POLISCI 299: Research Design

Spring 2019
Tuesdays/Thursdays, 1:30-2:50pm
Meeting on Zoom
https://canvas.stanford.edu/courses/116408

Contact Information

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Office Hours   by appointment (please sign up online at
                                 soledadprillaman.youcanbook.me)

Course Description

This course has two primary goals. The first is to teach students how to design and write a paper in political science. The emphasis is on learning how to turn an interest in a topic or issue into a focused question whose answer is both knowable and worth knowing, and then designing a research project that can arrive at that answer. We will read papers that tackle similar problems using different research methods and designs, allowing us to think about the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches.

The second goal is to launch students into their senior thesis projects with well-formed and interesting questions and an effective research strategy. Significant portions of the class will be designed around student interests and projects, and substantial class time will be devoted toward group and individual sessions focused on these projects as they form. The final 15-page research paper is intended to be both an exercise in writing a social scientific paper and a stepping stone to subsequent thesis work.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

Through active engagement with and successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
1. Critically evaluate various research designs and methodologies
2. Identify important and unanswered research questions
3. Draft a research design for the senior thesis

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment
1	4/7; 4/9	Intro and how to ask questions	Research topic presentation
2	4/14; 4/16	Descriptive inferences	Research question memo
3	4/21; 4/23	Causal inferences	Initial research design memo
4	4/28; 4/30	Theory development and hypotheses	Data sources memo
5	5/5; 5/7	Case studies, Interviews	Research hypothesis memo
6	5/12; 5/14	One-on-one meetings	
7	5/19; 5/21	Quantitative data and surveys	Literature review
8	5/26; 5/28	Experiments and natural experiments	Research design memo
9	6/2; 6/4	Student presentations	
10	6/9	Student presentations	Research proposal

Course Structure

Each week, the class will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Tuesday class will be styled like a normal discussion seminar, where we will discuss the readings from the week paying particular focus on the differences in research design across papers. It is important that you read all of the papers ahead of class. You will also be provided a reading guide each week. You do not need to think through the questions on the guide, but they will be used to structure our discussion. Thursday class will be used to workshop your individual thesis projects. We will do so through peer-editing and group discussion. This time is meant for you to get feedback on your project and progress your research proposal. To make sure that everyone gets the most out of this time, your assignments must be submitted on canvas no later than noon on Thursday.

Using Zoom

This class will meet exclusively online through Zoom. On the course Canvas page, you will see a tab for Zoom. All of the zoom links for class meetings will be available here. To ensure the best online class environment, everyone is expected to:
- Participate with video turned on for all class meetings
- Join the class from a quiet location

If you believe you will have trouble with any of the above requirements or have concerns about your internet/computer access, please get in touch with the instructor.

Assignments and Grades

In line with the University policy set during Covid-19, this class will be graded as Satisfactory/No Credit. To receive a grade of Satisfactory, students must submit all assignments detailed below and the assignment must be deemed to have satisfactorily accomplished the requirements (akin to having received a C grade or greater on a letter grading system).

1. Class participation: Attendance and active participation is integral to achieving the learning objectives of this course. Each class will focus on discussing the themes and specifics from that week's assigned readings. Part of active participation is therefore having done the readings prior

to class. Students are expected to read all required items listed for the week prior to attending class.

2. Research topic presentation: In class on Thursday of week 1, students will give a short 5-7 minute presentation on the topic they plan to study for their thesis. This presentation is meant to introduce the class to your research interests: what questions motivate you, why are you interested in this topic, where do you plan to do your study, what kinds of data do you hope to work with, etc Upload the slides to Canvas by the start of class on your presentation day, limited to <u>no more than 3 substantive slides</u>.

3. Research question memo: By week 2, students will submit up to a 1-page memo on the research question they want to answer in their final paper. Use the memo to motivate the broader topic you want to do research on and why it is important, clearly state your research question in one sentence, and discuss how it connects to the broader topic. This memo is due by noon on <u>April 16th</u>.

4. Initial research design memo: By week 3, students will submit up to a 1-page memo that lays out initial ideas on how they will attempt to answer the question they posed in their research question memo. To the best of their ability, students should discuss what kinds of methodologies they plan to use (case studies, quantitative analysis, survey experiments, etc.) and why these methodologies are best suited for the proposed question. If a student is uncertain, they can use this memo to discuss a few potential methodologies they are presently considering. This memo is due by noon on <u>April 23rd</u>.

5. Data sources memo: By week 4, students will submit a 1-2 page memo on potential data sources that they could draw from in their research. These data sources can be archives, secondary literature, publicly available data, data from the Stanford library, or original survey or interview data. This memo is meant to help students brainstorm a variety of sources of data that could help them answer their proposed research question using their proposed research methodologies. Given that, it is expected that each student will list multiple potential sources of data. This memo is due by noon on <u>April 30th</u>.

6. Research hypothesis memo: By week 5, students will submit a 1-2 page memo that states their refined research question and provides a preliminary set of theoretical hypotheses. The memo should be used to specify testable hypotheses and should offer a hypothesis about the relationship between (at least) two variables, and a very brief explanation for why you anticipate that relationship (causal logic). This memo is due by noon on <u>May 7th</u>.

7. Literature review: By week 7, students will submit a 4-5 page literature review summarizing the state of the literature surrounding their research question and relating this literature to the proposed research question. This should not merely be a listing of relevant works. You should critically present and discuss each study or set of studies that you choose to include in the review, and their contribution to answering the question at hand. The ultimate role of the literature review is to present what we know, and especially what we don't know about the research question being asked. A good literature review correctly identifies the contributions of previous scholarship, while also justifying why your own proposed work on the topic is needed to provide a thorough answer to the question at hand. The literature review is due by noon on

May 21st.

8. Research design memo: By week 8, students will submit a 4-5 page preliminary research design on your chosen research topic. The emphasis here is on the work being original, as opposed to a synthesis of the work of others. The memo should present an updated and refined research question, a set of testable hypotheses, and a clear methodological strategy to address that questions and test those hypotheses. If you will be using secondary evidence, this memo should include some preliminary results. If you will be collecting original evidence, this memo should include a discussion of how you will collect this evidence. The preliminary research design memo is due by noon on May 28th.

9. Research proposal presentation: This will take place during class in weeks 9 and 10 of the course. A broad suggestion for structuring your presentation is the following: motivate your research topic and its importance (1-2 slides), clearly state your research question (1 slide) and your hypotheses (1 slide), place your question in the literature (1 slide), present the outline of your research design (1-2 slides), present details and results of your preliminary analysis (remainder of presentation), discuss next steps (1 slide). Be prepared to talk for 15 minutes, leaving 10 minutes for questions and discussion. Upload the slides to Canvas by the start of class on your presentation day.

10. Research proposal: The final project consists of a 15-page research proposal that identifies an empirical or theoretical puzzle that has not been adequately addressed in the extant literature and then explores an approach to solving it. For this final assignment, you will be drawing from (but not simply copy-pasting) the assignments you have already completed. Your proposal should be written on a well-defined research question that is worth answering and should provide a series of testable hypotheses along with a theoretical justification for these hypotheses. It should contain a literature review that explains why extant research is inadequate for answering the question at hand and how this literature relates to your proposed question. It should then propose a strategy for answering the question. If you are using secondary data, you should provide an initial analysis. If you are collecting primary data, you should provide a detailed discussion of how you will collect these data. Everyone should include a detailed plan of the next steps to be undertaken in the ultimate analysis. Finally, special focus should be placed on a discussion of the caveats and challenges of your research design.

Academic Accommodation

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: http://oae.stanford.edu).

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. If something does come up that will inhibit your ability to attend class, such as illness, other obligations, or conflict with a religious observance, please email me to discuss possible accommodations.

Late Assignment Policy

Assignments submitted after the deadline will not be accepted unless an accommodation/extension was agreed to ahead of the deadline. Please email me at the earliest possible time if there is any foreseeable reason an assignment may not be able to be submitted by the deadline.

Course Expectations

What you can expect from me

I am here to guide your learning and will challenge you to actively engage in the course and to grow as scholars. I will strive for an inclusive and collaborative classroom and welcome any suggestions for improvement. I will do my best to give you the tools, feedback, and support to succeed. There is a lot of material that we will not be able to cover given time constraints. I aim to motivate students to seek out more information on such topics and will provide additional resources to do so. I highly encourage everyone to visit me in office hours or to set up a meeting, even if you don't feel that you have questions. I want to get to know you and support you in this learning experience!

What I expect from you

As this is a senior-level course, I expect you to take an active role in your learning by coming to class prepared and being ready to share your ideas through discussion with your classmates. To get the most out of the class, you should be prepared to share your ideas, ask questions, and listen actively. Each member of this class has different ideas and perspectives that will enrich the experience for everyone else, so I expect you to be respectful and thoughtful in your interactions. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

Readings

All required readings will be posted on Canvas. Students may wish to purchase the following books (henceforth KKV and JRM), however, scanned copies will be provided.

> Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba. Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). ISBN 0-691-03471-0

> Janet B. Johnson, Henry T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. (2015) *Political science research methods*. CQ Press.

WEEK 1 - Intro and how to ask questions

Thursday:
- KKV, Ch 1.
- JRM, Ch 3.
- David Freedman. (1991) "Statistical Models and Shoe Leather." *Sociological Methodology.* Pages 291-300 only.
- David McRaney. (2013) "Survivorship Bias." www.youarenotsosmart.com.

Suggested Readings:
- W. Phillips Shively. (2013) The Craft of Political Research. Boston: Pearson. Ch1, pages 1-11.

WEEK 2 - Descriptive inferences

Tuesday:
- Thomas Friedman. (2006) "The First Law of Petropolitics." *Foreign Policy.*
- Michael Ross. (2001) "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics.*
- Stephen Haber and Victor Menaldo. (2011) "Do Natural Resources Fuel Authoritarianism?" *American Political Science Review.*

Thursday:
- KKV, Sections 2.1.1, 2.2, 2.6, and 5.2.
- John Gerring. (2012) "Mere description." *British Journal of Political Science*, 32:1–26.

WEEK 3 - Causal inferences

Tuesday:
- Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James Robinson. (2001) "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation." *American Economic Review.*
- David Y. Albouy. (2012) "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation: Comment." *American Economic Review.*
- Alexander Lee and Kenneth A. Schultz. (2012) "Comparing British and French Colonial Legacies: A Discontinuity Analysis of Cameroon." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*.

Thursday:
- JRM, Ch 6.
- KKV Sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.5 and 5.4.

WEEK 4 - Theory development and hypothesis generation

Tuesday:
- James D. Fearon. (1994) "Signaling Versus the Balance of Power and Interests: An Empirical Test of Crisis Bargaining Model." *Journal of Conflict Resolution.*
- Marc Trachtenberg. (2012) "Audience Costs: An Historical Analysis." *Security Studies.*
- Michael Tomz. (2007) "Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach." *International Organization.*

Thursday:
- W. Phillips Shively. (2013) *The Craft of Political Research*. Boston: Pearson. Ch 2.
- James D. Fearon. (1991) "Counterfactuals and hypothesis testing in political science." *World Politics.*

Suggested Readings:
- JRM, Ch. 4.

WEEK 5 - Case studies

Tuesday:
- Robert Putnam. (1994) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy.* Princeton University Press, chs. 1 and 4.
- Sheri Berman. (1997) "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World Politics.*
- Paromita Sanyal. (2009) "From credit to collective action: The role of microfinance in promoting women's social capital and normative influence." *American sociological review.*

Thursday:
- John Gerring. (2004) "What is a case study and what is it good for?" *American Political Science Review*.
- Beth L. Leech. (2002) "Symposium on interview methods in political science." *PS: Political Science & Politics,* **p. 665-672**.

Suggested Readings:
- JRM, Ch. 7.
- Barbara Geddes. (1990) "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get." *Political Analysis*.
- Nora Cate Schaeffer and Stanley Presser. (2003) "The science of asking questions." *Annual Review of Sociology*.

WEEK 6 – One-on-one meetings

No class. Please sign up for a 30 minute office hours slot during normal class time.

WEEK 7 - Interviews and Surveys

Tuesday:
- Mary C Waters. (1994) "Ethnic and racial identities of second-generation black immigrants in New York City." *International Migration Review*.
- Daniel Posner. (2004) "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review*.
- Lauren Davenport. (2016) "The Role of Gender, Class, and Religion in Biracial Americans' Racial Labeling Decisions." *American Sociological Review*.

Thursday:
- Jon A. Krosnick. (1999) "Survey research." *Annual review of psychology*.

Suggested Readings:
- Robert Adcock and David Collier. (2001) "Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research." *American Political Science Review*.
- Justin Grimmer and Brandon Stewart. (2013) "Text as Data: The promise and pitfalls of automatic content analysis methods for political texts." *Political analysis*.

WEEK 8 – Quantitative Data and Experiments

Tuesday:
- Larry Bartels. (1993) "Messages received: The political impact of media exposure." *American Political Science Review*.
- Stefano DellaVigna and Ethan Kaplan. (2007) "The Fox News effect: Media bias and voting." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics,* **p. 1187-1217**.
- Gary King, Benjamin Schneer and Ariel White. (2017) "How the news media activate public expression and influence national agendas." *Science*.

Thursday:
- JRM, Ch. 9.
- Alan S. Gerber and Donald P. Green. (2008) *Field experiments and natural experiments.* In Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, editors, Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology. Oxford University Press, Ch 15.

Suggested readings:
- JRM, Ch. 10.
- Thad Dunning. (2012) *Natural experiments in the social sciences: a design-based approach*. Cambridge University Press, Ch 1.

- Benjamin A. Olken. (2009) "Do television and radio destroy social capital? Evidence from Indonesian villages." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics.*

WEEK 9 - Student Presentations

WEEK 10 - Student Presentations