

# **POLS 8500: Special Topics in Research Methods – Experimental Methods in Political Science**

Meeting times: Wednesdays, 3:35 - 6:35 PM

Room: Baldwin Hall / 102

Instructor: Professor Alexa Bankert

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30–2:30 or by appointment

This course aims to introduce SPIA doctoral students to experimental methods in political science and beyond by discussing the method's potential as well as its limitations. For this purpose, we will assess experiments' ability to examine causal relationships *if designed and implemented properly*. The latter point is essential: Every good experimental design is based on a strong theoretical foundation that informs all stages of the experiment, including its conception, design, implementation, as well as the analysis of experimental data. From this perspective, this course will also teach you when experiments are useful and when they are not. While causality is nice, not every question in political science can nor need to be addressed with an experiment. Knowing when to utilize experimental methods is as important as knowing how to utilize them.

This course aims to be a hands-on seminar, which means that we will discuss and implement the stages of an experimental research project. This endeavor will include questions of ethics in research with human subjects, external validity, corroboration and reproducibility of experimental results, as well as the seemingly eternal debate surrounding pre-registration.

Overall, this class provides you with a new “toolbox” that expands your prior research methods repertoire and thereby enhances your research agenda.

## **Required Readings**

There are no assigned books. I will make the readings available to you via eLC the week before we discuss a specific topic. Please check eLC on a regular basis.

## **Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown**

- 1) Participation 10%
- 2) Homework assignments 30%

- 3) Project proposal and design presentation 20%
- 4) Final presentation 20%
- 5) Final project 20%

## Evaluation

1) **Participation:** You are expected to come to class prepared. The word “prepared” seems to have different meanings to different people so here is what “being prepared” means to me: reading the assigned articles and chapters, taking notes on their main points, raising questions that might have remained unaddressed in the readings, as well as thinking about the implications of the readings for various research agendas. In addition, everyone in class will be discussion leader once during the semester. You can choose your specific week.

2) **Project proposal and design presentation:** The main goal of this course is to prepare you to design and run your own experiments. For this purpose, I will provide you with the opportunity to collect data using the SPIA undergraduate student pool. You will propose and present an experimental research design to test a specific research question, convincing your classmates and me of its theoretical contribution, its suitability for an experiment, its design and key variable measurement, as well as its current IRB stage. In addition to your presentation, please submit a two-page project proposal to me. It should briefly summarize existing literature in which your research question is rooted, clearly state your hypotheses, and discuss your research design (e.g., treatments, anticipated effects, etc.). The document should also contain a preliminary list of references. **Project proposal and presentations are due February 6<sup>th</sup>.**

3) **Final project and presentation:** In our last class meeting, you will give an in-class presentation of your project. These 15-minute presentations should include the research question, its theoretical framework, the experimental design, results, as well as the contribution and shortcomings of your work. Be prepared to integrate feedback into your final paper. **Presentations are due April 24<sup>th</sup>. Final papers are due May 1<sup>st</sup>.**

## 4) Homework assignments

Homework 1 (Due January 16<sup>th</sup>)

Complete the UGA IRB course and submit a print-out of the final certification page. Go to <https://research.uga.edu/hrpp/citi-training/>.

## Homework 2 (Due January 23<sup>rd</sup>)

Set up a Qualtrics account and design a simple experiment. Write a brief paragraph discussing the nature of the experiment and email me a link to the survey.

## Homework 3 (Due January 30<sup>th</sup>)

Pick five political science articles that apply experimental methods to a topic of your interest. In a short memo, address the following questions:

- 1) What is the theory?
- 2) Is an experiment suitable for the theory? Why?
- 3) What is the experimental design?
- 4) Is there an alternative design (experimental or observational) that could test the same idea?

## Homework 4 (Due February 13<sup>th</sup>)

You will be assigned to one of the proposal presentations. Write a helpful one-page critique of the design, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, and provide suggestions that could make the design stronger. This critique will be shared with the presenter.

## Homework 5 (Due February 20<sup>th</sup>)

Prepare at least three questions to ask our guest speaker. Please tailor your questions to the expertise of the guest speaker. Email these to me by 11am.

## Homework 6 (Due February 27<sup>th</sup>)

Look again at your five political science articles from Homework 3. Examine their dependent and independent variables, answering the following questions:

- 1) What are the dependent and independent variables?
- 2) How are they measured and why?
- 3) Are there any manipulation checks?
- 4) Can you come up with alternative measures that could be used instead?

### Homework 7 (Due March 27<sup>th</sup>)

Prepare at least three questions to ask our guest speaker. Please tailor your questions to the expertise of the guest speaker. Email these to me by 11am.

### Homework 8 (Due April 10<sup>th</sup>)

Prepare at least three questions to ask our guest speaker. Please tailor your questions to the expertise of the guest speaker. Email these to me by 11am.

### Homework 9 (Due April 17<sup>th</sup>)

Look again at your five political science articles from Homework 3. Examine the experimental design and results section, answering the following questions:

- 1) Which parts of the experiment are reported?
- 2) What statistical methods are used to analyze the data?
- 3) What methods are used to interpret the data analysis?
- 4) Are there any robustness checks or supplementary analyses?

### **Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades**

100-94 A	79-77 C+	63-60 D-
93-90 A-	76-74 C	59-0 F
89-87 B+	73-70 C-	
86-84 B	69-67 D+	
83-80 B-	66-64 D	

### **Course Overview**

Week 1: Logic of experiments

Week 2: Ethics of research involving human subjects

Week 3: Connecting a theory to an experiment

Week 4: Designing an experiment and its key measures

Week 5: Project proposals

Week 6: Laboratory experiments

Week 7: Guest speaker I – Field experiments

Week 8: (Online) Survey experiments

Week 9: Natural experiments

Week 10: Bio-physiological measures in experiments

Week 11: Guest speaker II – Experiments in Sociology  
Week 12: No class  
Week 13: Guest speaker III – Experiments in Psychology  
Week 14: Analysis of experimental data  
Week 15: Project presentations

## **Readings**

### **Week 1: Logic of experiments (01/09)**

Druckman, James N., Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. 2006. The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science. *American Political Science Review* 100(4): 627-635.

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

Morton, R. B., & Williams, K. C. (2010). Chapter 2: Experiments and Casual Relations. In: *Experimental political science and the study of causality: From nature to the lab*. Cambridge University Press.

Druckman, James N., Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. 2011. *Experiments: An Introduction to Core Concepts*. In J.N. Druckman, D.P. Green, J.H. Kuklinski, and A. Lupia, eds., *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

### **Week 2: Ethics of research involving human subjects (01/16)**

#### **Homework #1 due**

Milgram, Stanley. 1965. Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority. *Human Relations* 18(1): 57-76.

Milgram, Stanley, and Thomas H. Murray. 1992. Can Deception in Research be Justified? In Slife and Brent, eds., *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Psychological Issues*.

Cohen, Adam. 2008. Four Decades After Milgram, We're Still Willing to Inflict Pain. *The New York Times*.

Willis, Derek. 2014. Professors' Research Project Stirs Political Outrage in Montana. *The New York Times: The Upshot*.

Michelson, Melissa. Messing With Montana: Get-Out-The Vote Experiment Raises Ethics Questions. In *The New West: Official Blog of the Western Political Science Association*.

### **Week 3: Connecting a theory to an experiment (01/23)**

#### **Homework #2 due**

Webb, Eugene J., Donald T. Campbell, Richard D. Schwarz, and Lee Sechrest. 2000. *Unobstrusive Measures*. Chapter 1: "Approximations to Knowledge".

Shadish, William R., Thomas D. Cook, and Donald T. Campbell. 2002. *Experimental and Quasi Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Chapter 8 & Chapter 9.

Kam, C. D., & Trussler, M. J. (2017). At the nexus of observational and experimental research: Theory, specification, and analysis of experiments with heterogeneous treatment effects. *Political Behavior*, 39(4), 789-815.

### **Week 4: Designing an experiment and its key measures (01/30)**

#### **Homework #3 due**

Webb, Eugene J., Donald T. Campbell, Richard D. Schwarz, and Lee Sechrest. 2000. *Unobstrusive Measures*. Chapter 5: "Simple Observation."

Baumeister, Roy F., Kathleen D Vohs, and David C. Funder. 2007. Psychology as the Science of Self-Reports and Finger Movements: Whatever Happened to Behavior? *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 2(4): 396-403.

Zaller, John, and Stanley Feldman. 1992. A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions Versus Revealing Preferences. *American Journal of Political Science* 36(3): 579-616.

Berinsky, Adam J., Michele F. Margolis, and Michael W. Sances. 2014. Separating the Shirkers from the Workers? Making Sure Respondents Pay Attention on Self-Administered Surveys. *American Journal of Political Science* 58(3): 739-753.

Bankert, A., Huddy, L., & Rosema, M. (2017). Measuring partisanship as a social identity in multi-party systems. *Political behavior*, 39(1), 103-132.

### **Week 5: Project proposals (02/06)**

No readings!

### **Week 6: Laboratory experiments (02/13)**

#### **Homework #4 due**

Orne, Martin T. 1962. On the Social Psychology of the Psychology Experiment. *American Psychologist* 17(11): 776-783.

Sears, David O. 1986. College Sophomores in the Laboratory: Influences of a Narrow Data Base on Social Psychology's View of Human Nature. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 51(3): 515-530.

Druckman, James N., and Cindy D. Kam. 2011. Students as Experimental Participants: A Defense of the "Narrow Data Base." In J.N. Druckman, D.P. Green, J.H. Kuklinski, and A. Lupia, eds., *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Henrich, Joseph, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan. 2010. The Weirdest People in the World? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33: 61-83.

### **Week 7: Guest speaker I – Field experiments (02/20)**

#### **Homework #5 due**

Butler, Daniel M., and David E. Broockman. 2011. Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators. *American Journal of Political Science* 55: 463-477.

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.

Michelitch, K. (2015). Does electoral competition exacerbate interethnic or interpartisan economic discrimination? Evidence from a field experiment in market price bargaining. *American Political Science Review*, 109(1), 43-61.

Bertrand, Marianne, and Sendhil Mullanathan. 2004. Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamil? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination. *American Economic Review* 94(4): 991-1013.

## **Week 8: (Online) Survey experiments (02/27)**

### **Homework #6 due**

Sniderman, Paul M. 2001. *The Logic and Design of the Survey Experiment: An Autobiography of a Methodological Innovation*. In J.N. Druckman, D.P. Green, J.H. Kuklinski, and A. Lupia, eds., *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Schwarz, Norbert. 1995. What Respondents Learn From Questionnaires: The Survey Interview and the Logic of Conversation. *International Statistical Review* 63(2): 153-168.

Hopkins, D. J. (2015). The upside of accents: Language, inter-group difference, and attitudes toward immigration. *British Journal of Political Science*, 45(3), 531-557.

Gaines, Brian J., James H. Kukilinski, and Paul J. Quirk. 2007. The Logic of the Survey Experiment Revisited. *Political Analysis* 15(1): 1-20.

Barabas, Jason, and Jennifer Jerit. 2010. Are Survey Experiments Externally Valid? *American Political Science Review* 104(2): 226-242.

## **Week 9: Natural experiments (03/06)**

Wallace, Sophia J., Chris Zepeda-Millán, and Michael Jones-Correa. 2014. Spatial and Temporal Proximity: Examining the Effects of Protests on Political Attitudes. *American Journal of Political Science* 433-448.

Hopkins, Daniel J. 2011. Translating into Votes: The Electoral Impacts of Spanish-Language Ballots. *American Journal of Political Science* 55(4): 813-829.

Dunning, Thad. 2008. Improving Causal Inference: Strengths and Limitations of Natural Experiments. *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2): 282-293.

Sekhon, Jasjeet S., and Rocío Titiunik. 2012. When Natural Experiments Are Neither Natural nor Experiments. *American Political Science Review* 106(1): 35-57.



## **Week 10: Bio-physiological measures in experiments (03/20)**

Hibbing, John R., and Kevin B. Smith. 2007. The Biology of Political Behavior: An Introduction. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 614: 6-14.

Oxley, Douglas R., Kevin B. Smith, John R. Alford, Matthew V. Hibbing, Jennifer L. Miller, Mario Scalora, Peter K. Hatemi, and John R. Hibbing. 2008. Political Attitudes Vary with Physiological Traits. *Science* 321: 1667-1670.

Smith, Kevin B., Douglas Oxley, Matthew V. Hibbing, John R. Alford, and John R. Hibbing. 2011. Disgust Sensitivity and the Neurophysiology of Left-Right Political Orientations. *PLoS ONE* 6(10): 1-9.

Gruszczynski, Michael W., Amanda Balzer, Carly M. Jacobs, Kevin B. Smith, and John R. Hibbing. 2013. The Physiology of Political Participation. *Political Behavior* 35: 135-152.

Kubota, Jennifer T., Mahzarin R. Banaji, and Elizabeth A. Phelps. 2012. The Neuroscience of Race. *Nature Neuroscience* 15: 940-948.

## **Week 11: Guest speaker II – Experiments in Sociology (03/27)**

### **Homework #7 due**

Readings TBD

## **Week 12: No class (04/03)**

## **Week 13: Guest speaker III – Experiments in Psychology (04/10)**

### **Homework #8 due**

Readings TBD

## **Week 14: Analysis of experimental data (04/17)**

### **Homework #9 due**

Field, Andy P., and Graham Hole. How to Design and Report Experiments. Chapter 4: “Descriptive Statistics”; Chapter 5: “Inferential Statistics.”

Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and David Nickerson. 2001. Testing for Publication Bias in Political Science. *Political Analysis* 9(4): 385-392.

Mutz, Diana C. 2011. Population-Based Survey Experiments. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 7: “Analysis of Population-Based Experiments.”

## **Week 15: Project presentations (04/24)**

No readings!

## **Important Policies**

### **Grade Appeals, Incompletes, Late Assignments, and Make-Up Policy**

Formal grade appeals must be made in writing, and in the case of a paper, I will re-grade your entire paper. Therefore, your grade can go up or down. A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible. Legitimate excuses for absence from class (e.g., religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness) must be presented to me prior to the class when feasible. Late assignments will be docked 5 percent per day (half letter grade), for each day that a project is late (including weekends).

### **Office Hours**

Students who are having difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments are encouraged to make an appointment with. Don’t be afraid to come by. However, please note that office hours are for clarification of material, not for recreating a lecture if you skipped class. If you like to talk to me, feel free to stop by my office during office hours but please email me in advance if possible.

**Syllabus Policy:**

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus if necessary. I will give you fair notice (at least a week) if something, such as a reading assignment, is to change.

**Disability Resource Center**

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

**Culture of Honesty Policy**

You are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures relating to academic honesty. To understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University, please carefully review the policy here:

[https://honesty.uga.edu/\\_resources/documents/academic\\_honesty\\_policy\\_2017.pdf](https://honesty.uga.edu/_resources/documents/academic_honesty_policy_2017.pdf)