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

Meeting times: Tuesdays, 3:30pm-6:15pm
Room: Baldwin Hall 302
Instructor: Professor Alexa Bankert
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Office: Baldwin Hall 380F
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30–2:30 or by appointment

This course aims to accomplish three goals. First, it introduces 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 grounded in a strong theoretical foundation that informs all stages of the experiment, including its conception, design, implementation, as well as the analysis of experimental data.

Second, 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 needs to be addressed with an experiment. Knowing *when* to utilize experimental methods is as important as knowing *how* to utilize them.

Third, this course aims to be a hands-on seminar, which means that we will not just discuss but also 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 required books for this course. I will make all readings available to you via eLC.

Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown

1) Participation 15%
2) Homework assignments 20%
3) Discussion Leadership 20%
4) Final presentation and Q&A 15%
5) Final project 30%

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	

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 future research.

2) **Final Project and 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. For this purpose, you will first propose and present in class an experimental research design which tests aspecific 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 22.** In our last class meeting, you will give an in-class presentation of your project. These 15-minute presentations should be similar to a conference presentation and include the research question, its theoretical framework, the experimental design, results, as well as the contribution and limitations of your work. Be prepared to answer your peers' questions and to integrate feedback into your final paper. **Presentations and final papers are due May 3rd**

3) Discussion Leadership: Everyone in class will be discussion leader once during the semester. You can choose your specific week. Your leadership includes providing a summary of the readings, identifying common themes and differences across the readings, and develop discussion questions that focus on the strengths and weaknesses in the assigned readings. Please also create a handout for the class. This will be useful for your comprehensive exams.

4) Homework assignments

There will be five homework assignments this semester that are due before each class and that I would like you to submit via eLC. For more details, please see the course schedule.

Important Course Dates

Tuesday, January 11: First day of class
Tuesday, January 18: Homework 1 due
March 7-11: Spring Break
Tuesday, January 18: Homework 1 due
Tuesday, January 25: Homework 2 due
Tuesday, February 1: Homework 3 due
Tuesday, February 22: Proposal and presentation due
Tuesday, March 1: Homework 4 due
Tuesday, March 15: Qualtrics survey questionnaire due
Tuesday, March 29: Homework 5 due
Tuesday, May 3: Final paper and presentation due
Monday, May 16: Grades due

Course Schedule

Week 1: Logic of experiments (01/11)

Druckman, James N., Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinksi, 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.

Gerber, A. S. and Green, D. P. (2012). Field experiments: Design, analysis, and interpretation. W.W. Norton & Company Norton, New York, NY. Chapter 1.

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: Validity in Experimental Political Science (01/18)

Homework 1: Complete the IRB CITI course and submit a print-out of the final certification page.Go to https://research.uga.edu/hrpp/citi-training/.

Morton, R. and Williams, K. (2010). Experimental political science and the study of causality: From nature to the lab. Cambridge University Press, New York, NY. Chapter 7 and Chapter 8.

McDermott, R. (2011). Internal and external validity. In Druckman, J. N., Green, D. P., Kuklinski, J. H., and Lupia, A., editors, Handbook of Experimental Political Science, pages 27–41. Cambridge University Press, New York, NY.

Barabas, J. and Jerit, J. (2010). Are survey experiments externally valid? American Political Science Review, 104(2):226–242

Cohen, J. (1992). A power primer. Psychological bulletin, 112(1):155.

Week 3: Lab Experiments and Student Samples (01/25)

Homework 2: Set up a Qualtrics account and program a simple experiment that would test the following hypothesis: "Exposure to violent content intensifies party attachments." Share the survey with me and write a brief paragraph justifying your design choices.

Morton, R. and Williams, K. (2010). Experimental political science and the study of causality: From nature to the lab. Cambridge University Press, New York, NY. Chapter 9 and Chapter 10.

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.

Applications:

Levine, D. K. and Palfrey, T. R. (2007). The paradox of voter participation? a laboratory study. American political science Review, 101(1):143–158

Oxley, D. R., Smith, K. B., Alford, J. R., Hibbing, M. V., Miller, J. L., Scalora, M., Hatemi, P. K., and Hibbing, J. R. (2008). Political attitudes vary with physiological traits. science, 321(5896):1667–1670

Week 4: Survey Experiments (02/01)

***Homework 3: Examine Chong and Druckman (2007) as well as a Adida et al. (2018). In a short memo, address the following questions:

a. What is the theory?
b. Is an experiment suitable for the theory? Why?
c. What is the experimental design (i.e., experimental intervention)?
d. Is there an alternative design (experimental or observational) that could test the same idea?***

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.

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

Mullinix, K. J., Leeper, T. J., Druckman, J. N., and Freese, J. (2015). The generalizability of survey experiments. Journal of Experimental Political Science, 2(2):109–138.

Mummolo, J. and Peterson, E. (2019). Demand effects in survey experiments: An empirical assessment. American Political Science Review, 113(2):517–529.

Applications:

Chong, D. and Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing public opinion in competitive democracies. American Political Science Review, 101(4):637–655.

Adida, C. L., Lo, A., and Platas, M. R. (2018). Perspective taking can promote short-term inclusionary behavior toward Syrian refugees. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 115(38):9521–9526

Week 5: Survey Experiments II (02/08)

Blair, G. and Imai, K. (2012). Statistical analysis of list experiments. Political Analysis, 20(1):47–77.

Hainmueller, J., Hopkins, D. J., and Yamamoto, T. (2013). Causal inference in conjoint analysis: Understanding multidimensional choices via stated preference experiments. Political Analysis, 22(1):1–30.

Bansak, K., Hainmueller, J., Hopkins, D. J., and Yamamoto, T. (2017). Beyond the breaking point? survey satisficing in conjoint experiments. Working Paper.

Glynn, A. N. (2013). What can we learn with statistical truth serum? Design and analysis of the list experiment. Public Opinion Quarterly, 77(S1):159–172.

Applications:

Blair, G., Imai, K., and Lyall, J. (2014). Comparing and combining list and endorsement experiments: Evidence from Afghanistan. American Journal of Political Science, 58(4):1043–1063.

Hainmueller, J. and Hopkins, D. J. (2015). The hidden American immigration consensus: A conjoint analysis of attitudes toward immigrants. American Journal of Political Science, 59(3):529–548.

Week 6: Field Experiments (02/15)

John, P. (2017). Field Experiments in Political Science and Public Policy: Practical Lessons in Design and Delivery. Routledge Press, New York, NY (Chapter 4: A Brief History of Field Experiments).

Gerber, A. S. (2011). Field experiments in political science. In Druckman, J. N., Green, D. P., Kuklinski, J. H., and Lupia, A., editors, Handbook of Experimental Political Science, pages 114–140. Cambridge University Press.

Coppock, A. and Green, D. P. (2015). Assessing the correspondence between experimental results obtained in the lab and field: A review of recent social science research. Political Science Research and Methods, 3(1):113–131.

Grose, C. R. (2014). Field experimental work on political institutions. Annual Review of Political Science, 17:355–370

Applications:

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.

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 7: Experimental Design Presentations (02/22)

Two-page proposal due

Week 8: Issues in Causality & Heterogeneous Treatment Effects (03/01)

Homework 4: 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.

Imai, K., Keele, L., Tingley, D., and Yamamoto, T. (2011). Unpacking the black box of causality: Learning about causal mechanisms from experimental and observational studies. American Political Science Review, 105(4):765–789.

Bullock, J. G., Green, D. P., and Ha, S. E. (2010). Yes, but what's the mechanism?(don't expect an easy answer). Journal of personality and social psychology, 98(4):550.

Baron, R. M. and Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator–mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. Journal of personality and social psychology, 51(6):1173.

Kam, C. D. and 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.

Applications:

Tomz, M. and Weeks, J. (2013). Public opinion and the democratic peace. American Political Science Review, 107(3):849–865.

Renshon, J., Lee, J. J., and Tingley, D. (2015). Physiological arousal and political beliefs. Political Psychology, 36(5):569–585

Week 9: SPRING BREAK (03/7-03/11)

Week 10: Survey Questionnaire Workshop (03/15)

Program your survey experiment in Qualtrics and be ready to present it in class. We will discuss your questionnaire in class.

Week 11: Confounding Factors (03/22)

Gerber, A. S. and Green, D. P. (2012). Field experiments: Design, analysis, and interpretation. W.W. Norton & Company Norton, New York, NY. Chapters 5 and 6 (on noncompliance) and 8 (on interference).

Dafoe, A., Zhang, B., and Caughey, D. (2018). Information equivalence in survey experiments. Political Analysis.

Clifford, S., Sheagley, G., & Piston, S. (2021). Increasing Precision without Altering Treatment Effects: Repeated Measures Designs in Survey Experiments. *American Political Science Review*, 1-18.

Druckman, J. N. and Leeper, T. J. (2012). Learning more from political communication experiments: Pretreatment and its effects. American Journal of Political Science, 56(4):875–896

Applications:

Renshon, J., Dafoe, A., and Huth, P. (2018). Leader influence and reputation formation in world politics. American Journal of Political Science, 62(2):325–339.

Week 12: Analysis of Experimental Data (03/29)

***Homework 5: Look again at Chong and Druckman (2007) as well as a Adida et al. (2018) 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?***

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."

Acharya, A., Blackwell, M., and Sen, M. (2018). Analyzing causal mechanisms in survey experiments. Political Analysis, 26(4):357–378.

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.

Week 13: Pre-Registration and Replications (04/05)

Ioannidis, J. P. (2005). Why most published research findings are false. PLoS medicine, 2(8):e124.

Humphreys, M., Sanchez de la Sierra, R., and Van der Windt, P. (2013). Fishing, commitment, and communication: A proposal for comprehensive nonbinding research registration. Political Analysis, 21(1):1–20.

Olken, B. A. (2015). Promises and perils of pre-analysis plans. The Journal of Economic Perspectives, 29(3):61–80.

Simmons, J. P., Nelson, L. D., and Simonsohn, U. (2011). False-positive psychology: Undisclosed flexibility in data collection and analysis allows presenting anything as significant. Psychological science, 22(11):1359–1366

Applications:

Findley, M. G., Jensen, N. M., Malesky, E. J., and Pepinsky, T. B. (2016). Can results free review reduce publication bias? the results and implications of a pilot study. Comparative Political Studies, 49(13):1667–1703.

Dunning, T. (2016). Transparency, replication, and cumulative learning: What experiments alone cannot achieve. Annual Review of Political Science

Week 14: Ethics and Research Transparency (04/12)

Morton & Williams Chapters 12 (Ethics) and 13 (Deception)

Hertwig, R. and Ortmann, A. (2008). Deception in experiments: Revisiting the arguments in its defense. Ethics & Behavior, 18(1):59–92.

Desposato, S., editor (2015). Ethics and Experiments: Problems and Solutions for Social Scientists and Policy Professionals. Routledge, New York, NY:

– Chapter 17: The Responsibilities of the Researcher and the Profession
– Chapter 18: Journal Editors as Ethical Sheriffs

Applications:

Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioral study of obedience. The Journal of abnormal and social psychology, 67(4):371.

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.

Week 15: Recap (04/19)

Week 16: Final paper workshop (04/26)

Week 17: Final Presentations (05/03)

Final paper due

Important Policies

Required Technology & Communication

Our course is administered through eLC. You will find all course materials through this website. You will also submit assignments using Dropboxes on eLC. Finally, my primary means of communication with the class will be through announcements posted in eLC. Makes sure you receive eLC updates for our class automatically via email (eLC > Click on your profile > Notifications > Instant Notifications). Please note that you cannot reply to an email I send out via eLC (ending in @uga.view.usg.edu emails). Please also note that – due to privacy and confidentiality concern – I can only reply to emails sent from your UGA account.

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 thefollowing 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

If you experience difficulties with the course materials and/or assignments, I strongly encourage you to make an appointment with me or to come by during office hour. 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.

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 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

Preferred Name and Pronouns
Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources. If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit https://sco.uga.edu. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga) or crisis support (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies).

If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.

CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

UGA adheres to guidance from the University System of Georgia and the recommendations from Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) related to quarantine and isolation. Since this may be updated periodically, we encourage you to review the latest guidance here. The following information is based on guidance last updated on December 29, 2021.

Face coverings:
Following guidance from the University System of Georgia, face coverings are recommended forall individuals while inside campus facilities.

How can I obtain the COVID-19 vaccine?
University Health Center is scheduling appointments for students through the UHC Patient Portal (https://patientportal.uhs.uga.edu/login_dualauthentication.aspx). Learn more here – https://www.uhs.uga.edu/healthtopics/covid-vaccine.

The Georgia Department of Health, pharmacy chains and local providers also offer the COVID-19 vaccine at no cost to you. To find a COVID-19 vaccination location near you, please go to: https://georgia.gov/covid-vaccine.

In addition, the University System of Georgia has made COVID-19 vaccines available at 15 campuses statewide and you can locate one here: https://www.usg.edu/vaccination

What do I do if I have COVID-19 symptoms?
Students showing COVID-19 symptoms should self-isolate and get tested. You can schedule an appointment with the University Health Center by calling 706-542-1162 (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5p.m.). Please DO NOT walk-in. For emergencies and after-hours care, see https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies.

What do I do if I test positive for COVID-19? (Isolation guidance)
If you test positive for COVID-19 at any time, either through a PCR test, an Antigen test, or a home test kit, you are **required to report it** through the DawgCheck Test Reporting Survey. Follow the instructions provided to you when you report your positive test result in DawgCheck.

As of December 29, 2021, when an individual receive a positive COVID-19 test: Everyone, **regardless of vaccination status,** should:

- Stay home for 5 days.
- If you have symptoms or your symptoms are resolving after 5 days, you can leave your house and return to class.
- Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.

What do I do if I have been exposed to COVID-19? (Quarantine guidance)
If you have been exposed (within 6 feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period – unmasked**) to someone with COVID-19 or to someone with a positive COVID- 19 test and you are:

- Boosted, or have become fully vaccinated within the last 6 months (Moderna or Pfizervaccine) or within the last 2 months (J&J vaccine)
    - You do not need to quarantine at home and may come to class.
    - You should wear a mask around others for 10 days.
    - If possible, get tested on day 5.
    - If you develop symptoms, get tested and isolate at home until test results arereceived, then proceed in accordance with the test results.
- Unvaccinated, or became fully vaccinated more than 6 months ago (Moderna or

Pfizervaccine) or more than 2 months ago (J&J vaccine) and have not received a booster:

- You must quarantine at home for 5 days. After that you may return to class butcontinue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.
- If possible, get tested on day 5.
- If you develop symptoms, get tested and isolate at home until test results arereceived, then proceed in accordance with the test results.

** "Masked-to-masked" encounters are not currently considered an exposure; this type of interaction would not warrant quarantine.

You should report the need to quarantine on DawgCheck (https://dawgcheck.uga.edu/), and communicate directly with your faculty to coordinate your coursework while in quarantine. If you need additional help, reach out to Student Care and Outreach (sco@uga.edu) for assistance.