

84-765 Advanced Research Methods – Fall 2017 Syllabus

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Course: Tuesday and Thursday 9:00–10:20am, Baker Hall 154A

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:00am –12:00pm, Baker Hall 327N

Course Description:

In this course, students will learn how to consume, evaluate, and begin the process of conducting research in political science. The course is broadly split into two major parts. The first part is the “Research Nuts and Bolts,” and introduces students to the foundational challenges of identifying research questions, drawing valid causal inferences, engaging with existing literature, measuring concepts and describing data, and choosing cases or observations. The second part builds on this foundation and explores a number of the leading methods or tools of conducting research in the social sciences today, including case studies, interviews, surveys, experiments of various kinds, multivariate regression, and natural experiments.

Throughout the course, the focus will be twofold. First, students will build their research toolkits, accumulating an understanding of both general principles of causal inference and research design and specific research strategies and their relative strengths and weaknesses. Second, students will apply these skills to the creation of an original thesis proposal, which will serve as the foundation for a thesis project in International Relations and Politics to be completed in the spring semester. In this sense, students will gain both a thorough conceptual *and* applied knowledge of key issues in the design of modern political science research.

Course Readings:

In an effort to provide you with both a structured foundation and a diverse range of perspectives, the course relies on both a textbook that is required for purchase plus a variety of journal articles and book chapters that will be provided for you. The required textbook is listed below (available on Amazon in either hard copy or digital versions):

-*The Fundamentals of Political Science Research, 2nd Ed*, by Paul M. Kellstedt and Guy D. Whitten, 2013 (henceforth FPSR)

Additionally, the following books are recommended but not required (we will read excerpts from them which I will provide to you, but they are classics of research design which you may want to consult more broadly as you formulate your thesis):

-*Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, by Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, 1994

-*The Craft of Research, 4th Ed*, by Wayne C. Booth et al, 2016

Course Evaluation:

Research Memos:

This course is both a course on research design and a research workshop. The main assignments are a series of six brief memos, due every two weeks by 6pm on Sunday (deadlines listed below), in which you apply what we learn in class to developing a specific aspect of your thesis proposal. Each memo is worth 10% of your grade for a total of 60% – you should approach them seriously. Moreover, we will discuss each one of them in class in an effort to provide constructive feedback and help you develop and improve your projects. This means that everyone must read all memos before the Tuesday after their circulation and come ready to discuss them. On the weeks without a memo, we will start class that Tuesday with a brief check-in on your progress to keep everyone on track and accountable.

Thesis Proposals:

The point of these memos is to work toward the development of your master’s thesis proposal – this is your final paper in our course. The proposal will be due one week after the end of classes on Friday, December 15th by 6pm and will be worth 25% of the final grade. The thesis proposals (minimum of 25 double-spaced pages, using standard formatting) should contain a working title, advisor, abstract, discussion of your research question and its importance, research methodology and timeline, and preliminary data analysis. Essentially, the proposal should build on all of your memos and the feedback you receive on them throughout the class to produce a coherent whole. For further details, consult the IRP/AMP Thesis Guidelines handbook.

Student Presentations:

This course also includes two student presentations. First, during “database week” (10/30-11/3), students will present a major political science database to the class. These presentations will last around 15 minutes with a short Q&A and will make up 5% of your final grade. Full instructions are available below. Second, during the last week of the semester (12/4-8), students will present their thesis proposals to the class. These presentations will last around 20 minutes with a longer Q&A and comprise 10% of your final grade. These final presentations are meant to emulate the format of a conference panel and give you practice sharing your work and answering questions. Both presentations should use some type of visual aid (handouts, PPT).

Course Participation:

Active and thoughtful participation is critical to your (and to our general) success this semester. All students should carefully read assigned readings (as well as circulated memos) prior to each course meeting and come ready to discuss and analyze them. The course will be very hands-on. While class participation and attendance will not be a direct component of your grade, I reserve the right to adjust your final grades up for excellent participation or down for poor participation by half of a letter grade (e.g., from an A- to an A or a B+).

Research memos	60% (10% each)
Database presentation	5%
Final presentation	10%
Thesis proposal	25%
Attendance/Participation	Instructor discretion (max half letter grade)

Proper documentation of a medical or personal emergency is needed for late work to be excused, otherwise it will be penalized at a rate of 10% per day. Barring exceptional conditions, late work that is excused must be submitted within one week of the original deadline. Any grievances with a grade must be submitted in writing to the instructor within one week of the grading as well, and will lead if appropriate to a re-grading of your assignment. Do note that your grade may be raised or lowered in this process. Final grades will be based on the following grade scale, with rounding at instructor discretion:

Grading Scale:

	B+	87 to 89.9	C+	77 to 79.9	D+	67 to 69.9	
A	93 to 100	B	83 to 86.9	C	73 to 76.9	D	60 to 66.9
A-	90 to 92.9	B-	80 to 82.9	C-	70 to 72.9	E/F	0 to 60

Inappropriate Technology Use:

Cellphones should be silenced and stowed during class. Laptops may be used for class purposes. Inappropriate or disruptive technology use may affect your participation grade.

Academic Integrity/Misconduct:

All work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (use of someone else's words or ideas without properly citing them) will be tolerated. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the university according to the University Policy on Academic Integrity. For questions about this policy, see <http://www.cmu.edu/policies/student-and-student-life/academic-integrity.html>

Accommodations for Disabilities:

If you have a disability and have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, please discuss your accommodations or needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with you to ensure appropriate accommodations are provided. If you suspect you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, I encourage you to contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu.

Maintaining Personal Wellness:

Take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings of anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help. Call 412-268-2922 and visit their website at <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty, or a family member you trust for help in getting connected to support services.

Part 1 – Research Nuts & Bolts

Tuesday 8/29 & Thursday 8/31. Research and research questions.

- *Designing Social Inquiry*, Ch. 1
- Shapiro, Ian. 2002. “Problems, Methods, and Theories in the Study of Politics, or What’s Wrong with Political Science and What to Do about It.” *Political Theory* 30(4): 596-619.

Tuesday 9/5 & Thursday 9/7. Causality and causal inference.

- FPSR, Chs. 3-4
- Intro to Stata (basics)

Memo #1: Choosing a Research Question – due on Sunday, 9/10

Choose some puzzling variation or phenomenon that you think is (1) important and (2) poorly understood by existing research. Identify at least one working hypothesis that you think might shed more light on what is driving it. Based on this, write a one-page memo that outlines your chosen research question, being sure to explain both its theoretical and real-world significance (the “so-what?”) in addition to your working hypothesis about what explains it. Circulate your memo to everyone by 6pm on Sunday.

Tuesday 9/12 & Thursday 9/14. Introductions and literature reviews.

- *Craft of Research*, Ch. 16
- Knopf, Jeffrey W. 2006. “Doing a Literature Review.” *PS, Political Science & Politics* 39(1): 127-32.

Tuesday 9/19 & Thursday 9/21. Conceptualization and measurement.

- FPSR, Ch. 5
- Collier, David, and Steven Levitsky. 1997. “Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research.” *World Politics* 49: 430-51.
- Hayes, Danny, and Matt Guardino. 2010. “Whose Views Made the News? Media Coverage and the March to War in Iraq.” *Political Communication* 27(1): 59-87.
- Stata Module #2 (description)

Memo #2: Reviewing the Existing Literature – due on Sunday, 9/24

Identify at least eight studies on your research question, summarize them, and synthesize them into natural perspectives, camps, or schools of thought. In other words, outline what we know about your specific topic. Then, identify at least one flaw or “gap” in this literature – what we do not know – that might be amenable to further study. Based on this, write a two-page memo reviewing and evaluating the literature on your question. Circulate your memo to everyone by 6pm on Sunday.

Tuesday 9/26 & Thursday 9/28. Case selection.

- Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." In *Political Analysis*, vol. 2, ed. James A. Stimson, 131-50. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Pape, Robert. 2003. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *American Political Science Review* 97(3): 343-61.
- Seawright, Jason, and John Gerring. 2008. "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2): 294-308.

Part 2 – Key Research Methods

Tuesday 10/3 & Thursday 10/5. Case studies.

- Mahoney, James. 2000. "Strategies of Causal Inference in Small-N Analysis." *Sociological Methods & Research* 28(4): 387-424.
- Bellin, Eva. 2004. "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective." *Comparative Politics* 36(2): 139-57.
- Fravel, Taylor. 2010. "The Limits of Diversion: Rethinking Internal and External Conflict." *Security Studies* 19: 307-41.
- Carson, Austin. 2015. "Facing Off and Saving Face: Covert Intervention and Escalation Management in the Korean War." *International Organization* 70(1): 103-31.

Memo #3: Selecting Cases for Analysis – due on Sunday, 10/8

Identify the case(s) that you will use to examine your research question and investigate your key hypothesis. Why are these cases good or useful? Write a two-page memo outlining your rationale for picking these cases (e.g., representative, diverse, influential, etc.) and how they fit into your broader population of interest. Be sure to discuss how you will avoid key issues such as selection bias as appropriate. Finally, describe the data that you anticipate collecting or using from them. Circulate by 6pm on Sunday.

Tuesday 10/10 & Thursday 10/12. Interviews.

- Leech, Beth, et al. 2002. "Symposium: Interview Methods in Political Science." *PS, Political Science & Politics* 35(4): 663-88.
- Pinderhughes, Howard. 1993. "The Anatomy of Racially Motivated Violence in New York City: A Case Study of Youth in Southern Brooklyn." *Social Problems* 40: 478-92.
- Parkinson, Sarah Elizabeth. 2013. "Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High-Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War." *American Political Science Review* 107(3): 418-32.

Tuesday 10/17 & Thursday 10/19. Surveys.

- Keeter, Scott. 2005. "Survey Research." In *Doing Research: Methods of Inquiry for Conflict Analysis*, ed. Daniel Druckman. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Krosnick, Jon A. and Stanley Presser. 2010. "Question and Questionnaire Design." In *Handbook of Survey Research*, eds. Peter V. Marsden and James D. Wright. Bingley, UK: Emerald.

- Miller, Joanne M., Kyle L. Saunders, and Christina E. Farhart. 2016. “Conspiracy Endorsement as Motivated Reasoning: The Moderating Roles of Political Knowledge and Trust.” *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 824-44.
- Berinsky, Adam, Kai Quek, and Michael Sances. 2012. “Conducting Online Experiments on Mechanical Turk.” *Newsletter of the APSA Experimental Section* 3(1): 2-6.

Memo #4: Qualitative Research Strategy – due on Sunday, 10/22

Choose one of the case(s) identified in your last memo and sketch out a three-page qualitative research strategy using either case studies, interviews, or focus groups to explore your theory. If you choose a case study approach, explain the type you will use (e.g., between-case, within-case, both), and how it will help test your theory. If you choose an interview or a focus group approach, explain the types of people and questions you will rely on (e.g., closed, open, etc.), and how they will help test your theory. Circulate by 6pm on Sunday.

Tuesday 10/24 & Thursday 10/26. Regressions/Large-n.

- FPSR Chs. 8-9, Ch. 11.1-2
- Stephan, Maria J., and Erica Chenoweth. 2008. “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict.” *International Security* 33(1): 7-44.
- Stata Module #3 (regression)

Database Presentations:

Give a 15 minute presentation in which you present the key features, applications, strengths, and weaknesses of a major database in the field of political science. This presentation should include two visual elements that help show how the database can be useful to scholars (e.g., histograms, cross-tabs, scatter plots, etc.). A list of potential databases you can use is below, but you can ask me if there is another one you would like to invest your time in:

Public opinion: *World Values Survey, Global Barometer Surveys (pick one region), Pew’s Global Attitudes Project, American National Election Survey, European Social Survey, General Social Survey*

War, conflict, and violence: *UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Datasets, Correlates of War, Global Terrorism Database, Armed Conflict Location and Event Database (ACLED), Minorities at Risk database*

Regime type and regime change: *POLITY, Freedom House, PSU Autocratic Regime Data, UKY Global Instances of Coups dataset, Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) datasets*

Other databases: *Leader Experiences and Attributes Database (world leaders), Archigos Database (world leaders), Social Conflict Analysis Database (civil unrest), Comparative Manifestos Project (party ideology)*

Tuesday 10/31 & Thursday 11/2. Database week.

- No readings, presentation week!

Memo #5: Quantitative Research Strategy – due on Sunday, 11/5

Write a three page memo outlining a “large-n” or quantitative research strategy using surveys, experiments, or some other observational data to explore your theory. Make sure to clarify (1) the parts of your theory that can be tested quantitatively, (2) how you will collect or access the data needed to test them, and (3) how you will analyze that data statistically to accept or reject your hypotheses. Circulate by 6pm on Sunday.

Tuesday 11/7 & Thursday 11/9. Experiments 1 (survey and lab).

- Nyhan, Brendan, and Jason Reifler. 2010. "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions." *Political Behavior* 32(2): 303-30.
- Johns, Robert, and Graeme A. M. Davies. 2012. "Democratic Peace or Clash of Civilizations? Target States and Support for War in Britain and the United States." *Journal of Politics* 74(4): 1038-52.
- Sears, David O. 1986. "College Sophomores in the Laboratory: Influences of a Narrow Data Base on Social Psychology's View of Human Nature." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 51(3): 515-30.

Due on Sunday 11/12:

Submit your thesis advisor choice to me by email (must be in IPS).

Tuesday 11/14 & Thursday 11/16. Experiments 2 (lab-in-the-field and field).

- Wantchekon, Leonard. 2003. "Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin." *World Politics* 55(3): 399-422.
- Loewen, Peter John, Daniel Rubenson, and Leonard Wantchekon. 2010. "Help Me Help You: Conducting Field Experiments with Political Elites." *ANNALS of the American Academic of Political and Social Science* 628(1): 165-75.
- Henrich, Joseph et al. 2005. "Economic Man in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Behavioral Experiments in 15 Small-Scale Societies." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 28: 795-855.
- Robinson, Amanda. 2016. "Nationalism and Ethnic-Based Trust: Evidence from an African Border Region." *Comparative Political Studies* 49(14): 1819-54.

Memo #6: Preliminary Data Analysis – due on Sunday, 11/19

Write a three page memo in which you briefly restate your research question and theory, and then present a preliminary effort at data analysis to test it. If you are doing a case study, you can present a "plausibility probe" or brief and preliminary version of it. If you are analyzing existing data, you can present descriptive results (e.g., cross-tabs) or initial regression results that examine your hypotheses. If you are gathering new data, you can present the materials – interview script, survey questionnaire, or experimental protocol – that you will use to do so. Circulate by 6pm on Sunday.

Tuesday 11/21 & Thursday 11/23. Natural experiments.

- Posner, Daniel. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 529-45.
- Dube, Arindrajit, Oeindrila Dube, and Omar Garcia-Ponce. "Cross-Border Spillover: U.S. Gun Laws and Violence in Mexico." *American Political Science Review* 107(3): 397-417.
- Sekhon, Jasjeet S., and Rocio Titiunik. 2012. "When Natural Experiments and Neither Natural nor Experiments." *American Political Science Review* 106(1): 35-57.

Tuesday 11/28 & Thursday 11/30. Social media and text as data.

- King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. 2013. "How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression." *American Political Science Review* 107(2): 326-43.
- Zeitzoff, Thomas, John Kelly, and Gilan Lotan. 2015. "Using Social Media to Measure Foreign Policy Dynamics: An Empirical Analysis of the Iranian-Israeli Confrontation (2012-13)." *Journal of Peace Research* 52(3): 368-83.
- Munger, Kevin. 2017. "Tweetment Effects on the Tweeted: Experimentally Reducing Racist Harassment." *Political Behavior* 39(3): 629-49.
- Lucas, Christopher, et al. 2015. "Computer-Assisted Text Analysis for Comparative Analysis." *Political Analysis* 23(2): 254-77.

Tuesday 12/5 & Thursday 12/7. Final presentations.

- No readings, presentation week!

*****Final thesis proposals due by Friday, December 15th at 6pm*****