

Introduction to Political Methodology and Research Design

1) Course Description: The bulk of this course is designed to introduce you to the types of methodology most commonly utilized when conducting empirical research in Political Science. Rather than to simply provide you with an overview of the basics in methods; in addition, this course is structured to provide you with the practical skills necessary to undertake research of your own. In doing so, this class culminates with your submission of a 15 page research design of your choice.

2) Course Objectives: Often, courses which fall under the rubric of ‘methods’ differ considerably in their missions. Thus, it is important to clarify, not only the main objectives of this course, but its scope. The primary aim of this course is to render you capable of understanding and executing empirical research in Political Science. The essentials of forming a research question, gathering data and formulating hypotheses while being equipped with the varying methodological tools to effectively tackle your inquiry is of utmost importance. As a result, a comprehensive assessment of methodology (quantitative or qualitative) is not offered here. Instead, my goals for students are to understand the main ways in which political research is conducted, the methodological choices scholars face and their trade-offs, and how to carry out and produce a sophisticated research agenda.

3) Course Requirements

- **Class Preparation & Attendance:** Your success in this class depends heavily upon your attendance and active participation. You are expected to come to class having read the material assigned for the day. The course schedule lists the readings that will be covered each day. It will serve you well to re-visit the course schedule occasionally so as to be prepared to engage in class discussion. If I deem a student has not covered the material for the day and is unprepared, this will count as an absence.
- **Quizzes:** There will be six (5 short answer) quizzes through the first 9 weeks of the course. The quizzes are aimed at evaluating your knowledge of the material covered, and to provide me with additional information on areas where topics may/may not be well understood. This is vital since we will be covering the issue topics of the quizzes in a more applied fashion during the second half of the course. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped. Please consult the course schedule for quiz dates and topics.
- **Short Papers:** During the second half of the course, you will provide me with 4 one page, double-spaced papers on essential components of your final research design project. These papers (and the feedback received) are essential to the overall quality of your final project, thus, should not be taken lightly. No papers will be dropped. Please consult the course schedule for paper due dates.
- **Research Design Paper:** The main written assignment in this class is a 15 page minimum (double-spaced with 1” margins and 12 point fonts) research design. In this paper you will do the following:
 - Formulate a research question of empirical inquiry into Comparative Politics or the International Relations subfields of Political Science

- Locate this question in the context of relevant literature (i.e. discuss the importance of the question both for theory and policy)
- Outline a strategy for answering this question addressing the following
 - Operationalize the dependent variable (or what's being caused)
 - Develop a series of alternative explanations for the outcome
 - Operationalize the independent variables (or what's doing the causing)
 - Discuss case selection (what cases are you going to look at and why)
 - Develop a testing procedure (or, how you will test your arguments, and how you will know you are right)
- Offer a respectable bibliography comprised of academic research.

➤ **Grading:**

Attendance	10%
Quiz #1	4%
Quiz #2	4%
Quiz #3	4%
Quiz #4	4%
Quiz #5	4%
Paper#1	5%
Paper#2	5%
Paper#3	5%
Paper#4	5%
Research Presentations	15%
Research Design	35%

4) Course Policies

- **Absences:** A majority of the semester is dedicated to hands-on research and analysis; therefore, multiple absences will result in a reduction of your overall letter grade, while excess absences may result in failure of the course. You are permitted two unexcused absences through the semester. Any absence in excess of this allowance may be detrimental to your overall grade. Please plan accordingly. More than 5 absences (unexcused or not) will result in an automatic failing grade.
- **Missed Assignments:** Late assignments will not be accepted. Papers are due, typed, at the end of the class period. You will need them for discussion during class time. Missed assignments will be counted as a 0 which will inevitably reduce your overall grade for the course.
- **Cheating & Academic Dishonesty:** Any student found to be in violation of the University's policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty will receive an F in this course and be reported to the appropriate authorities. If in doubt, please consult the university handbook.

5) Textbooks & Class Materials

- There is one required textbook for this course. The text is:
Political Science Research Methods, 6th Edition
Janet Buttolph Johnson, University of Delaware
H. T. Reynolds, University of Delaware
Jason D. Mycoff, University of Delaware
- In addition to the above textbook, we will spend a week of class time in the computer lab working with STATA software. It might help to cover the basics of STATA before then. Please consult the course schedule for lab date.

*Other readings can be found online through Blackboard or Library Reserves

6) Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1: Scientific Method

Class A: Introduction

Class B: The Seven Steps of the Scientific Method:

- *Chapter 2 of textbook*

Class C: Deduction and Induction in Social Science Research:

- *Chapter 2 of textbook*

Week 2: Theory, Variables and Hypotheses (Overview)

Quiz 1(*On Scientific Method*)

Class A: The importance of Theory in Research:

- *Chapters 2 & 3 of textbook (pages TBD)*

Class B: Independent and Dependent Variables:

- *Van Evera, Stephen. 1997. Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Pp. 9-21.*

Class C: Formulating Hypotheses: *Same as above*

Week 3: Concepts, Case Selection, Data and Measures (Overview)

Quiz 2(*On Theory, Variables and Hypotheses*)

Class A: Defining Concepts:

- *Sartori, G. 1970. "Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics." American Political Science Review. 64:1033-1053.*

- *Collier, D. and J. Mahon, Jr. 1993. "Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Politics." American Political Science Review. 87(4): 845-55.*

Class B: The Accuracy of Measurements (Reliability and validity):

- *Adcock, R. and D. Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." American Political Science Review. 95(3):529-46.*

- *Shively, W. Phillips. 1998. The Craft of Political Research. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Pp. 37-52.*

Class C: Cases and Data

- *Geddes, B. 1990. "How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics." Political Analysis. 2: 131-50.*

Week 4: Research Design Fundamentals/ Intro to Quant and Qual.

**Quiz 3*(On Concepts, Cases, Measures and Data)*

Class A: Causal Inferences and Controlled Experimentation

- *Shively, W. "Chapter 6: Causal Thinking and the Design of Research." The Craft of Political Research. Third Edition. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990.*

- *DeFelice, E. 1986. "Causal inference and comparative methods." Comparative Political Studies. 19(3):415-37*

Class B: Interpreting and Generalizing Results (TBD)

Class C: Intro to Quant and Qual. Approaches to Social Science

- *Rabinow, P. Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977. Pages TBD.*

- *Chapter 11 of textbook (Pages TBD)*

Week 5: Quant. methods (Overview)

Quiz 4

Class A: Sampling and Statistical inferences

- *Chapter 7 of textbook (Pages TBD)*

Class B: Large-N research techniques (Experimental and Statistical)

- *Chapter 11 of textbook (Pages TBD)*

Class C: Statistical Tools and Approaches

- *Chapter 11 of textbook (Pages TBD)*

Week 6: Quant. Methods (Applied) /Lab (Will work with data from Afro-barometer, or ICPSR data)

Class A: Correlation/Cross Tabs

- *Chapter 12 of textbook (Pages TBD)*

Class B: Linear Regression

- *My personal notes*

Class C: Logistic Regression

- *My personal notes*

Week 7: Qual. Methods (Overview)

**Quiz 5*(On Quantitative Methods)*

Class A: Descriptive Inference

- *Chapter 5 of textbook (Pages TBD)*

- *George and Bennett, Chapter 2*

Class B: Small-N research techniques

- *Same as above*

Class C: Small-N Tools and Approaches
- *Same as above*

Week 8: Qual. Methods (Applied)

Class A: The Case Study (Types)
- *George & Bennett (Chapter TBD)*

Class B: Most Similar/Most Different Designs
- *Gerring Chapter 9*

Class C: Process Tracing, Analytic Narratives and Interviewing
- *Rubin, H. and I. Rubin. Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data. Thousand Oaks, C.A.:Sage Publications, 1995.*

Week 9: Quant/Qual. Combined/Pick Research Topic/Create a Puzzle

**Quiz 6*(On Qualitative Methods)*

Class A: Nested Analysis and Mixed Method Research
- *Lieberman, E.S. 2005. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." American Political Science Review. 99(3):435-52.*

Class B: Creating a Research Puzzle
- *Zinnes, Dina. A. 1980. Three Puzzles in Search of a Researcher." International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 24 No. 3, 315-342.*

Class C: Identifying a Research Question
- *Chapter 3 of Textbook (Pages TBD)*

Week 10: Methods/Justification

**Paper 1*(On Research Puzzle and Question)*

Class A: Quantitative, Qualitative or Both?
- (Review w/ research topic)

Class B: Exploratory or Confirmatory
- (Review w/ research topic)

Class C: Tradeoffs
- *Gerring, Chapter 10 (Pages TBD)*
-(Review w/ research topic)

Week 11: Theory, Hypothesis and Variables (Applied)

**Paper 2*(On Methods)*

Class A: Literature Review
- Chapter 6 of text (Pages TBD)

Class B: Situating Research Question
- *Same as above*

Class C: Identifying Variables and Formulating Hypotheses
- (Review w/ research project)

Week 12: Concepts, Case Selection, Data and Measures (Applied)

**Paper 3* (On Theory, Hypotheses and Variables)*

Class A: Defining and Measuring Concepts

-(Review w/ research topic)

Class B: Case selections

-(Review w/ research topic)

Class C: Data

-(Review w/ research topic)

Week 13: Testing Data (hypotheses) and Interpreting Results (Applied)

**Paper 4*(On Concepts, Cases and Measures)*

Class A: Evaluating Data

-(Review w/ research topic)

Class B: Testing Hypotheses

-(Review w/ research topic)

Class C: Interpreting Results and Forming Conclusions

-(Review w/ research topic)

Week 14: Final presentations

Week 15: Final Presentations