

INTL 6010: Research methods in international policy

Course information	Instructor information
Fall 2024	dwhill@uga.edu
Thursday, 9:35 a.m.-12:45 p.m	Office hours: By appointment
115 IA Building	Office: 319 IA Building

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to learn the fundamental principles of policy research. Although academic and policy research sometimes have different goals, they share a common set of criteria for conducting sound research. Being familiar with these criteria is necessary for both reading and producing (academic and policy) research. To usefully read existing research, you must be able to evaluate whether and how a study's conclusions are supported by the evidence it presents. To produce sound research, you must be able to not only identify an interesting question, but to recognize what kind of evidence you need to answer that question, where you might find it, and how you should analyze it.

In this course, you will learn how to design and execute a research project from start to finish. This process involves formulating a useful research question, reviewing and synthesizing existing research, gathering, analyzing, and drawing conclusions from data, and presenting results (sometimes for multiple, distinct audiences). Topics covered include research design, causal inference, conceptualization and measurement, descriptive inference, data visualization, and regression analysis.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will have learned how to:

- Produce a useful, specific, and tractable research question
- Critically evaluate existing research to identify its insights as well as its limitations
- Conduct a thorough review of relevant literature, recognize how findings relate to each other and which questions are unanswered
- Gather and examine data from publicly available sources
- Use software to conduct data analysis, including:
 - Descriptive analysis
 - Statistical hypothesis tests
 - Visual presentation of data/results
 - Regression analysis
- Present research findings to academic and non-academic audiences

Required Reading

The textbook for the course is: Rassel, Gary, Suzanne Leland, Zachary Mohr, and Elizabeth O'Sullivan. 2020. *Research Methods for Public Administrators*. Taylor & Francis. (electronic copy available through UGA library website).

Other assigned readings are available online through either the UGA library or the eLC course site.

Assignments and grades

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Course participation (20%):

This is a graduate level course. Each week, students are expected to read the assigned material and be prepared to participate in, and make meaningful contributions to, in-class discussion and activities. Making a *meaningful* contribution means offering insightful comments and constructive critiques, asking useful questions, and demonstrating strong comprehension of the material.

Lab assignments (10% each, 30% total):

Over the course of the semester students will complete three lab assignments that require you to analyze data using statistical software. For these assignments, you may use either Stata or R. Stata is proprietary software but is available to you via remote access through [vLab](#). R is free software and is available to download at [The Comprehensive R Archive Network](#). We will spend time in class learning how to use these programs.

Students will have at least one week to complete each lab assignment. Due dates for lab assignments are as follows:

Lab 1: October 16th

Lab 2: November 6th

Lab 3: November 20th

Research design paper (50%): At the end of the course students will submit a research design on a substantive topic of their choosing. A research design is a plan to conduct an (empirical) research paper. This entails identifying a research question, developing a theoretical argument that addresses/answers the question, making a specific claim that can be evaluated using data, and proposing a research design to test this claim. The paper should describe the data needed for the analysis and the appropriate method for analyzing it, but does not have to include a complete analysis. The research design can be qualitative or quantitative, but there must be a plan to execute an empirical research project (it cannot be purely theoretical/conceptual).

Students are required to submit a proposed research question by *August 21st*. This document should describe their question in no more than one paragraph. The exact question may change over the course of the semester. By *September 13th*, students must submit a 3-5 page literature review that synthesizes existing research on their topic and explains how their paper builds on/adds to existing work. By *October 4th*, students must submit a 3-5 page theory section. This document should identify the paper's main claim and make a logically coherent argument that justifies this claim. By *October 25th*, students must submit a 3-5 page research design that describes the nature of the data needed for evaluating the paper's main claim, where it might come from, and how it

would be analyzed, and explains why the proposed analysis is appropriate for the purpose at hand. I will give students individual feedback after each of the due dates listed above. Between October 25th and November 8th, I will schedule one-on-one meetings with students to discuss their projects. Final papers are due on *December 5th* and are expected to include *revised* versions of each of the documents students submit throughout the semester.

Grade Distribution (note that I do not assign minus grades):

90 - 100: A
86 - 89: B+ 80 - 85: B
76 - 79: C+ 70 - 75: C
66 - 69: D+ 60 - 65: D
below 60: F

Course Website

The course website can be accessed through elc.uga.edu. You will need to use this site to access some of the course readings.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a plan for the course, and we may deviate from it. I will clearly communicate to students any changes that become necessary, and will do so in a timely manner.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in order to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the instructor or designate during regular office hours or by appointment.

University Honor Code/Academic Honesty Policy

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. 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.

Withdrawal Policy

Students who withdraw from the class before the withdrawal deadline of June 20 will be assigned a grade based on their performance (pass/fail) in the class up to the point of withdrawal. This means that students who are failing will be assigned a “WF” grade even if they withdraw before the deadline. The university automatically assigns a “WF” grade upon withdrawal to students who withdraw from a class after the withdrawal deadline.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

August 15: Introduction and course overview, no reading.

August 22 – Beginning a research project: Rassel et al, Chapter 1

Charap, Samuel (and many others). 2023. “Anticipating Flashpoints with Russia: Patterns and Drivers.” Rand Corporation. ([link](#))

Knopf, Jeffrey. 2006. “Doing a Literature Review.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(1): 127-132.

August 29 – Research design basics: Rassel et al, Chapter 2

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton. (Chapter 2)

Seawright, Jason, and John Gerring. 2008. “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options.” *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2): 294-308.

September 5 – Experiments, quasi-experiments, and causal inference: Rassel et al, Chapters 3 and 12 (pp. 382-384).

Simmons, Beth. 2000. “International Law and State Behavior: Commitment and Compliance in International Monetary Affairs.” *American Political Science Review* 94 (4): 819-835.

Von Stein, Jana. 2005. “Do Treaties Constrain or Screen? Selection Bias and Treaty Compliance.” *American Political Science Review* 99(4): 611-622. (skim. See also reply by Simmons and Daniel Hopkins in the same issue.)

Lupu, Yonatan. 2013. “Best Evidence: The Role of Information in Domestic Judicial Enforcement of International Human Rights Treaties.” *International Organization* 67(3): 469-503.

Dai, Xinyuan, and Alexandros Tokhi. 2023. “New Democracies and Commitment to Human Rights Treaties.” *International Studies Quarterly* 67(4).

September 12 – Concepts and measurement: Rassel et al, Chapter 4.

Munck, Gerardo L. and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. “Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices.” *Comparative Political Studies* 35(1): 5-34.

Hill Jr., Daniel W. 2016. “Democracy and the concept of personal integrity rights.” *Journal of Politics* 78(3): 822-835.

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.

September 19 – Sampling: Rassel et al, Chapter 5.

Dion, Michelle L. and Sara McLaughlin Mitchell. 2020. “How many citations to women is ‘enough’? Estimates of gender representation in political science.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 53(1): 107-113.

Habyarimana, James and Macartan Humphreys, Daniel N. Posner, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2007. “Why does ethnic diversity undermine public goods provision?” *American Political Science Review* 101(4): 709-725.

Mullinix, Kevin J., Thomas J. Leeper, James N. Druckman, and Jeremy Freese. 2015. “The generalizability of survey experiments.” *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 2(2): 109-138.

September 25 – Finding and analyzing data: Rassel et al, Chapter 9.

Coppedge, Michael, et al. 2024. “V-Dem Codebook v14” Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. ([link](#))

Themnér, Lotta, and Peter Wallensteen. 2014. “Armed conflicts, 1946-2013.” *Journal of Peace Research* 51(4): 541-554.

Uppsala Conflict Data Program [website](#)

World Development Indicators [Database](#)

Be sure to familiarize yourself with either Stata or R before coming to class. For Stata, you should log in to [vLab](#), open Stata, and open and summarize a data file in Stata. For R, you should download and install R from [this website](#), open R, and open and summarize a data file in R.

October 3 – Combining variables/creating indices: Rassel et al, Chapter 10.

Gurr, Ted Robert. 1974. “Persistence and change in political systems, 1800 -1971.” *American Political Science Review* 68(4): 1482-1504.

Marshall, Monty, and Ted Robert Gurr. 2020. “Polity5: Dataset User’s Manual.” ([link](#))

Coppedge, Michael, et al. 2011. “Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: A new approach.” *Perspectives on Politics* 9(2), 247-267.

Coppedge, Michael, et al. 2024. “V-Dem Codebook v14” Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. ([link](#))

October 10 – Using statistical software for descriptive analysis: Rassel et al, Chapter 11.

Samii, Cyrus. 2013. “Perils or promise of ethnic integration? Evidence from a hard case in Burundi.” *American Political Science Review* 107(3): 558-573.

Healy, Kieran, and James Moody. 2014. “Data visualization in sociology.” *Annual review of sociology* 40(1): 105-128.

October 17 – Statistical hypothesis testing: Rassel et al, Chapter 12.

October 24 – Statistical hypothesis testing: Agresti, Alan and Barbara Finlay. 1997. *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*. Prentice Hall. Chapters 5 and 6.

October 31 – Working with nominal and ordinal variables: Rassel et al, Chapter 13

November 7 – Regression analysis: Rassel et al, Chapter 14.

Schroeder, Larry D., David L. Sjoquist, and Paula E. Stephan. 1986. *Understanding regression analysis: An introductory guide*. Sage Press.

November 14 – Regression analysis continued: Agresti, Alan and Barbara Finlay. 1997. *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*. Prentice Hall. Chapter 9.

Ward, Michael D., Brian D. Greenhill, and Kristin M. Bakke. 2010. “The perils of policy by p-value: Predicting civil conflicts.” *Journal of peace research* 47(4), 363-375.

November 21 – Communicating results: Rassel et al, Chapter 15.

Kastellec, Jonathan P., and Eduardo L. Leoni. 2007. “Using graphs instead of tables in political science.” *Perspectives on politics* 5(4): 755-771.