

Scope and Methods of Political Science
Political Science 700
Section 001

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University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
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Tuesday 4:00-6:40 PM
Bolton 294

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is designed for incoming graduate students. We will focus on three related issues: 1) how authors in political science and in related fields convince their readers of the validity of their theories; 2) how to distinguish between convincing and unconvincing research; and 3) how to design one's own research so that it is as convincing as possible. In this class, students should develop a taste for criticism: that is, not believing things written only because they have been published, but in evaluating the evidence presented; in being skeptical, yet fair. This last skill (fairness) will be most appreciated when you begin to design your own research projects at the end of this course and in later years. For now, our focus is on criticism and on developing the skills to distinguish convincing from unconvincing research projects. We will discuss some aspects of philosophy of science, notably questions of the nature of "proof" and evidence in science, but mostly we will learn by doing. In this case, doing means both criticizing existing research and, equally importantly, proposing improvements.

Each of the readings assigned in this course should be read with three questions in mind, questions to which we will return constantly in class, and which should be the focus of your papers: 1) What is the author's argument or theory, and how does it compare to alternative theories that might be proposed or have been proposed by others? 2) What evidence does the author provide, and how convincing is it? and 3) How could the research be improved? This last question on improvements will be central to all our discussions, since each criticism must generally be related to a possible way of fixing the problem noted. Also of particular interest will be the question of alternative theories: has the author of a given theory not only convinced you that her theory makes good sense, but also that rival explanations have been eliminated? This last point, we will see, implies that individual theories can rarely be treated in isolation; rather, all work must be considered as part of a literature in which contending explanations must be evaluated against each other. We will also note that question #2 above, on evidence, covers a wide range of issues including research design, operationalization and measurement, sampling, index construction, data gathering, statistical analysis, and other related questions.

The following books are available for purchase:

Required Texts:

Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava, and David Nachmias. 2008. *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. 7th ed. New York: Worth. (hereafter referred to as Nachmias)

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (hereafter referred to as KKV)

Reserved Readings:

Campbell, Donald T., and Julian C. Stanley. 1966. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.

The bulk of the readings for this class will be in the form of individual chapters, convention papers, and journal articles. All readings will be available using standard or electronic reserve through the Golda Meir Library, or through the internet via JSTOR or EBSCOhost.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Grades will be based on the following:

Short Papers:	25%
Rough Draft of Term Paper	20%
Term Paper:	35%
Class Participation:	20%

SHORT PAPERS: There will be a series of short papers throughout the term, assigned in such a way that several students will have assignments each week on a rotating basis. Each week's discussion, therefore, will benefit from a number of students who have been assigned to write papers on particular topics. These short papers should not be summaries of the readings. Rather, they should take issue with the author(s) on some particular question, discuss what potential problems arise from what the author(s) did, and propose an improvement. Since these papers will be short (no more than 4 pages, double-spaced), you should not spend time on generalities, but should go quickly into the particulars. After stating the general problem, spend some time discussing the particular mistake or unforeseen implication of what the author did, and then discuss how to make improvements. Also discuss how this change might be related to any possible changes in the substantive conclusions of the article. In class discussion, you may be asked to summarize the reading and to begin the discussion on problems and improvements. These papers will therefore serve two purposes: first, they will allow you to show your understanding of the articles and to work on proposing improvements on assigned topics; second, they will constitute a way to ensure intelligent class discussion, since for each reading there will generally be at least one student assigned to write a paper and therefore particularly aware of the problems with the reading. Since it would be easy to write a brilliant paper after having sat in the class discussion, late papers will normally not be accepted for credit. So, plan to have them in on time. One copy should be placed in my mailbox by 12:00 pm on the Monday preceding our class. I'll return them in class on Tuesday.

TERM PAPER: There is a term paper, due on the last day of class, with a preliminary draft due approximately one and a half months before. This paper will be a large version of the short papers. In it, you need to: 1) choose a limited area of research that interests you; 2) identify some empirical studies that have been done on that topic, using contrasting methodological approaches; 3) evaluate these studies and their methodologies, discussing the strong and weak

points of each approach, and linking these to the theory being tested; and 4) propose a theory, a research design, and a set of measurements that would be the best possible way to answer your question. You should go into detail on the proposed theory, the research design, measurements, availability of evidence, and any other important points. The topic may be anything from political science that interests you (you may want to choose a topic that interests you enough to follow up on, for example in your other statistics, methods, or substantive courses this or next semester). The literature review does not have to be all-inclusive; rather the important point is that it include examples of different approaches (case study, longitudinal design, cross-sectional comparison, experimental study, for example), so that you can discuss the strong and weak points of each approach. Your discussion of the literature should show what problems have plagued researchers in the past, and your proposal obviously should begin to do away with those problems. You should be able to do this in about 25 pages or so.

Students often come to my office to discuss their paper topic and the conversation often goes something like this: “Me: So what topic are you interested in? Student: I think I’d like to do something on [insert overly broad and vague topic here]; Me: Can you be more specific, i.e., what is your research question, what are your variables, what is the puzzle you’re interested in, etc.; Student: [silence, or hemming and hawing]” (BTW, lest you think I am being overly critical, I was once a student and did the exact same thing ☺). I would like each of you to spend the first week or two of class in the library, or online, looking for and then reading journal articles that are related to the topic you’re interested in. Research ideas do not come out of thin air. Instead, they are borne of reading and studying what’s already been done and then adjusting one’s approach so that it is more original in nature. In fact, Google Scholar uses the tagline or motto “Stand on the Shoulders of Giants.” The only way to figure out what’s been done is to actually read those journal articles that are relevant to your intended field of study. Hint: research ideas can often be found in the conclusions of journal articles wherein most authors often include a Further Research Is Needed (FRIN) paragraph or two. As you read articles that are related to your general area of interest, you will begin to see how research questions are formed, narrowed down, and presented.

For our purposes here, you do not have to initially come up with an original research question, since you will identify several different theoretical and methodological approaches to your question first, before you propose your own unique theoretical and/or methodological improvements. So, spend the first week or two identifying and reading 5-10 journal articles that you can use for your paper assignment this semester. You may actually look at many more than 5-10 articles as you discover how your topic area is narrowed down by authors in various ways, but you should settle on 5-10. These 5-10 articles should give you a solid foundation from which to select 4-6 articles that approach the same research question from different theoretical and methodological approaches.

You are advised to get an early start on the research design paper. Since the criticism of existing literature is an important part of the paper, you will need to locate a number of articles or books for criticism before you can even start writing the paper. You should discuss your topic with me before the mid-point of the semester so that I can help you avoid topics where too few studies have been done, or help you define your topic in the most appropriate way. The first three parts of this paper are due in class on **October 18**. This should include your evaluation of existing literature, but not your own proposal for further research. I will read and comment on those

within one-two weeks, with suggestions for the research design. Then, your final paper should include any improvements on the first draft, including solving any problems that I might point out in my comments, and then propose your research design. This final version of the paper is due in class during the last meeting of the semester (**December 13**). When you hand in your final paper you should also hand back my comments on your earlier draft.

PARTICIPATION AND DISCUSSION: Class participation is a must. There will be some lecturing in this class, but mostly we should have a discussion among all the students about the merits of the readings presented. Note that asking questions where you do not understand is an important contribution to the discussion. Answering others' questions also helps. Graduate seminars cannot be run effectively without class participation, and students should get in the habit of contributing. Class participation will involve normal questions and discussion as well as occasional presentations of assigned material. I reserve the right to call on students individually, and I will do so. No student can be a passive participant in this class and receive higher than a B+, assuming all the written work is perfect. Talk. Participate. Ask questions. Come prepared. The course will be organized as a research seminar, and will include weekly presentations and discussions of the readings. However, some class time will also be spent on brief lectures and on discussion of students' research projects. Everyone is expected to read all of the assigned readings, and participate in all class discussions! Failure to participate in class discussions will be taken as an indicator that the student is not adequately prepared to do so. Relatedly, failure to be adequately prepared for class discussions is a good indicator that the individual is not well equipped for graduate school.

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is a representation of other people's work as your own (for example, in directly quoting another source without using quotation marks). Plagiarism can be defined by using Alexander Lindley's definition:

Plagiarism is the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of another person's mind, and presenting it as one's own (Plagiarism and Originality [New York: Harper, 1957], p. 2). Plagiarism may take the form of repeating another's sentences as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, or even presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of a thesis as though it were your own. In short, to plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from another.

I strongly urge you to access the following link to read a discussion of what plagiarism is and looks like <https://plagiarism.duke.edu/>. Another useful link concerning plagiarism as well as information pertaining to grammar and writing can be found by clicking on the following link: <http://webster.comnet.edu/mla/plagiarism.shtml>. See the Wisconsin Administrative Code, Chapter UWS 14, entitled "Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures," for a discussion and range of available penalties. Severe penalties (up to the maximum allowed) should be expected for plagiarism or other forms of cheating. Along these lines, you may NOT use a paper that you have written previously, or are currently writing for another course, for this class unless you clear it with me first. Doing so without first consulting me is considered academic misconduct and will be dealt with accordingly.

UWM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has several policies concerning students with disabilities, accommodations for religious observances, students called to active military duty, incompletes, discriminatory conduct, academic misconduct, and so forth available for you to read using the following link: <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf>. I strongly encourage you to access this link and familiarize yourself with these policies and procedures.

COURSE OUTLINE:

The following is a tentative outline for the semester, including topics and reading assignments. In the event of disruption of normal classroom activities due to an H1N1 swine flu outbreak, the format for this course may be modified to enable completion of the course. In that event, you will be provided an addendum to this syllabus that will supersede this version.

I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

September 6: Introduction to the course and overview of the syllabus

September 13: The Scientific Approach: Theories, Concepts, Hypotheses, Inference

We will focus on the importance of being wrong; the nature of scientific explanation; the nature of evidence; what is convincing to a scientist; how evidence accumulates; what is “proof.” We will return to some of the philosophical questions of this approach during the last week of the semester. For now, the focus will be on developing a shared vocabulary and an understanding of the process. Note how these ideas apply to quantitative and to qualitative research projects.

Nachmias, Ch. 1-4

KKV, Ch. 1

Stinchcombe, Arthur L. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. pp. 15-56. *ER*

Lave, Charles, and James G. March. 1975. *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*. New York, NY: Harper and Row. pp. 9-84. *ER*

September 20: The Scientific Approach (cont.)

KKV, Ch. 2-3

Glenn, Norval D. xxxx. “What We Know, What We Say We Know: Discrepancies Between Warranted and Unwarranted Conclusions.” In *ER*

II. MEASUREMENT ISSUES

September 27: Measurement Issues

We will concentrate on measurement terminology; tests for reliability and validity; basics of designing good measures that tap the concepts they are supposed to measure; how to

recognize measures that do not measure what they say they measure; systematic versus random measurement error and their consequences; building indices combining multiple measures into a single scale. Examples from survey research, economic data, and international relations.

Nachmias, Ch. 7, 11, 12, 18, skim ch. 9

KKV, Ch. 4-6

Chandler, William M., and Marsha A. Chandler. 1974. "The Problem of Indicator Formation in Comparative Research." *Comparative Political Studies* 7:26-46. *ER*

Prothro, James W., and Charles M. Grigg. 1960. "Fundamental Principles of Democracy." *Journal of Politics* 22:276-294. *JSTOR*

Baumgartner, Frank R., and Jack L. Walker. 1988. "Survey Research and Membership in Voluntary Associations." *American Journal of Political Science* 32:908-928. *JSTOR*

Gibson, James L., Gregory A. Caldeira, and Lester Kenyatta Spence. 2003. "Measuring Attitudes Toward the United States Supreme Court." *American Journal of Political Science* 47:354-367. *EBSCOhost*

Bollen, Kenneth A. 1980. "Issues in the Comparative Measurement of Political Democracy." *American Sociological Review* 45:370-390. *JSTOR*

Morgenstern, Oskar. 1963. *On the Accuracy of Economic Observations*. 2nd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. pp. 3-69, 216-241. *ER*

October 4: Measurement Issues (cont.)

October 11: Sampling and Survey Designs

Many measurement issues here as well, specific to surveys this week, but also important in other types of research as well. Also sampling procedures and the importance of sampling error as opposed to other types of error in most work that involves sampling, such as surveys. Note the differences and similarities between mass surveys, elite surveys, and mail questionnaires, and pay attention to how one creates a sampling frame and ensures a high response rate. Note that one can calculate the standard error associated with sampling uncertainties but that other types of error, such as low response rate, poorly worded questions, or ambiguous responses, are not included in these calculations.

Nachmias, Ch. 8, 10, 11

Hojnacki, Marie, and David C. Kimball. 1998. "Organized Interests and the Decision of Whom to Lobby in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 92:775-790. *JSTOR*

Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2:131-152. *ER*

Fowler, Floyd Jackson, Jr. 1992. "How Unclear Terms Affect Survey Data." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 56:218-231. *JSTOR*

Koss, Mary. 1992. "The Underdetection of Rape: Methodological Choices Influence Incidence Estimates." *Journal of Social Issues* 48:61-75. *ER*

III. RESEARCH DESIGN QUESTIONS

October 18: Experiments, Quasi-experimental, and Qualitative designs

This week focuses on designing a research project so that covariance, time-order, and spuriousness can be controlled or demonstrated. Time-series, cross-sectional designs, experimental designs, and a wide variety of other techniques are described. Note especially the numerous generic threats to validity that Campbell and Stanley lay out. Nachmias makes it easier to understand.

Nachmias, Ch. 5-6

Campbell, Donald T., and Julian C. Stanley. 1966. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.

Mook, Douglas G. 1983. "In Defense of External Invalidity." *American Psychologist* (April):379-387. *ER*

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

Kinder, Donald R., and Thomas R. Palfrey. 1993. "On Behalf of an Experimental Political Science." In *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*, ed. Donald R. Kinder and Thomas R. Palfrey. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. pp. 1-39. *ER*

October 25: Experiments in Political Science

Quattrone, George A., and Amos Tversky. 1988. "Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice." *American Political Science Review* 82:719-36. *JSTOR*

Chin, Michelle, Jon R. Bond, and Nehemia Geva. 2000. "A Foot in the Door: An Experimental Study of PAC and Constituency Effects on Access." *Journal of Politics* 62:534-49. *EBSCOhost*

Mintz, Alex, Nehemia Geva, Steven B. Redd, and Amy Carnes. 1997. "The Effect of Dynamic and Static Choice Sets on Political Decision Making: An Analysis Using the Decision Board Platform." *American Political Science Review* 91:553-66. *JSTOR*

Gilliam, Franklin D., Jr., and Shanto Iyengar. 2000. "Prime Suspects: The Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public." *American Journal of Political Science* 44:560-573. *EBSCOhost*

Mintz, Alex, Steven B. Redd, and Arnold Vedlitz. 2006. "Can We Generalize from Student Experiments to the Real World in Political Science, Military Affairs, and International Relations?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50:757-776. *EBSCOhost*

November 1: Quasi-Experiments in Political Science

Consider the strength of these designs, and discuss whether the authors could have reached similar conclusions if they had chosen different designs.

- Campbell, Donald T., and H. Laurence Ross. 1970. "The Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding." In *The Quantitative Analysis of Social Problems*, ed. Edward R. Tufte. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. pp. 110-125. *ER*
- Campbell, Donald T. 1975. "Degrees of Freedom and the Case Study." *Comparative Political Studies* 8:179-193. *ER*
- Lijphart, Arend. 1979. "Religious vs. Linguistic vs. Class Voting: The Crucial Experiment of Comparing Belgium, Canada, South Africa, and Switzerland." *American Political Science Review* 73:442-451. *JSTOR*
- Jennings, M. Kent, and Gregory B. Markus. 1977. "The Effect of Military Service on Political Attitudes: A Panel Study." *American Political Science Review* 71:131-147. *JSTOR*
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., and John R. Alford. 1980. "Can Government Regulate Safety? The Coal Mine Example." *American Political Science Review* 74:745-756. *JSTOR*
- Wood, B. Dan, and Richard W. Waterman. 1991. "The Dynamics of Political Control of the Bureaucracy." *American Political Science Review* 85:801-828. *JSTOR*

November 8: Case Studies in Political Science

- Hendrickson, Ryan C. 2002. "Clinton's Military Strikes in 1998: Diversionary Uses of Force?" *Armed Forces and Society* 28:309-332. *ER*
- Author Unknown. 2011. "Diversionary American Military Actions?: American Military Strikes on Grenada and Iraq." Manuscript submitted to *International Studies Perspectives*. May. *ER*
- Mintz, Alex. 1993. "The Decision to Attack Iraq: A Noncompensatory Theory of Decision Making." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37:595-618. *ER*
- Redd, Steven B. 2005. "The Influence of Advisers and Decision Strategies on Foreign Policy Choices: President Clinton's Decision to Use Force in Kosovo." *International Studies Perspectives* 6:129-150. *ER*
- DeRouen, Karl, Jr.. 2003. "The Decision not to Use Force at Dien Bien Phu: A Poliheuristic Perspective." In *Integrating Cognitive and Rational Theories of Foreign Policy Decision Making*, ed. Alex Mintz. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. *ER*

November 15: Cross-Level Inferences, Ecological Analysis

Review KKV Ch. 2-6 again

- Naroll, Raoul. 1970. "Galton's Problem." In *A Handbook of Method in Cultural Anthropology*, ed. Raoul Naroll and Ronald Cohen. Garden City, NY: Natural History Press. pp. 974-989. *ER*
- Robinson, W. S. 1950. "Ecological Correlations and the Behavior of Individuals." *American Sociological Review* 15:351-357. *JSTOR*
- King, Gary. 1997. *A Solution to the Ecological Inference Problem*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Ch. 1, "Qualitative Overview." *ER*
- Achen, Christopher H., and W. Phillips Shively. 1995. *Cross-Level Inference*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 1, "Cross-Level Inference." *ER*

IV. APPLICATIONS IN THE PROFESSION

November 22: Qualitative Methods

Discussion led by TBA. Readings to be announced.

November 29: Experimental Methods

Discussion led by Professor Redd. Readings to be announced.

December 6: Quantitative Nonexperimental Methods

Discussion led by Professor David Armstrong. Readings to be announced.

December 13: Present professional reviews; hand in final paper