

17.850
Graduate Scope and Methods

Fall 2014
Thursday 10:00-12:00
Room E453-438

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The world is full of compelling stories, fascinating events, and baffling puzzles. But how do these ideas translate into research? The purpose of this course is to help you move from *topics* of interest to research *questions*, and to give you the skills necessary to answer those questions with solid, well-designed empirical research. The course draws on current research in political science to introduce you to the enterprise of scientific research in politics. Specifically, the course reviews the basic principles of research design and evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of various empirical approaches. Mastering these skills—indeed internalizing them so that they become second nature—is one of the most important things that you will learn in graduate school. You will emerge from this course not only a more sophisticated consumer of the literature, but in a position to design and conduct your own independent scholarly research.

Course Requirements

Class attendance and participation are mandatory and essential to the intellectual life of class discussions. We expect that you will come to each week's class prepared to discuss the week's required readings. There will also be homework assignments on inference and measurement due on **September 11** and **September 25**, and students will complete MIT's IRB (COUHES) training by **November 13**.

Learning to design original scholarly research is a central component of this course. You will therefore be required to prepare and submit an application to the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship Program. Students will first submit a one-paragraph description of their proposed research topic on **September 25** followed by a rough draft of their application proposal on **October 9**. Final drafts of the application will be due by email to both instructors on **October 27 (NOTE: not a class meeting day)**, and the strict NSF deadline for applications is **November 3, 2014**. Finally, building on your proposal for the NSF application, you will submit a more detailed 15-page research proposal at the end of the course, on **December 4**.

September 4: Political Science as Science

Almond, Gabriel and Stephen Genco. "Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics." *World Politics* 29:4 (2007): 489-522.

Eidlin, Fred. "The Method of Problems versus the Method of Topics." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44:04 (2011): 758-761.

Fearon, James and David Laitin. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97:1 (2003): 75-90.

Cederman, Lars-Erik and Luc Girardin. "Beyond Fractionalization: Mapping Ethnicity onto Nationalist Insurgencies." *American Political Science Review* 101:1 (2007): 173-185.

Recommended:

Popper, Karl. "A Survey of Some Fundamental Problems." In *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 1-26. New York: Routledge, 2002.

September 11: Basics of hypothesis testing and causal inference

-DUE: Experimental Analysis Exercise-

Campbell, Donald T., and Julian Stanley. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research* 1-71. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1963.

Dunning, Thad. "Design-Based Inference: Beyond the Pitfalls of Regression Analysis?" In *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, Brady, Henry and David Collier, 206-243. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010.

Fearon, James. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science." *World Politics* 43.2 (1991): 169-195.

Recommended:

King, Gary, Keohane, Robert and Sidney Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Brady, Henry and David Collier. *Rethinking Social Inquiry*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2010.

Gerring, John. "Methods." In *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*, 200-230. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Humphreys, Macartan, and Alan Jacobs. "Mixing Methods: A Bayesian Unification of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches." Working Paper, 2013.

September 18: Concepts and Measurement

Sartori, Giovanni. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Review* 64:4 (1970): 1033-1053.

Adcock, Robert and David Collier. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95:3 (2001): 529-546.

Nisbett, Richard and Timothy DeCamp Wilson. "Telling More Than We Can Know: Verbal Reports on Mental Processes." *Psychological Review* 84:3 (1977): 231-260.

Lustick, Ian. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias." *American Political Science Review* 90:3 (1996): 605-618.

Recommended:

Locke, Richard and Kathleen Thelen. "Problems of Equivalence in Comparative Politics: Apples and Oranges, Again." *American Political Science Association-CP Newsletter* (1996): 9-12.

Shivley, W. Phillips. "Problems of Measurement: Accuracy" and "Problems of Measurement: Precision." In *The Craft of Political Research*, 41-73. London: Pearson Classics in Political Science, 2012.

September 25: Measurement II: Examples (Democracy)

-DUE: Measurement Exercise-

-DUE: Research Proposal Topic Paragraph-

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

Treier, Shawn and Simon Jackson. "Democracy as a Latent Variable." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Political Methodology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, July 17-19, 2013.

Marshall, Monte, Keith Jagers and Ted Robert Gurr. 2011. "Polity IV Project: Dataset Users' Manual." Center for Systemic Peace: 1-29

Seawright, Jason and David Collier. "Rival Strategies of Validation: Tools for Evaluating Measures of Democracy." *Comparative Political Studies* 47:1 (2014): 111-138.

October 2: Case Selection and Case Studies

Seawright, Jason and John Gerring. "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly* 61:2 (2008): 294-308.

Ziblatt, Daniel. "Rethinking the Origins of Federalism: Puzzle, Theory, and Evidence from Nineteenth-Century Europe." *World Politics* 57:1 (2004): 70-98.

Sekhon, Jasjeet. "The Neyman-Rubin Model of Causal Inference and Estimation via Matching Methods." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, edited by Janet M. Box-Sheffenmeiser, Henry Brady and David Collier, 271-299. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Nielsen, Richard A. Forthcoming. "Case Selection via Matching." *Sociological Methods and Research*.

Geddes, Barbara. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2:1 (1990): 131-150.

Recommended:

Mill, John Stuart. 1872. *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*. London: Longmans, Green and Co. 8th edition.

Gerring, John. "The Case Study: What It Is and What It Does." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, edited by Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, 90-122. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

October 9: Within-case "process tracing"

-DUE: Application Research Proposal Draft-

Chapters from *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*. Eds. Jeffrey T. Checkel and Andrew Bennett. Cambridge University Press (forthcoming). To be made available on Stellar.

Collier, David. "Understanding Process Tracing." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44:4 (2011): 823-30.

Fairfield, Tasha. "Going Where the Money Is: Strategies for Taxing Economic Elites in Unequal Democracies." *World Development* 47 (2013): 42-57. **ALSO READ APPENDIX A**

Parkinson, Sarah Elizabeth. "Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High-Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War." *American Political Science Review* 107:3 (2013): 418-432.

Recommended:

Bennett, Andrew. "Process Tracing and Causal Inference." In *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, Brady, Henry and David Collier, 207-220. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010.

Glynn, Adam and Kevin Quinn. "Why Process Matters for Causal Inference." *Political Analysis* 19 (2011): 273-286.

Van Evera, Stephen. "What Are Case Studies? How Should They Be Performed?" In *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 49-88. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

October 16: Large-N analysis of experimental data

Berinsky, Adam and Donald Kinder. "Making Sense of Issues Through Media Frames: Understanding the Kosovo Crisis." *Journal of Politics* 68:3 (2006): 640-656

Habyarimana, James; Humphreys, Macartan; Posner, Daniel and Jeremy Weinstein. "Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?" *American Political Science Review* 101:4 (2007): 709-725

Beath, Andrew; Fotini, Christia and Ruben Enikolopov. "Empowering Women through

Development Aid: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan.” *American Political Science Review* 107:3 (2013): 540-557.

October 23: Large-N analysis of observational data

Acemoglu, Daron, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson. “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation.” *American Economic Review* 91:5 (2001): 1369-1401.

Berinsky, Adam. “Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict.” *Journal of Politics* 69:4 (2007): 975-997.

Bateson, Regina. “Crime Victimization and Political Participation.” *American Political Science Review* 106:3 (2012): 570-587.

Nielsen, Richard A. et al. “Foreign Aid Shocks as a Cause of Violent Armed Conflict.” *American Journal of Political Science* 55:2 (2011): 219-232.

-DUE Oct. 27: Application Research Proposal-

October 30: Interpretivism

Autesserre, Severine. “The Defeat of Bottom-Up Solutions.” In *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*, 179-230. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Wedeen, Lisa. “Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science.” *American Political Science Review* 96:4 (2002): 713-728.

Hawkesworth, Mary. “Congressional Enactments of Race-Gender: Toward a Theory of Raced-Gendered Institutions.” *American Political Science Review* 97:4 (2003): 529-550.

Yanow, Dvora. “Neither Rigorous nor Objective? Interrogating Criteria for Knowledge Claims in Interpretive Science,” 97-119 in *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn (Second Edition)*, Eds. Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, Inc., 2014.

Pachirat, Timothy. “We Call It a Grain of Sand: The Interpretive Orientation and a Human Social Science,” 426-432, in *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn (Second Edition)*, Eds. Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, Inc., 2014.

November 6: Combining methods

Tsai, Lily. “Temples and Churches in Rural China.” In *Accountability Without Democracy*, 120-147. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Lieberman, Evan. “Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research.”

American Political Science Review 99(2005): 435-451.

Fearon, James and David Laitin. "Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, edited by Janet M. Box-Sheffenmeiser, Henry Brady and David Collier, 756-778. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Ahmed, Amel and Rudra Sil. "When Multi-Method Research Subverts Methodological Pluralism—or, Why We Still Need Single-Method Research." *Perspectives on Politics* 10.4 (2012): 935-953.

Wawro, Gregory J. and Ira Katznelson. "Designing Historical Social Scientific Inquiry: How Parameter Heterogeneity Can Bridge the Methodological Divide between Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches." *American Journal of Political Science* 2013 (early edition).

Dunning, Thad. "The Central Role of Qualitative Evidence," 208-232 in *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences: A Design-Based Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

November 13: Ethics and IRB

-DUE: Complete MIT COUHES training before the start of class.-

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. 1979. *The Belmont Report*.

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html>

Fujii, Lee Ann. "Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 45:4 (2012): 717-723.

McMurtrie, Beth. "Secrets from Belfast: How Boston College's oral history of the Troubles fell victim to an international murder investigation." *Chronicle of Higher Education*. 26 January 2014. <http://chronicle.com/article/Secrets-from-Belfast/144059/>

Palys, Ted and John Lowman. 2012. "Defending Research Confidentiality 'To the Extent the Law Allows': Lessons from the Boston College Subpoenas." *Journal of Academic Ethics* 10(4): 271-297.

Fried, Brian, Paul Lagunes, and Atheendar Venkataramani. "Corruption and Inequality at the Crossroad: A Multimethod Study of Bribery and Discrimination in Latin America." *Latin American Research Review* 45:1 (2010): 76-97.

November 20: Political Science as Science

Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Gerber, Alan and Neil Malhotra. "Do Statistical Reporting Standards Affect What is Published? Publication Bias in Two Leading Political Science Journals." *Quarterly Journal of*

Political Science 3 (2008): 313-326.

Simmons, Joseph; Nelson, Leif and Uri Simonsohn. "False-Positive Psychology: Undisclosed Flexibility in Data Collection and Analysis Allows Presenting Anything as Significant." *Psychological Science* 22 (2011): 1359-1366.

December 4: Political Science as a Profession

-DUE: 15-page Research Proposal-

Gans, Joshua and George Shepherd. "How Are the Mighty Fallen: Rejected Classic Articles by Leading Economists." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 8:1 (1994): 165-179.

Dixit, Avinash. "My System of Work (Not!)" In *Passion and Craft*, edited by Michael Szenberg, 69-81. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.

Packet of journal reviews and author responses (to be distributed).