

**17.850**  
**Graduate Scope and Methods**  
 Fall 2015  
 Thursday 10:00-12:00  
 Room E53-438

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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 24<sup>th</sup>** and **October 8<sup>th</sup>**.

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 17<sup>th</sup>**, followed by a rough draft of their application proposal on **October 1<sup>st</sup>**. Final drafts of the application will be due in class on **October 22<sup>st</sup>**, and the NSF deadline for the application is **October 29<sup>th</sup>, 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 10<sup>th</sup>**.

### **September 10: Introduction**

### **September 17: Political Science as Science**

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

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

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

by Herbert F. Weisberg, 11-23. New York: Agathon Press, Inc, 1986.

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

Dahl, Robert. "The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest." *American Political Science Review* 55:4 (1961): 763-772.

Mayhew, David. "Robert A. Dahl: questions, concepts, proving it." *Journal of Political Power*, 8:2 (2015): 175-187.

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce. "The methodical study of politics." In *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics* edited by Ian Shapiro, Rogers M. Smith and Tarek E. Masoud, 227-247. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Jones, Robert Alun. "The Rules of Sociological Method" in *Emile Durkheim: An Introduction to Four Major Works*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1986. 60-81.

*Recommended:*

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

Snidal, Duncan. "Formal Models in International Politics." in *Models, Numbers and Cases: Methods for Studying International Relations*. Detlef Sprinz and Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias, eds. University of Michigan Press 2004.

Freedman, David A. "On types of scientific inquiry: The role of qualitative reasoning." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, edited by Janet M. Box-Sheffenmeiser, Henry Brady and David Collier, 300-318. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

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

**September 24: 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.

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

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.

Braumoeller, Bear and Anne Sartori. "Problems and Perils of Statistics in International Relations." In *Models, Numbers and Cases: Methods for Studying International Relations*, edited by Sprinz, Detlef and Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias, 129-151. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004.

*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.the

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.

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

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

Treier, S. and Jackman, S. "Democracy as a Latent Variable." *American Journal of Political Science*. 52:1 (2008): 201–217.

Marshall, Monty, 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 15: 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.

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

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

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.

#### *Recommended:*

Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz. "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 98:4 (2004): 653-669

Shivley, W. Phillips. "Selection of Observations for Study." In *The Craft of Political Research*, 97-110. London: Pearson Classics in Political Science, 2012.

Achen, Christopher and Duncan Snidal. "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies." *World Politics* 41:2 (1989): 143-169.

### **October 22: Large-N analysis of experimental data - Due: Final draft of NSF Application -**

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 29: Large-N analysis of observational data**

**- Due: NSF GRFP Deadline 8.00 pm -**

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

Lenz, Gabriel S. "Learning and Opinion Change, Not Priming: Reconsidering the Priming Hypothesis." *American Journal of Political Science* 53:4 (2009): 821-837.

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.

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.

*Recommended:*

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

**November 5: Within-case "process tracing"**

Brady, Henry. "Data-Set Observations versus Causal-Process Observations: The 2000 U.S. Presidential Election." In *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, Brady, Henry and David Collier, 237-242. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010.

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

Falletti Tullia G. "Theory-Guided Process Tracing: Something Old, Something New," APSA-CP, Newsletter of the Organized Section in Comparative Politics of the APSA, Volume 17, Issue 1, Winter, 9-14.

Jason Lyall, "Process Tracing, Causal Inference, and Civil War." In *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* edited by Bennett and Checkel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Strategies for Social Inquiry Series)

TBD in Wood, Elisabeth. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

*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.

Beck, Nathaniel. "Causal Process "Observation": Oxymoron of (Fine) Old Wine." *Political Analysis* 18 (2010): 499-505.

**November 12: 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.

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.

*Recommended:*

Laitin, David. "The Perestroika Challenge to Social Science." *Politics and Society* 31 (2003): 163-184.

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).

**November 19: 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>

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.

Wilis, Derek. "Professors' Research Project Stirs Political Outrage in Montana." *New York Times*. 28 October 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/29/upshot/professors-research-project-stirs-political-outrage-in-montana.html?abt=0002&abg=1&r=0>

Desposato, Scott. "Ethics and research in comparative politics." *The Washington Post*. 3 November 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/11/03/ethics-and-research-in-comparative-politics/>

Blattman, Chris. "Is it ok for researchers to mess with elections?" 27 October 2014  
<http://chrisblattman.com/2014/10/27/ok-researchers-mess-experiments/>

Patty, John. "Well, In a Worst Case Scenario, Your Treatment Works..." 27 October 2014  
<http://www.mathofpolitics.com/2014/10/27/well-in-a-worst-case-scenario-your-treatment-works/>

### **December 3: Realities of the Profession**

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.

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.

*Recommended:*

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

### **December 10: Conclusions and Reflections**

- **Due: 15 page research proposal** -

Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago, University of Chicago, 1996.