

POLS 7010: Research Design

Fall 2022

Th: 3:55-6:50pm, Baldwin 101D

Dr. Mollie J. Cohen

Office: 311, IA Building

Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00-4:00pm

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Description: How do political scientists ask and answer questions about the world? In this class, students will learn about different tools political scientists use to answer research questions. Students will also learn to make design choices to maximize the validity of their research. Most research issues are better addressed by good design upfront than by complex analyses after data is collected. Following from this principle, this class will teach students to make the best design choices available given their constraints.

To achieve these goals, this class will introduce students to the basics of descriptive and causal inference in political science research. Students will be exposed to several design choices that political scientists use to provide rigorous answers to descriptive and causal questions. Additionally, students will complete five short writing assignments over the course of the semester to engage more deeply with these concepts.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, students will:

1. Learn to make design choices that maximize the scientific validity of their research
2. Understand the tradeoffs of different design choices
3. Apply these lessons by producing a series of short, “ideal” research designs

Course Requirements

Short Papers: Each short paper is worth 15% of your final class grade. Ten points are granted on completion of the first draft, **due via email by 9am on the morning of class**, as noted in the schedule below. Late assignments will be docked 1 point immediately, and an additional half point per day late. If your assignment is late, I cannot guarantee timely feedback. Additionally, five points will be assessed following revisions based on instructor feedback. Revised short papers are due via drop box on eLC by **Wednesday, December 14th at 5pm**. The prompts for short paper assignments are listed below.

1. **Research question:** Formulate a “big” question about your political science subfield. Then, revise that big question into a research question, that is answerable in the space of a paper manuscript. Derive a testable hypothesis and describe the ideal data for answering your question. This memo should be no longer than 3 double-spaced pages.

2. **Experimental design:** Take a well-known theory of politics and derive a hypothesis that is testable using an experimental design. Describe the theory, hypothesis, and experimental design in no more than 5 double-spaced pages.
3. **Quasi-experimental design:** Take a well-known theory of politics and derive a hypothesis that is testable using a quasi-experimental design. Describe the theory, hypothesis, and design in no more than 5 double-spaced pages.
4. **Case study or Observational design:** Take a well-known theory of politics and derive a hypothesis that is testable using a case study or observational design. Describe the theory, case selection strategy, hypothesis, and design in no more than 5 double-spaced pages.
5. **Survey or Interview design:** Take a well-known theory of politics and derive a hypothesis that is testable using a survey or other form of interview. Describe the theory, hypothesis, and design in no more than 5 double-spaced pages.

Participation: Active participation is foundational to graduate courses. You are expected to come to class having completed all assigned reading and ready to ask questions and actively discuss course material. To do so, you should take notes when reading and reflect on the material prior to class.

Attendance: Your attendance is not graded in this class. However, participation accounts for a substantial portion of your final grade, and it is not possible to participate actively without attending. In other words, attendance is “necessary” but not “sufficient” for success in this class.

If you are ill, please do not come to class! In such an instance, make sure to review the lecture slides, follow up with a classmate for their notes, and come to office hours or schedule a meeting with me to clarify any points of confusion.

Readings: Most readings are available to you for free via google scholar, accessed from campus. Selections from books are available through the university library, at www.gilfind.uga.edu. Readings that are not available through these sources will be made available on the course’s eLC page. We will engage extensively with two textbooks over the course of the semester:

1. Trochim, William and James P. Donnelly. 2007. *The Research Methods Knowledge Base, 3rd Edition*. Cincinnati, OH, Atomic Dog Publishing. Online at: <https://conjointly.com/kb/>
2. King, Gary, and Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

We will also read selections from several outstanding volumes on research design that are worth having in your library:

1. Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

2. Dunning, Thad. 2012. *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
3. Mosley, Layna. 2013. *Interview Research in Political Science*, eds. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press.

Slides: All slides will be made available on the course eLC page.

Grades:

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

Short Papers: 75%

Participation: 25%

Grade scale:

>=93%:	A
90-92.9%:	A-
87-89.9%:	B+
83-86.9%:	B
80-82.9%:	B-
77-79.9%:	C+
73-76.9%:	C
70-72.9%:	C-
60-69.9%:	D
<60%:	F

Week 1. The “science” in political science

August 18

Optional reading:

1. Keohane, Robert O. 2009. “Political Science as a Vocation.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42(2): 359-363.
2. <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/science-isnt-broken/>

Week 2. Laying the foundation: research questions, theory, hypotheses, validity

August 25

Required reading:

1. King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. “Chapter 1: The Science in Social Science.” *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994: 3-33.
2. Geddes, Barbara. 2003. Pp. 27-35 of Chapter 2: “Big Questions, Little Answers: How the Questions You Choose Affect the Answer You Get.” *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
3. Pavão, Nara. 2018. "Corruption as the only option: The limits to electoral accountability." *The Journal of Politics* 80(3): 996-1010.

Skim:

1. Trochim and Donnelly. Ch 1: “Foundations.”

Week 3. Concepts and measurement: data, validity, and reliability

September 1

Required reading:

1. Kellstedt and Whitten. 2018. “Chapter 5: Measuring Concepts of Interest”. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*.
2. Adcock, Robert, and David Collier. 2001. “Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research.” *American Political Science Review* 95(3): 529-546.
3. Cheibub, José Antonio, Jennifer Gandhi and James Raymond Vreeland. 2010. “Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited.” *Public Choice* 143(1/2): 67-101.
4. Lührmann, Anna, Marcus Tannenberg and Staffan Lindberg. 2018. “Regimes of the World (RoW): Opening New Avenues for the Comparative Study of Political Regimes.” *Politics and Governance* 6(1):1-18.

Skim:

1. Trochim and Donnelly. Ch 3: “The Theory of Measurement.” (“construct validity” and “reliability”)

Week 4. Description, description, description

Research question memo due via eLC drop box by 9am

Class visit: Dr. Chad Clay

September 8

Reading:

1. King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. "Chapter 2: Descriptive Inference." *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994: 33-72.
2. Fariss, Christopher J. 2014. "Respect for human rights has improved over time: Modeling the changing standard of accountability." *American Political Science Review* 108(2): 297-318.
3. Davenport, Lauren D. 2016. "Beyond black and white: Biracial attitudes in contemporary US politics." *American Political Science Review* 110(1): 52-67.
4. Lerner, Alexis M. "The Co-optation of Dissent in Hybrid States: Post-Soviet Graffiti in Moscow." *Comparative Political Studies* (2019): 0010414019879949.

Week 5. No class (APSA)

September 15

Week 6. Causal inference and the experimental ideal

September 22

Reading:

1. King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. "Chapter 3: Causal Inference." *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994: 33-72.
2. 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.
3. Cheema, Ali, Sarah Khan, Asad Liaqat, and Shandana Khan Mohmand. 2021. "Canvassing the Gatekeepers: A Field Experiment to Increase Women Voters' Turnout in Pakistan." *American Political Science Review*: 1-21.
4. Bush, Sarah Sunn, and Lauren Prather. 2018. "Who's There? Election observer identity and the local credibility of elections." *International Organization* 72(3): 659-692.

Week 7. Natural Experiments

Anonymous midterm evaluations to be completed at the beginning of class

September 29.

Reading:

1. Dunning, Thad. 2012. *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences*. Chapter 2, pp. 41-62.

- Hyde, Susan. 2007. "The Observer Effect in International Politics: Evidence from a Natural Experiment." *World Politics* 60:37-63.
- Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The political salience of cultural difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 529-545.

Week 8. Other quasi-experimental designs

Experimental design memo due via eLC drop box by 9am

October 6.

Reading:

- Dunning, Thad. 2012. "Chapter 3: Regression Discontinuity Designs." In *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences*.
- Harris, J. Andrew. 2021. "Election administration, resource allocation, and turnout: Evidence from Kenya." *Comparative Political Studies* 54(3-4): 623-651.
- Lyall, Jason. 2010. "Are Co-Ethnics More Effective Counter-Insurgents? Evidence from the Second Chechen War." *American Political Science Review* 104(1):1-20.
- Grumbach, Jacob M., and Charlotte Hill. 2022. "Rock the registration: Same day registration increases turnout of young voters." *The Journal of Politics* 84(1): 405-417.

Week 9. Observational designs

October 13

Reading:

- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. "Chapter 5: Understanding What to Avoid." *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994: 150-206.
- Przeworski, Adam, and Fernando Limongi. 1997. "Modernization: Theories and facts." *World politics* 49(2): 155-183.
- Boix, Carles, and Susan C. Stokes. 2003. "Endogenous democratization." *World politics* 55(4): 517-549.
- Archer, Allison MN. 2018. "Political advantage, disadvantage, and the demand for partisan news." *The Journal of Politics* 80(3): 845-859.

Week 10. Case studies, case selection, and the comparative method

Quasi-experimental design memo due via eLC drop box by 9am

October 20

Reading:

- Lijphart, Arend. 1971. "Comparative politics and the comparative method." *American political science review* 65(3): 682-693.
- Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics." *Political analysis* 2: 131-150.

3. Seawright, Jason. 2016. "The Case for Selecting Cases That are Deviant or Extreme on the Independent Variable." *Sociological Methods and Research*. 45(3):493-525.
4. Berman, Sheri. 1997. "Civil society and the collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World politics* 49(3): 401-429.
5. Gamboa, Laura. 2017. "Opposition at the Margins: Strategies against the Erosion of Democracy in Colombia and Venezuela." *Comparative Politics* 49(4): 457-477.

Week 11. On mechanisms and process tracing

October 27

1. Collier, David. 2011. "Understanding process tracing." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44(4): 823-830.
2. Ricks, Jacob I. and Amy H. Liu. 2018. "Process-Tracing Research Designs: A Practical Guide." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 51(4): 842-846.
3. Pérez Betancur, Verónica, Rafael Piñero Rodríguez, and Fernando Rosenblatt. 2020. "Chapter 4: Origins and Reproduction of the Mass-Organic Structure." In *How Party Activism Survives: Uruguay's Frente Amplio*. Cambridge University Press.
 - a. Also read Chapter 1. Introduction

Week 12. Surveys

Case study or observational design memo due via eLC drop box by 9am

November 3

Reading:

1. Lupu, Noam, and Kristin Michelitch. 2018. "Advances in survey methods for the developing world." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21(1): 195-214.
2. Berinsky, Adam J. 2017. "Measuring public opinion with surveys." *Annual review of political science* 20: 309-329.
3. TBA

Skim:

1. Trochim and Donnelly. Ch 2: "Sampling."
2. Trochim and Donnelly. Ch 4: "Survey Research"

Week 13. Fieldwork: talking to people

November 10

Reading:

1. Mosley, Layna. 2013. "'Just Talk to People'? Interviews in Contemporary Political Science" In *Interview Research in Political Science*, editors, Layna Mosley. Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press.
2. González, Yanilda, and Lindsay Mayka. 2022. "Policing, Democratic Participation, and the Reproduction of Asymmetric Citizenship." *American Political Science Review*: 1-17.

3. Cramer, Katherine J., and Benjamin Toff. 2017. "The fact of experience: Rethinking political knowledge and civic competence." *Perspectives on Politics* 15(3): 754-770.

Week 14. Best Practices I

Survey design memo due via eLC drop box by 9am

November 17

Reading:

1. Berinsky, Adam J., James N. Druckman, and Teppei Yamamoto. 2021. "Publication Biases in Replication Studies." *Political Analysis* 29(3): 370-384.
2. Dion, Michelle L., Jane Lawrence Sumner, and Sara McLaughlin Mitchell. 2018. "Gendered citation patterns across political science and social science methodology fields." *Political analysis* 26(3): 312-327.
3. Djupe, Paul A., Amy Erica Smith, and Anand Edward Sokhey. 2019. "Explaining gender in the journals: how submission practices affect publication patterns in political science." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 52(1): 71-77.
4. Elman, Colin, Diana Kapiszewski, and Arthur Lupia. 2018. "Transparent social inquiry: Implications for political science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21: 29-47.
5. Franco, Annie, Neil Malhotra, and Gabor Simonovits. 2014. "Publication bias in the social sciences: Unlocking the file drawer." *Science* 345(6203): 1502-1505.

November 24. Thanksgiving Break

Week 16. Best Practices II

December 1

Reading:

1. Fry, Hannah. 2019. "What Statistics Can and Can't Tell Us About Ourselves." *The New Yorker*. September 2.
2. Lieberman, Evan S. 2016. "Can the Biomedical Research Cycle be a Model for Political Science?" *Perspectives on Politics*.
3. Lin, Winston, and Donald P. Green. 2016. "Standard operating procedures: A safety net for pre-analysis plans." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 49(3): 495-500.
4. MacLean, Lauren M. 2013. "The Power of the Interviewer." In *Interview Research in Political Science*, ed. Layna Mosley. Cornell University Press. Pp. 67-83.
5. Newman, Andy. 2019. "I Found Work on an Amazon Website. I Made 97 Cents an Hour." *New York Times*. November 15.

All revised short papers are due via eLC drop box by Wednesday, December 14th at 5pm.