards your participation grade. Presenters may wish to incorporate the suggestions of the discussant and the rest of the audience into their final research design. The research design will count for 45% of your grade. Note that a one-page summary of your research design is due in class midway through the semester.

**Exam:** There will be one exam during the middle of the semester, which will count for 35% of your grade.

**Grade Scale:**

>=93%:	A
90-92.99%:	A-
87-89.99%:	B+
83-86.99%:	B
80-82.99%:	B-
77-79.99%:	C+
73-76.99%:	C
70-72.99%:	C-
60-69.99%:	D
<60%:	F

**Late/Missed Assignments:** Missed assignments will result in a zero without a university-approved medical excuse or family emergency. Students will be penalized for late assignments; 20% of the grade for each day late without a university-approved medical excuse or family emergency. Make-up exams can be arranged with the instructor with a university-approved medical excuse or family emergency.

*As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in "A Culture of Honesty" found at: [www.uga.edu/honesty](http://www.uga.edu/honesty). Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.*

**Readings and Course Schedule:** *The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

**Readings with a “\*” in front are optional**

**WEEK 1**

**August 17: Welcome and Introduction**

The Edicts of Candler Hall

\*Keohane, Robert O. 2009. Political Science as a Vocation. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42 (2):359-363.

\*<http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/science-isnt-broken/> (an article on the scientific process that illustrates the dangers of doing it wrong and the great value of doing it right)

**WEEK 2**

**August 24: The Scientific Study of Politics**

KW, Chapter 1

KKV, Chapter 1 (thinking like a social scientist)

Putnam, Chapter 1 (an example of selecting and formulating a research agenda)

**WEEK 3**

**August 31: No Class (Out of Town for Conference)**

**WEEK 4**

**September 7: Theory, Hypotheses, and Variable Conceptualization**

KW, reread Sections 1.2 and 1.3 of Chapter 1 and read Chapter 2

Skim: Fridkin, Kim L., and Patrick J. Kenney. 2014. How the Gender of U.S. Senators Influences People’s Understanding and Engagement in Politics. *Journal of Politics* 76 (4): 1017-31. (a good American politics example with clear hypotheses and variables)

Skim: Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2009. Spreading Temptation: Proliferation and Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreements. *International Security* 34 (1):7-41. (a good international relations example with clear hypotheses and variables)

Skim: Reher, Stefanie. 2015. Explaining Cross-National Variation in the Relationship between Priority Congruence and Satisfaction with Democracy. *European Journal of Political Research* 54 (1): 160-81. (a good comparative politics example with clear hypotheses and variables)

## **WEEK 5**

### **September 14: Operationalization and Measurement**

KW, Chapter 5, pgs. 92-114

Putnam, Chapter 3 (an example of operationalization and measurement)

\*KKV, Chapter 5, stop at page 168 (a good discussion of how *not* to measure)

\*McDonald, Michael P., and Samuel L. Popkin. 2001. The Myth of the Vanishing Voter. *American Political Science Review* 95 (4):963-974. (an example of how measurement decisions can affect substantive conclusions)

## **WEEK 6**

### **September 21: Causality and Relationships between Variables**

KW, Chapter 3

KKV, Chapter 3 (important rules for constructing causal theories)

\*BC, Chapters 10-14 (start on page 201)

\*Holland, Paul. 1986. Statistics and Causal Inference. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 81 (396):945-960. (what can a statistical model say about causation?)

\*Keele, Luke. 2015. The Statistics of Causal Inference: A View from Political Methodology. *Political Analysis* 23 (3): 313-35. (an overview of the assumptions needed to give statistical estimates a causal interpretation)

\*Muller, Edward N., and Mitchell A. Seligson. 1994. Civic Culture and Democracy: The Question of Causal Relationships. *American Political Science Review* 88 (3):635-652. (the authors examine whether democracy causes attitudes, or vice versa)

## **WEEK 7**

### **September 28: Experimental and Observational Designs**

KW, Chapter 4

Putnam, Chapter 4 (Putnam's theory testing chapter)

## **WEEK 8**

### **October 5: Sampling, Interviews, and Surveys**

KW, Chapter 6

Franzen, Axel, and Dominikus Vogl. 2013. Acquiescence and the Willingness to Pay for Environmental Protection: A Comparison of the ISSP, WVS, and EVS. *Social Science*

*Quarterly* 94 (3):637-659. (an example of how the survey(s) you use can affect the answers you get)

Gerber, Alan S, and Donald P. Green. 2000. The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment. *American Political Science Review* 94 (3):653-663. (an example of how your sampling technique can affect the answers you get)

## **WEEK 9**

### **October 12: Bias**

KKV, Chapter 4, pgs. 128-149 and Chapter 5, pgs. 168-182 (discusses bias in variable selection and omission).

Geddes, Barbara. 1990. How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics. *Political Analysis* 2 (1):131-150. (illustrates the perils of selecting on the dependent variable)

Jacobsmeier, Matthew L., and Daniel C. 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. (illustrates the potential perils of omitting relevant variables)

## **WEEK 10**

### **October 19: Exam**

*Hand in one-page research design summaries*

## **WEEK 11**

### **October 26: Rethinking Social Inquiry**

*Sign up for research design presentation days; assign discussants*

BC, Chapters 1-8

Wuffle, A. 2015. Uncle Wuffle's Reflections on Political Science Methodology. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 48 (1): 176-82. (a somewhat humorous list of comments on many of the debates in political science methodology)

## **WEEK 12**

### **November 2: The Structure of a Paper and Journal Submissions**

*Form groups for next week's class.*

KW, Chapter 12

King, Gary. 2006. Publication, Publication. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39 (1):119-125. (advice on writing a, neat, well-organized, publishable paper, beginning with the

replication of an existing article)

Zigerell, L. J. 2013. Rookie Mistakes: Preemptive Comments on Graduate Student Empirical Research Manuscripts. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46 (1):142-146. (advice about basic dos and don'ts to consider when writing a research paper)

\*Weale, Albert. 2010. The Journal as a System of Norms. *British Journal of Political Science* 30 (3):477-485. (an in depth discussion of the journal submission, review, and publication process)

### **WEEK 13**

#### **November 9: Dissecting and Critiquing Published Work**

In today's class your group should come prepared to dissect and critique a published scholarly journal article. You pick the article. It must be in political science and the author(s) cannot be anyone currently employed by UGA (unless you get his/her/their permission). You should do the following:

- Summarize the argument and findings of the article.
- Describe its sampling technique, data, measurement, variables, etc.
- Tell the class, based on everything we've learned to this point, what is wrong with this article? Be harsh.
- Tell the class, based on everything we've learned to this point, what is right with this article?

### **WEEK 14**

#### **November 16: Presentation and Discussion of Research Designs**

### **WEEK 15**

#### **November 23: No Class (Thanksgiving)**

### **WEEK 16**

#### **November 30: Presentation and Discussion of Research Designs (Last Day of Class)**

### **FINALS WEEK**

**December 12: Research design papers due in my mailbox, under my door, or directly to me before 5:00PM—not by email.**