

Professor Dawn Brancati
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Prof. Office Hours: Wed, 11-12pm, Seigle 284
Meeting Time: 1-2:30PM, Lab Sciences 260

POLITICAL SCIENCE 495: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This course provides an introduction to qualitative and quantitative research methods in political science. Topics address issues related to theory building (e.g., case studies and formal models) as well as theory testing (e.g., observational studies and experiments). Technical issues related to these methods are not the focus of this course. Theoretical issues regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the different approaches are instead. Ultimately, the goal of this course is twofold: (1) to instruct students to critically analyze scholarly articles with particular attention to research design, and (2) to guide students in how to design an original research project, such as a senior thesis. Both the readings assignments, including methodological and applied readings, and the written assignments are directed toward these goals.

EXPECTATIONS/REQUIREMENTS:

Students are expected to come to each class having read the assignments for that day ahead of time and to participate in the class discussions. All students must submit their assignments on time. Late assignments will be graded down 1/3 point for every day late. Late assignments will not be accepted after 3 days. Late final exam essays will not be accepted at all. Extensions *may* be granted but only in the case of serious unforeseen illness and/or family emergencies. Powerpoint slides will not be made available to students.

READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Reading assignments include two types: (1) methodological readings, and (2) applied readings in American politics, comparative politics, or international relations. The methodological readings discuss theoretical issues related to each method while the applied readings are examples of original research using each method. Readings are available through e-reserves (password: methods). A list of optional readings will be made available electronically.

EXAMS:

The course will have a mid-term and a final exam. Each exam will have an in-class and take-home component. The in-class exam is comprised mainly of short-answers about various methodological issues. The take-home exam (methodical critique) will consist of one 8-12 page essay in which students offer a thoughtful, methodological critique of an academic article.

GRADES:

Midterm (take-home): 30%
Midterm (in-class): 15%
Final (take-home): 30%
Final (in-class): 15%
Participation: 10%

INTRODUCTION: MON., 01/12/15

I. RESEARCH METHODS: PURPOSE AND GOALS (WED., 01/14/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: *What is methodology? Why does it matter? How does the method we use shape the answers that we get? Is there a best method? What is the scientific method?*

METHOD READINGS:

Almond, Gabriel and Stephen Genco. 1977. Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of World Politics. *World Politics* 29:(4): 489-522. Read *only* pp. 489-511.

Rehfeld, Andrew. 2010. Offensive Political Theory. *Perspectives on Politics* (2010), 8:465-486

Stevens, Jacqueline. "Political Scientists Are Lousy Forecasters." *New York Times*, June 23, 2012.

***** MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY*** MON., 01/19/15. NO CLASS. ******

II. RESEARCH TOPIC/QUESTION SELECTION (WED., 01/21/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: *What is the difference between a research question and a research puzzle? What makes a good topic? How to find a good topic? What are the differences between problem-driven versus method-driven approaches? Which is superior?*

****Please come to class prepared to discuss your thesis interests.****

METHOD READINGS:

Krugman, Paul. 1993. How I Work. *The American Economist*. 37(2): 25-31. (Nobel Prize Winner, 2008).

Rothman, Steven B. 2008. Comparatively Evaluating Potential Dissertation and Thesis Projects. *PS: Political Science and Politics* (October): 367-369.

APPLIED READINGS: NONE

III. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT (MON., 01/26/15; WED., 01/28/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: *What is the difference between a concept and a measure? What is concept stretching? When is a measure valid and reliable?*

METHOD READINGS:

Lohr, Steve. "The Age of Big Data," *The New York Times*, February 11, 2012.

Caramani, David. 2008. *Introduction to Comparative Method with Boolean Algebra*. Sage Publications. Read pp. 30-34.

APPLIED READINGS:

Collier, David and Steven Levitsky. 1997. Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research, *World Politics*, 49(3): 430-451.

IV. CAUSALITY (MON., 02/02/15 and WED., 02/04/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: *What is causality? Can we demonstrate it in social science research and how? What are the following terms: tautology, functionalism, spuriousness and endogeneity?*

METHOD READINGS:

Davis, James. 1985. *The Logic of Causal Order*. London: Sage Publications. Read pp. 1-34.

Jaccard, James and Jacob Jacoby. The Construction and Model Building Skills: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists. New York: The Guilford Press. Read pp.141-145; pp. 98-108.

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Read pp. 99-107.

APPLIED READINGS: NONE

V. FORMAL THEORY (MON., 02/09/15, and WED., 02/11/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: What are the assumptions of rational choice theory? Are these assumptions realistic? Does it matter if they are not? When are formal models most/least effective?

METHOD READINGS:

Arrow, Kenneth. 1983. The Principle of Rationality in Collective Decisions. In *Social Choice and Justice*, pp. 46-56.

APPLIED READINGS:

“How Game Theory Helped Improve New York City’s High School Application Process,” *The New York Times*, 5 December 2014.

VI. CASE STUDY METHODS (MON, 02/16/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: *How are qualitative methods and case studies useful? What are their limitations? What is the best case study method?*

METHOD READINGS:

Odell, John S. 2001. “Case Study Methods in International Political Economy.” *International Studies Perspectives* 2: 161-176.

APPLIED READINGS:

Berman, Sheri. 1997. Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic, *World Politics*, 49 (3): 401-429.
[SKIM]

VII. CASE SELECTION/SELECTION BIAS (WED., 02/18/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: What are the best principals to follow when choosing case studies to examine? What does the term selection bias mean and what problems arise from it?

METHOD READINGS:

Geddes, Barbara. 1990. “How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics.” *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150.

APPLIED READINGS:

Patricia Cohen, “Professor Is a Label That Leans to the Left,” *New York Times*, January 17, 2013.

VIII. COUNTERFACTUALS (MON., 02/23/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: *What is a counterfactual? What purpose can counterfactuals serve in research? When are counterfactuals useful and what constitutes a good counterfactual?*

METHOD READINGS:

Fearon. James. 1991. Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science *World Politics* 43(2): 169-195.

READINGS: NONE

IX. RESEARCH ETHIC STANDARDS (WED., 02/25/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: *Why do IRBs exist? What kind of research will they approve? What kind of research does not need IRB approval?*

METHOD READINGS: You must complete the Human Subjects Training Module. Bring CITI certificate to class by Monday, 03/04/13. <http://hrpo.wustl.edu/education/human-subjects-education/> Fill in your WUSTL key. Go to Human Subjects Education and then "Required Initial", then "Behavioral IRB Members and Researchers in the following Departments:"....."Then log on to CITI.

APPLIED READINGS:

Dylan Scott, "Professors Bumble into Big Legal Trouble After Election Experiment Goes Away Wrong," TPM, 27 October 2014.

***** MIDTERM EXAM *****

Exam Review, MON. 03/02/15

In-Class Exam, WED. 03/04/15

TAKE-HOME DUE FRIDAY, 03/06/15 BY 12 PM

***** SPRING BREAK (MON. 03/09/15; WED. 03/11/15) *****

X. INTERVIEWS (MON., 03/16/15 AND WED., 03/18/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: *Why interview people? How should I structure and approach an interview so that it is most effective? How to obtain interviews?*

METHOD READINGS:

Wu, Irene S. and Bojan Savic. 2010. How to Persuade Government Officials to Grant Interviews and Share Information for Your Research, PS, 721-723.

APPLIED READINGS:

Carey, Benedict. "Psychiatry Giant Sorry for Backing Gay 'Cure'." *The New York Times*, May 18, 2012.

XI. OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES (MON., 03/23/15 and WED., 03/24/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: What are the advantages of observational studies and when are they appropriate? To what does the term generalizability refer? What are the shortcomings of observational studies and how can they be overcome?

METHOD READINGS:

Jackman, Robert W. 1985. Cross-National Statistical Research and the Study of Comparative Politics. *American Journal of Political Science*. 29:161-182.

APPLIED READINGS:

"In One Study, a Heart Benefit for Chocolate," *The New York Times*, 14 September 2009.

Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2003. Ethnic Insurgency and Civil War. *American Political Science Review*, 97.1 (February): 75-90. [SKIM]

XII. CONTENT ANALYSIS (MON., 03/30/15 and WED. 04/01/15 [Lab Session])

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: What is content analysis? When is it appropriate? What are its benefits and shortcomings? What are the advantages and disadvantages of computer-aided content analysis?

METHOD READINGS: NONE

APPLIED READINGS:

Huber, John D. and Charles R. Shipan. 2002. *Deliberative Discretion? The Institutional Foundations of Bureaucratic Autonomy*. Cambridge University Press. Read pp. 1-13 and 44-77.

"Why Wasn't It 'Grapes of Glee'?" Study of Books Finds Economics Link?" *The New York Times*, 8 January 2014.

XIII. SURVEYS (MON., 04/06/15 and WED., 04/08/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: What kinds of things can you learn from surveys that you cannot learn from other methods? How to effectively design a survey from the instrument design to sampling and response rates?

METHOD READINGS:

Iarrosi, Giuseppe. 2006. *The Power of Survey Design*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. Read Chapter 3.

Tourangeau, Roger and Ting Yan. 2007. Sensitive Questions in Surveys. *Psychological Bulletin*. 133(5): 859-883.

APPLIED READINGS:

Hopkins, Dan. 2009. The Wilder Effect. *The Journal of Politics*. 71(3): 769-781

XIV. LABORATORY/SURVEY EXPERIMENTS (MON., 04/13/15 and WED., 04/15/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: *How can lab experiments be applied to political science? How do experiments allow researchers to establish causality? What is external validity?*

METHOD READINGS:

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

APPLIED READINGS:

Tomz, Michael. 2007. Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach. *International Organization* 61(4): 821-840.

Guests: Current Thesis Students who conducted experiments for their theses.

XV. NATURAL AND FIELD EXPERIMENTS (MON., 04/20/15)

TOPICS/QUESTIONS: *How do natural/field experiments differ from lab experiments? What are their advantages and disadvantages compared to lab experiments? How can they natural/field experiments be applied to political science?*

METHOD READINGS:

Dunning, Thad. 2008. Improving Causal Inference. *Political Research Science Quarterly*, 61 (2): 282-293.

APPLIED READINGS:

Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment *American Political Science Review* 102 (1): 33-48.

XVI. CONCLUSION: COMPARISON OF RESEARCH METHODS (WED., 04/22/15)

Exam Review. No Reading.

****** FINAL EXAM (IN-CLASS EXAM AND TAKE-HOME ESSAY), May 6, 2015 1- 3:00PM *******