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 24th** and **October 8th**.

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. You will first submit a one-paragraph description of their proposed research topic on **September 17th**, followed by a rough draft of their application proposal on **October 1st**. Final drafts of the application will be due in class on **October 22nd**, and the NSF deadline for the application is **October 29th, 2015**. 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 10th**.

**September 10: Introduction**

**September 17: Political Science as Science**

- **DUE: Research Proposal Topic Paragraph** -


Kramer, Gerald. “Political Science as Science.” In *Political Science: The Science of Politics*, edited


Recommended:


**September 24: Basics of hypothesis testing and causal inference**  
- **DUE: Experimental Analysis Exercise -**


Recommended:


**October 1: Measurement I: Theory**
- **DUE: Rough Draft of NSF Application Proposal** -


Recommended:


**October 8: Measurement II: Examples**
- **DUE: Measurement Exercise** -


**October 15: Case Selection and Case Studies**


**Recommended:**


**October 22: Large-N analysis of experimental data**

- **Due: Final draft of NSF Application**


Habyarimana, James; Humphreys, Macartan; Posner, Daniel and Jeremy Weinstein. “Why


October 29: Large-N analysis of observational data

- Due: NSF GRFP Deadline 8.00 pm -


Recommended:


November 5: Within-case "process tracing"


Recommended:


November 12: Combining methods


Recommended:


November 19: Ethics and IRB
- Due: Complete MIT COUHES training before the start of class.
http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html


December 3: Realities of the Profession


Recommended:


December 10: Conclusions and Reflections
- Due: 15 page research proposal -