

EMPIRICAL METHODS FOR POLITICAL SCIENCE (GOV 366)

SPRING 2014

Mondays & Wednesdays, 1:10pm-2:30pm in PAC 107

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Office/Office Hours: PAC 331; Mondays and Wednesdays, 12pm-1pm

Purpose:

Although most of us get interested in government, public affairs and politics because of its substance (not its methodology), in the end, heated debates over issues and government boil down to normative and empirical arguments about theories and relationships between 'facts' and variables. This course is an introduction to the concepts, tools, and methods used in the *empirical* study of political phenomena, with an emphasis on both the practical and theoretical concerns involved in scientific research. The course is designed to get you to think like a social scientist and covers topics in research design, hypothesis generation, concept/indicator development, experimental design, and some basic quantitative and qualitative analysis and interpretation. Whether or not you pursue the empirical study of politics afterward, this course should help you become a better critical consumer of information available through and arguments made in mass media, scholarly journals, and your own personal discussions or debates with others.

IMPORTANT NOTE: There *may* be a few required meeting sessions outside of class to introduce you to Stata (a statistical computer software package). More details on those times and dates forthcoming.

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

Overall Course Objectives

- Analyze and recognize the challenges to an empirical approach toward politics and policy
- Describe in detail the necessary elements, formats, and purposes of a research paper
- Critically evaluate arguments and/or counter-arguments to contemporary political debates on measurement and/or empirical grounds
- Communicate through a variety of different media, including written assignments, small group projects, and in-class presentations

Specific Learning Objectives

- Read controversial and difficult material objectively and critically.
- Be a more savvy consumer of political science data and methods
- Communicate the importance of and the most appropriate method of studying a political/social topic of your choice
- Construct a narrative about a research concept/topic and explain why it is important to understand empirically

Course Requirements and Grading

Participation: 10%

Short Assignments: 30% (6% each)

Longer Assignments: 16% (8% each)

Class Leadership/Short Memo: 11%

Final Paper/Presentation: 33%

The major components of your grade are as follows:

1. **Participation** (10%) – this includes attendance, preparation and class participation. Attendance is required, and I will take note of who is and who is not in class. Excused absences are only granted in rare circumstances. In addition, attendance alone is not sufficient. In a small seminar, class will depend upon your preparation and participation. I will evaluate you on your comments and contribution to class discussion and encourage you to ask questions.
2. **Five smaller assignments** (6% each) – These are short papers of no more than 3 pages (double-spaced). Due dates and specific instructions for each assignment are detailed in the syllabus.
3. **Longer assignment** (8% each) – These are slightly longer papers (5-6 pages double-spaced) to be used as jumping off points for your final project paper. Due date are in the syllabus and further instruction will be provided.
4. **Class Leadership/ Short memo** (11%)- With a partner, each student—with assistance from Professor Harrison—will lead discussion once during the semester. Class leadership will correspond with the class for which students draft a response memo to the readings for the week, due the same day of leadership.
5. **Final paper and presentation** (33%) – this is a 10 to 12-page paper that sets out a research design for a major research project. You will state your question, theory and hypotheses; how your project contributes to the literature, and what data you will use to test your empirical expectations (along with how you will operationalize important concepts). You will also present your findings in class.

Course Policies and Expectations

Below is a list of course policies and expectations. By staying in the course, you agree to abide by the following rules.

Etiquette: Although I will spend some of our class time lecturing, we will have many dialogues, both in class and online. In these discussions, you are encouraged to use your personal experiences and perspectives as well as your understanding of the course material and current events. Direct personal attacks against others in the class are not permitted. Insulting anyone one inside or outside the class on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, party affiliation, or national background is not permitted. Violations of these rules will be reflected in your grade and, if they continue, may result in disciplinary action by the University.

I highly value class discussion and interaction. I regard it as an integral part of the learning experience and learning from you is one of the joys of my job. Therefore, I expect you to attend lectures and to complete the assigned readings before attending class. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and your interpretations of the way the course material informs our understanding of current events. As a teacher, one of my primary goals is to empower students to claim their own education. I emphasize discussion and limit the number (and length) of my lectures. This discussion-based format means that you, along with your classmates, bear a lot of responsibility for the success of the class. You must hold each other accountable for the claims that you make and the ideas you express. And you must make sure that you come to class prepared with some thoughts/questions so that we can have respectful and productive discussions about the material.

Disability Resources: Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-2332 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

Copyrighted Class Materials: All course materials including but not limited to class notes, lectures, handouts, and presentations are the copyrighted materials of the professor. The copying and sale of any such materials will subject the involved parties to the provisions of the Federal Copyright Act.

Contested Grades – If you believe your grade is inaccurate, you must wait at least 24 hours before contesting it. If you wish to contest a grade, you will need to write a letter explaining why you believe a mistake was made in grading your assignment. After I have received and read the letter, we will schedule an appointment to discuss the matter; however, if you ask for a paper to be reevaluated, I reserve the right to reevaluate the entire contents of the assignment, and your grade can go up or go down as a result. Whenever possible, I encourage you to ask questions and clarifications about course assignments *before* turning them in.

Late Paper/Assignment Policy – All assignments are due *in class* on the class date (or final exam period) listed in the syllabus without exception unless I have specified otherwise. In fairness to those who complete assignments on time, *no late papers/assignments will be accepted for credit*. You are strongly encouraged to print one copy of all papers for your own records before handing them in and to print drafts as you write and/or to make frequent backups on multiple disks. “Lost paper” and “computer crash” claims will not be

considered if you are unable to produce immediately at a minimum an advanced draft of your paper.

Readings: We will primarily be drawing on primary journal articles and outside material, along with the Johnson & Reynolds text listed below. The book is available through the campus bookstore and is on reserve at the library, and the rest of the material will be available through Moodle. Students should check Moodle regularly for course information.

Main Text: Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. 2012. *Political Science Research Methods*, 7th Edition. (I'll sometimes refer to it as J &R).

Other resources you may consider purchasing or reading: [* = Text on reserve at Olin.]

- ✓ Kellstedt, Paul and Guy D. Whitten. 2009. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. New York: Cambridge.*
- ✓ Pollock, Philip. 2009. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*.
- ✓ Baglione, Lisa. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*. Sage.
- ✓ Becker, Howard. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ✓ Brady & Collier. 2004. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*.
- ✓ King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton. [*available as an electronic resource through Olin]
- ✓ Hart, Chris. *Doing a Literature Review*. Sage.

Writing Specifications: Unless otherwise noted, all written assignments must be typed, doubled spaced with one-inch margins, and in a 12-point font. Acceptable fonts are Palatino Linotype or Times New Roman. Please number your pages and be sure that your paper is **stapled** before you turn it in. The clarity of your writing will affect the strength of your argument and therefore students should proofread and spell-check their work carefully. You must cite any information and/or ideas that you take from someone else's work. Also note, you should limit your use of direct quotations (someone else's words surrounded by "") to the rare occasion when the original author has stated your point perfectly and it cannot be improved. Otherwise, you are generally better off stylistically using your own words and citing the ideas and facts provided by other authors. For citations, I prefer that students use the American Psychological Association (APA). However, any citation method is acceptable as long as it is used correctly and consistently. For additional information on APA style, visit <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> or <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>.

ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES:

SHORT ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1 assigned: 2/6
Assignment 1 due: 2/17

Assignment 2 assigned: 2/17
Assignment 2 due: 2/26

Assignment 3 assigned: 2/26
Assignment 3 due: 3/5

Assignment 4 assigned: 3/26
Assignment 4 due: 4/9

Assignment 5 assigned: 4/9
Assignment 5 due: 4/23

PAPER ASSIGNMENTS

Paper 1 assigned: 3/3
Paper 1 due: 4/2

Paper 2 assigned: 4/2
Paper 2 due: 4/23

Final paper due 5/16 at 5pm. Please e-mail a copy to bfharrison@wesleyan.edu.

Course Outline¹

Monday, January 27 – Introductions, Syllabus review

Wednesday, January 29– Studying Politics Scientifically

- Theis, Cameron G. and Robert E. Hogan. 2005. "The State of Undergraduate Research Methods Training in Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 38(2): 293-297.
 - Baker, Katie J.M. "Diversity U Makes a U-Turn." *Newsweek Magazine*, December 12, 2013. <http://mag.newsweek.com/2013/12/13/diversity-protest-activism-wesleyan.html>
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Monday, February 10– Building Blocks: Concepts, Indicators, & Variables

- Johnson & Reynolds, Ch. 1 & 2
 - Kellstedt & Whitten, Ch. 2 (available on Moodle)
 - Johnson & Reynolds, Ch 4 (except 119-124)
 - Charles Jones. 1974. "Doing Before Knowing: Concept Development in Political Research," *American Journal of Political Science*. 18(1): 215-228
 - Rejali, Darius. 1995. "Define Your Terms! Dictionaries, Medievals, and Thinking About Concepts." *PS: Political Science* 26(3): 515-520.
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ASSIGNMENT 1 (Research Question):

- Find an empirical puzzle/regularity in politics or research question you might like investigating worthy of serious consideration. Why did you choose the question? How do you defend the "so what" question? Speculate a bit on what model might explain the puzzle or question. What should you observe if your story is right? How might you know if you are wrong?
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Wednesday, February 12– Building Blocks (Part III): Measurement Issues

- Johnson & Reynolds, Ch. 5
 - King 1995 and Herrnson. 1995. "Replication, Replication" and "Replication, Verification and Secondary Analysis and Data Collection in Political Science" in *PS*
 - Ward, Artemus. 2004. "How One Mistake Leads to Another: On the Importance of Verification/Replication." *Political Analysis* 12: 199-200.
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¹ Note: This syllabus does not constitute a contract between the professor and the student. I reserve the right to make adjustments or modifications to the course at any time. Changes include but are not limited to assignments and grading criteria; readings or course requirements; grading policies; and course topics and schedule. Changes, if necessary, will be announced in class and/or on the course Moodle page.

Monday, February 17– Populations, Sampling & Statistical Inference

- Johnson & Reynolds, Ch. 7
- Sears, David. 1986. "College Sophomores in the Laboratory: Influence of a Narrow Data Base on Social Psychology's View of Human Nature" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 51: 515-30.
- Druckman, James N. & Cindy D. Kam. 2011. "Students as Experimental Participants: A Defense of the 'Narrow Base.'" In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, Druckman, Green, Kuklinski, Lupia, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

ASSIGNMENT 1 Due.

ASSIGNMENT 2 (Concepts):

- Define negativity as it relates to U.S. elections and outline what is included and excluded in your definition. Determine what indicators you will need to use, and outline how you would measure them. What types of measurement do you use? Can you identify multiple ways of measuring the same thing? Defend your choices. (Suggested length – 2-3 pages, no more than 3)

Wednesday, February 19– Literature Review

- Johnson & Reynolds, Ch. 3
- McMenamin, Iain. 2006. "Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 39(1): 133-135.
- Knopf, Jeffrey. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 39(1): 127-132.
- Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon and Valentino. 1994. "Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?" *American Political Science Review*.

Monday, February 24 – Literature Review (putting it in practice)

- Finkel and Geer. 1998. "A Spot Check: Casting Doubt on the Demobilizing Effect of Campaign Advertising." *American Journal of Political Science*.
 - Goldstein & Freedman. 2002. "Campaign Advertising and Voter Turnout: New Evidence for a Stimulation Effect." *Journal of Politics*.
 - Kahn & Kenney. 1999. "Do Negative Campaigns Mobilize or Suppress Turnout? Clarifying the Relationship between Negativity and Participation." *APSR*.
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Wednesday, February 26: Literature Review in practice (Part II):

- Druckman, James N. 2004. "Political Preference Formation: Competition, Deliberation, and the (Ir)relevance of Framing Effects." *American Political Science Review*, 98(4): 671-686.
- Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clawson, & Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties conflict and its Effect on Tolerance." *American Political Science Review*, 91(3): 567-583.
- Scheufele, Dietram A. 2000. "Agenda-setting, Priming, and Framing Revisited: Another Look at Cognitive Effects of Political Communication." *Mass Communication and Society*, 3: 297-316.

ASSIGNMENT 2 Due.

ASSIGNMENT 3 (Literature Review)

Write a 2-3 page literature review of ONE of the last two sets of course readings (i.e. literature review of Ansolabehere et al., Finkel and Geer, Goldstein and Freedman and Kahn and Kenney readings **OR** a review of Druckman, Nelson, et. al, and Scheufele). Your literature review should identify the main issues, puzzles, or questions that motivated the research and make an argument about where research should go next (e.g., what has not been considered or examined?). To stimulate your thinking, consider the following questions: What is the primary argument (or arguments) made by each? What divisions (if any) occur between them (the "literature" in this case)? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and the data employed in each? Be sure to conclude with a restatement of the puzzle and what is left to be done (i.e., where research should go next)?

Monday, March 3- Causal vs. Descriptive Inference

- King, Keohane, and Verba, Ch 2-3
- Critique of KKV: Brady & Collier, Ch 1-2 (on Moodle)

Paper 1 Assignment handed out

Wednesday, March 5- Research Design:

- Gerring, John. 2004. "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" *American Political Science Review* 98: 341-354.
- Baglione, Lisa A. 2012. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*. Los Angeles: Sage Publishing, Chapters 2 and 4.
- Johnson & Reynolds, Ch. 6

Assignment 3 due

Monday, March 10- Wednesday, March 19: Break!

Monday, March 24- Experiments in Political Science:

- Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science. 2011. Druckman, Green, Kuklinski, Lupia, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 1-2.
 - Green & Gerber. 2002. "Reclaiming the Experimental Tradition in Political Science." In *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*.
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Wednesday, March 26- Experimental Design (in practice):

- 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: 33-48.
- Klar, Samara. 2013. "The Influence of Competing Identity Primes on Political Preferences." *Journal of Politics*, 1-17.
- Harrison, Brian F. & Melissa R. Michelson. Forthcoming. "God and Marriage: Activating Religious Identity to Influence Attitudes on Same-Sex Marriage." In *Listen, We Need to Talk: Facilitating Political Communication through Strategic Identity Priming*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

ASSIGNMENT 4 (Experimental Design):

Describe how you would design and initiate an experimental design answering a prominent question in politics or political science. (The issue can be the same as assignment 1 or a new idea). Define the scope of the question/problem, identify your population of choice, how you would operationalize key concepts, important dependent and independent variables, and your experimental manipulation(s). (Suggested length: 3-4 pages, no more than 4 pages).

Monday, March 31- Peer editing session

(failure to attend class this day results in an automatic deduction of half of the Paper 1 grade)

Wednesday, April 2- Research Ethics

- "When Peer Review Produces Unsound Science," *New York Times*, June 11, 2002.
- "Two Studies, Two Results, and a Debate Over a Drug," *New York Times*, June 3, 2004.
- "Review Finds Scientists With Ties to Companies," *New York Times*, July 15, 2005.
- "Medical Journal Retracts Study Linking Autism to Vaccine" CNN, February 2, 2010
- "Addressing Scientific Fraud," *Science* 334, December 2, 2011: 1182
- "Flu Researchers Will Halt Controversial Studies for 60 Days," *MedPageToday.com*, January 20, 2012.
- "Were Controversial Studies of Killer Flu Bug Worth the Security Risk?" *MedicRelief.com*, January 26, 2012.

PAPER 1 due & Paper 2 assignment handed out

Monday, April 7 – Descriptive Statistics

(MEET IN LAB)

- Johnson & Reynolds, Ch 11 (pgs. 354-376)

Wednesday, April 9– Graphing, Cross-Tabs and Data Display

(MEET IN LAB)

- Johnson & Reynolds, Ch 11 (pgs. 376-393)
- ✓ Tufte, Edward. 2001. *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*. Graphics Press. (www.edwardtufte.com/tufte)

ASSIGNMENT 4 Due.

ASSIGNMENT 5 (Survey Writing and Question Wording):

Find a publicly available survey through a prominent, reputable source and critique the survey questions used. Identify potentially problematic or particularly interesting questions in the survey and provide alternative questions to unclear/poorly measured questions. (Suggested length: 3-4 pages, no more than 4 pages).

Monday, April 14– Survey Questions and Measurement

- “Pollster Finds Error on Holocaust Doubts,” *New York Times* May 20, 1994.
- “How Are Questionnaires Put Together,” by Michael W. Traugott and Paul J. Lavrakas, 2000.
- “Diet Soda: Fewer Calories, Greater Stroke Risk?” ABC News, February 9, 2011.
- “Polling Experiment Finds Question Order Linked to Obama Approval,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 2012.

Wednesday, April 16– Bivariate & Multivariate Analysis

(MEET IN LAB)

- Johnson & Reynolds, Ch. 13-14
- Tufte, Edward. 1975. “Determinants of the Outcomes of Midterm Congressional Elections,” *American Political Science Review* 69: 812-826.

Monday, April 21– Peer Editing Session

(failure to attend class this day results in an automatic deduction of half of the Paper 2 grade).

ASSIGNMENT 5 Due.

Wednesday, April 23– Putting It All Together

- McGranahan, Matthew. "Guidelines on writing a research proposal."
<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~matt/proposal.html>
- Rochefort, David A. 2006. "Putting It All Together." In *Quantitative Methods in Practice*, David A. Rochefort (ed).

PAPER 2: Data/measurement paper due

Monday, April 28; Wednesday, April 30; Monday, May 5; Wednesday, May 7– Presentations
(Attendance mandatory)

- Work on Assignment 6, meet with Dr. Harrison with questions

Reading period: Friday, May 9- Tuesday, May 13

Final exam/paper period: Tuesday, May 13- Friday, May 16

Final Paper Due: Friday, May 16, 5pm

NOTE: No late papers will be accepted. Please e-mail a copy of your paper to bfharrison@wesleyan.edu by 5/16 at 5pm. When I receive it, I will acknowledge receipt; if you do not get a confirmation e-mail from me, your paper was not received and you should send again.