

Scope and Methods of Political Science
Political Science 700 – Fall 2014

Professor Kathleen Dolan

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This course is an introduction to the process of conducting research in political science. My goals in this course are to help you learn to think systematically about the political science topics in which you are interested, develop the skills necessary to put your ideas to the test, and to be able to critically evaluate the research of others. To do this, we will examine the central aspects of the empirical study of politics: hypothesis testing, measurement, inference, causation, research design. We will also learn about several different methods of gathering data using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, including experiments, surveys, content analysis, and case studies.

Course Requirements

Class Participation – Class attendance is a given. Class participation is a must. While there will be some lecturing in this course, the bulk of our time will be spent engaged in discussions about the readings among all members. Graduate seminars cannot run effectively without the contribution of all involved. Because of this, students must prepare all readings and assignments prior to class and come to each session prepared to contribute to the evening's discussion. Please remember that asking and answering questions is an important part of contributing to the discussion. Also, from time to time, you may be asked to share your ideas about your own research project with the class and take comments, questions, and suggestions from the class. If your personality is such that talking in class and taking part in discussion is difficult for you, you should consider this a skill to be developed. One cannot be successful in graduate school or in the profession without the ability to engage with others in this sort of dialogue. Class participation will count for 10 percent of your total grade.

Short Papers – Critiquing the methods and analyses of other scholars is an important part of the research enterprise and a skill that you will need to develop over time. There is a difference between being able to constructively identify limits in a piece of research and simply being critical for the sake of it and you need to become proficient at the former. To that end, each of you will write a handful of short papers in which you will address the readings for a particular week and providing a brief, cogent analysis of the quality of the research. These papers will be assigned so that you do not write a paper every week. Instead, a different subset of students will be writing each week. These short papers should NOT be summaries of the articles. Instead, they should analyze some decision of the author, take issue with some aspect of the question or method, discuss potential problems with the method or findings, and propose an improvement. Focusing on the topic of the week as it relates to the readings is a good place to start, but you are

not limited to this approach. For example, if you are writing during the week on operationalization and measurement, you should think about whether and how the articles raise measurement issues, but you are not limited to only discussing the measurement issues. These papers should be short (no more than four double-spaced pages), so you will need to get right into the meat of things and not spend time and page space on generalities or introductions. In class, we will use these papers to spark our discussions. You may be asked to summarize readings and begin the discussion on problems and improvements. These papers will serve two purposes – allowing you to develop and practice the skill of critique and providing a basis for fruitful class discussion. These papers will be worth 15 percent of your grade.

Exam – There will be one written exam in the class, which will be on **October 22**. This examine will include all of the substantive topics we have dealt with to that point and will cover text readings, journal articles, and class discussion. The exam will be worth 25 percent of your grade.

Literature Review and Research Design – Each of you will practice the art and science of research design by working on a project of your own choosing. **VERY EARLY** in the semester, you should start to think about your areas of interest within political science so that you can identify a reasonable topic. Once you have a topic (which you will discuss with me), the first thing you will do is conduct a literature review to identify empirical studies that have been done on that topic by other researchers. This literature review need not cover every article written on the subject, but should be thorough enough to capture the current thinking in your area. Also, you should strive, if at all possible, to include research that uses different methodological approaches. In this part of the project, you should summarize the empirical findings, assess the methodologies employed, and discuss the strengths and limitations of these approaches. This literature review is worth 20 percent of your grade and is due in my mailbox on **November 5**.

The second part of the project, the research design, will allow you to demonstrate how you would carry out your own research on this topic. Keep in mind that you do not have to complete the research for this project, but instead will detail how you would carry it out. In this design, you will define a research question and testable hypothesis and discuss the procedures for measuring your concepts and collecting data. For the data collection aspect, I will require you to outline **two** different methods by which you could collect data appropriate to test your hypotheses. The goal here is to get you to understand that there is rarely only one way to ask and answer a question when doing research. In this part of the project, you can also identify any unresolved issues or remaining barriers to the execution of your project. In preparing the final paper, you will incorporate the literature review into the research design. This final paper will be worth 30 percent of your grade and is due in my mailbox by 4:00 PM on **December 10**.

Readings – There are two sources of the readings for the course: the course D2L site and JSTOR. Those on the course D2L site are designated * D2L * All other articles are available on JSTOR, which is an invaluable resource, providing full-text articles from several social science disciplines. To access these journals, go to <http://www.jstor.org>

Full access to articles is gained through being on a campus computer or logging in through the library website. Also, to familiarize you with the major political science journals, I have put a list of about 50 of the top journals on the D2L site. This list is not meant to be comprehensive in any way, but simply to give you some familiarity with some of the major journal titles you will encounter in your own research.

Course Outline and Schedule

1. Course Introduction (September 3) – No reading

2. The Science of Political Science (September 10)

King, Keohane, and Verba, Chp 1

Kellstedt and Whitten, Chp. 1, “The Scientific Study of Politics”

Kellstedt and Whitten, Chp. 3, “Evaluating Causal Relationships”

Friedman and Mare “The Schooling of Offspring and the Survival of Parents”
Demography 2014 51: 1271-1293.

Glenn, Norval “What We Know, What We Say We Know: Discrepancies
Between Warranted and Unwarranted Conclusions”

ALL READINGS FOR THIS WEEK ARE ON D2L

3. The Basics of Research: Theories and Hypotheses (September 17)

Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 2 * **D2L** *

Mariani, Mack. 2008. “A Gendered Pipeline? The Advancement of State Legislators
to Congress in Five States.” *Politics & Gender* 4: 285-308. ** **D2L** **

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, et al. 2014. “Judicial Selection and Death Penalty Decisions”
American Political Science Review 108: 23-39. ***D2L***

Sanbonmatsu, Kira. 2003. “Gender Stereotypes and Vote Choice.” *American Journal of
Political Science* 46: 20-34.

Lawless, Jennifer. 2004. “Politics of Presence? Congresswomen and Symbolic
Representation” *Political Research Quarterly* 57: 81-99

4. The Basics of Research: Concepts and Variables (September 24)

- Coppedge, Michael et al. 2011. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach." *Perspectives on Politics* 9:247-267. ****D2L****
- Weisberg, Herbert. 1980. "A Multidimensional Conceptualization of Party Identification." *Political Behavior* 2: 33-60.
- Calhoun-Brown, Allison. 1996. "African-American Churches and Political Mobilization: The Psychological Impact of Organizational Resources" *Journal of Politics* 58: 935-953.
- Putnam, Robert. "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28: 664-683.
- Nice, David. 1988. "Abortion Clinic Bombings as Political Violence" *Journal of Politics* 32: 178-195.

5. Research Design (October 1)

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 4 ****D2L****
- Campbell and Ross "The Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding: Time Series Data in a Quasi-Experimental Analysis" *** D2L ***
- Gerber, Alan and Donald Green. 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 94: 653-663.
- Mondak, Jeffery. 1995. "Newspapers and Political Awareness." *American Journal of Political Science* 39: 513-527.
- Butler, Daniel and David Broockman. 2011. "Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators." *American Journal of Political Science* 55: 463-477.
- Prior, Markus and Arthur Lupia. 2008. "Money, Time, and Political Knowledge: Distinguishing Quick Recall and Political Learning Skills." *American Journal of Political Science* 52: 169-183.

6. Operationalization and Measurement (October 8)

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 5 ****D2L****
- Delli Carpini, Michael and Scott Keeter. 1993. "Measuring Political Knowledge: Putting First Things First." *American Journal of Political Science* 37: 1179-1206.
- Mondak, Jeffery and Belinda Creel Davis. "Asked and Answered: Knowledge Levels When We Will Not Take 'Don't Know' for an Answer" *Political Behavior* 23: 199-224.
- Segal, Jeffrey and Albert Cover. 1989. "Ideological Values and the Votes of U.S. Supreme Court Justices." *American Political Science Review* 83: 557-565.
- McDonald, Michael and Samuel Popkin. 2001. "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter." *American Political Science Review* 95: 963-974.
- Gibson, James, Gregory Caldeira, and Lester Spence. 2003. "Measuring Attitudes toward The United States Supreme Court." *American Journal of Political Science* 47: 354-367.

7. Sampling (October 15)

Babbie, “The Logic of Sampling” ****D2L****

Geddes, Barbara. 1990. “How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics” * **D2L** *

Lin, Ann. 2002. “Research Design Meets Prison Administration: Methodological Notes.” in *Reform in the Making: The Implementation of Social Policy in Prison*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ. * **D2L** *

Fox, Richard and Jennifer Lawless. 2004. “Entering the Arena: Gender and the Decision to Run for Office.” *American Journal of Political Science* 48: 264-280.

Stone, Walter and L. Sandy Maisel. 1997. “Determinants of Candidate Emergence in U.S. House Races: An Exploratory Study” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 22: 79-96.

9. Exam (October 22)

10. Research Topic Meetings (October 29)

11. Surveys (November 5)

Babbie, “Survey Research” ****D2L****

Weisberg, Herbert, “The Total Survey Error Approach” * **D2L** *

Davis, Darren and Brian Silver. 2003. “Stereotype Threat and Race of Interviewer Effects in a Survey on Political Knowledge.” *American Journal of Political Science* 47: 33-45.

Box-Steffensmeier, Janet, Gary Jacobson, and J. Tobin Grant. 2000. “Question Wording and the House Vote Choice: Some Experimental Evidence.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 64: 257-270.

Fowler, Floyd. 1992. “How Unclear Terms Affect Survey Data” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 56: 218-231.

11. Quantitative Research Techniques (November 12)

Discussion led by Professor Reuter – Readings to be announced

12. Qualitative Research Techniques (November 19)

Discussion led by Professor Sugiyama - Readings to be announced

**** No Class November 26 – Thanksgiving Break ****

13. Research Presentations (December 3 and 10)

During each of the two sessions, several students will present their research design projects.

Project Due Dates

The following are the due dates for the various assignments for this semester. Short of a major catastrophe, they are not negotiable.

Exam – **October 22**

Literature Review – Hard copy due in my mailbox by 4:00 on **Wednesday, November 5**

Research Design – Hard copy due in my mailbox by 4:00 on **Wednesday, December 10**