

Research Design in Political Science

Department of Political Science
Emory University
Fall 2021

Meeting room: Tarbuton Hall 120A
Meeting times: Wednesday, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Credit Hours 3
Pre-requisites None

Instructor: Professor McProfessor
Email: mcprof@emory.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday, 10:00 - 12:00 or by appointment

Course Description

This course introduces the research process in the field of political science. This is a required course in the Ph.D. program. Many of the topics we cover you will see again and study more deeply in our sequences on methodology and formal theory. Every idea we discuss will be relevant for your thematic course work and ultimately for the research you conduct. Topics include the selection and development of research questions, conceptualization, measurement, theoretical modeling and ethical concerns in human subjects research. We will also discuss core challenges in drawing causal inferences from data. We will discuss common methods for inferring causation in experimental and observational data. Students will have the opportunity to evaluate and design their own research.

Learning Goals and Outcomes

Students in this course will develop an understanding of how political scientists select questions to research, how they generate theoretical models of political behavior, and how they design empirical studies. Students will be able to explain what makes a research question important; compare two theoretical models of the same phenomenon to each other; evaluate the measurement strategies for key concepts; identify and explain the difference between causal and descriptive questions; identify key threats to causal inference in observational studies; assess research design quality; summarize the principles of ethical human subjects research; and, formulate a research design and translate that design into a pre-analysis plan.

Student Expectations and Support for Success

Success in this course depends on careful preparation and active engagement. You should set aside sufficient time to read all materials due to be discussed in class, as described in the course schedule. You should be prepared to engage in class discussions. Come prepared to answer questions and solve problems. If you are uncertain about something you have read, come prepared to ask questions. You should attend my office hours. You do not need to attend every week, but it is reasonable for students to plan to meet during office hours with me at least

a few times. If ever you are confused about something that we have covered in class, please come to office hours. If you cannot make office hours, please reach out to me via email to set an appointment. I expect you to turn your assignments in on their due date. You are welcome to speak with me about your work before it is due; and, you can send me a draft to review.

Inclusion

Members of our academic community represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. The Department of Political Science is committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that leverages this diversity. We encourage members to:

1. share their unique experiences and ideas;
2. be open to the views of others;
3. honor the uniqueness of their colleagues; and
4. appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community.

Courtesy

Classroom courtesy is necessary to help build a cohesive community that has the opportunity to learn without distractions. It is also true that “Emory University is committed to an environment where the open expression of ideas and open, vigorous debate and speech are valued, promoted, and encouraged” (Respect for Open Expression Policy, 8.14).

Although this course is primarily methodological in nature, we are political scientists and our studies often deal with political issues that stimulate strong feelings. They can produce heated debate. Comments made in our course should be:

1. respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement;
2. related to the class and course material;
3. delivered in respectful ways and in a non-aggressive manner; and,
4. free from personal attacks.

Accessibility

As the instructor of this course, I aim to provide an inclusive learning environment. I want every student to succeed. The Department of Accessibility Services (DAS) works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. It is your responsibility to request accommodations. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must register with the DAS at <https://accessibility.emory.edu/students/>. Accommodations cannot be retroactively applied so you need to contact DAS as early as possible and contact us as early as possible in the semester to discuss the plan for implementation of your accommodations. For additional information about accessibility and accommodations, please contact the DAS at (404) 727-9877 or accessibility@emory.edu.

Stress Management and Mental Health

As a student, you may find that personal and academic stressors in your life, including those related to illness, economic instability, and/or racial injustice, are creating barriers to learning this semester. Many students face personal and environmental challenges that can interfere with their academic success and overall wellbeing. If you are struggling with this class, please visit me during office hours or contact me via email at name@emory.edu. If you are feeling overwhelmed and think you might benefit from additional support, please know that there are people who care and offices to support you at Emory. These services – including confidential resources – are provided by staff who are respectful of students' diverse backgrounds. For an extensive list of well-being resources on campus, please go to: <http://campuslife.emory.edu/support/index.html>. And keep in mind that Emory offers free, 24/7 emotional, mental health, and medical support resources via TimelyCare: <https://timelycare.com/emory>. Other Emory resources include:

1. Counseling & Psychological Services
2. Office of Spiritual & Religious Life
3. Student Case Management and Interventions Services
4. Student Health Services Psychiatry
5. Support During A Crisis: A Guide for Faculty & Staff
6. Emory Anytime Student Health Services

Instructor Expectations

Achieving the goals of the course requires not only your effort but mine. I am committed to fostering your learning by:

1. presenting materials and activities that respect and affirm differences in learning styles and backgrounds;
2. maintaining a class environment in which you feel that you belong;
3. responding to your inquiries within 24 hours (48 hours on weekends); and,
4. providing feedback and assessment of your assignments in a timely manner.

Course Materials and Format

Format

This course meets once per week in-person in Tabutton 120A.

Materials

Nearly all materials for the course are available via Emory's library. You will be able to find most articles via the library's electronic journal or database access. In cases where this is not possible, you will find the reading on the library's electronic Course Reserve.

Assignments and Grading

Your final grade is a weighted average of the following five components:

Participation (20%) Active participation is essential to graduate seminars. I expect you to be present. I expect you to be prepared and I expect you to participate. You should complete all readings before the session at which we will discuss them. You may not feel comfortable responding to all questions we consider in class, but you should make an effort to contribute your ideas and to respond to the ideas of your colleagues and me. I will grade your participation on a binary scale. You either participate actively in class or you do not. Your overall grade for participation will be the percentage of classes on which you participated actively. You can turn that percentage into a grade via the standard scale for translating course grades into letter grades, described below. I will not include classes for which you have a valid excuse not to attend.

Introducing a empirical study (20%) Select an article published in a top political science journal, e.g., APSR, AJPS, JOP, BJPS, World Politics, LSQ, IO, etc. Provide a written evaluation of author's introduction to the research problem to be studied. This is found in the introductory sections of the paper. In a paper with a deep theoretical argument, this can be found before the theoretical argument is presented. In a primarily empirical paper, it often includes a theoretical argument. Historically, this is the section of the paper that we would refer to as the "introduction" and "literature review." Summarize the question and explain how the authors develop it. How soon do you learn the research question? Is it clearly stated? Do they convince you that the question is important? Do they convince you that it has not been answered before or that the answers need further consideration? Are the key concepts that the author needs in order to describe the question clear to you? How closely connected is the material that follows the development of the question to the question itself? Do you detect differences between the question the author intends to answer and the results that are summarized or do the results provide clear answers to the original question? If you see a disconnect, what is it and what kind of evidence would you have rather seen? Your evaluation should be about 5-7 pages. Your grade will be on the standard 100-point scale.

Why is my study important? (20%) Identify a professor(s) (or advanced Ph.D. student) in our department with whom you would like to discuss research. I will help you organize a meeting with this person should it prove difficult. You will meet and discuss with him/her a recent study they have completed. You do not need the professor to have a finished paper, but if he or she does, ask for it! Before you read it, though, you should have the meeting. Your assignment is to report to the class about your conversation. Answer the following questions. What question is the professor attempting to answer? Why is the question important? What debate is being addressed? What was known about the question prior to the professor's study? What was the theoretical model that structured the analysis? What is the key finding in the study? How does the empirical design work? Why is the finding important? Why is it important? Is there anything puzzling in the study? What questions remain open? Your report should be about 5-7 pages. Your grade will be on the standard 100-point scale.

Research design (40%) You will develop a research design on a topic of interest to you. The research design may be written specifically for this course or you may combine this requirement with a paper requirement in another course (obviously the more efficient strategy if available!). We will discuss the particulars of the research design in class on **DATE**. Your research design will be about 15 pages, though it can be shorter or longer, really depending on what you feel you need to do to communicate the plan. Your grade will be on the standard 100-point scale.

Grading Scale

The following scale translates the traditional 100-point grading scale to the letter grades consistent with Laney Graduate School policy.

93-100	A
90-92	A-
88-89	B+
83-87	B
80-82	B-
70-79	C
0-69	F

I expect you to perform at the A or A- level. Performance below the A- level is a sign that you struggled with the assignment. If you receive a grade below A-, you should come see me to talk about the course material, your questions, or concerns.

General Course Policies

Academic Integrity

You are expected to uphold and cooperate in maintaining academic integrity as a member of the Laney Graduate School. By taking this course, you affirm your commitment to the Laney Graduate School Honor Code, which you can find in the Laney Graduate School Handbook. You should ensure that you are familiar with the rights and responsibilities of members of our academic community and with policies that apply to students as members of our academic community. Any individual, when they suspect that an offense of academic misconduct has occurred, shall report this suspected breach to the appropriate Director of Graduate Studies, Program Director, or Dean of the Laney Graduate School. If an allegation is reported to a Director of Graduate Studies or a Program Director, they are in turn required to report the allegation to the Dean of Laney Graduate School.

Health and Safety

Should it be necessary, you can use this section to remind students of university health and safety protocols, including for example mask requirements. Please ensure that what you include, should you include a statement, aligns with university health policies.

Other policies

Instructors sometimes include additional course policies. Examples include policies related to the circulation and selling of class materials, particular expectations about the use of tech in the classroom, incomplete grades, etc. If you have such policies, include them here.

Course Schedule

Part I

What are the origins of political science? How do these origins influence the way that we work today? How do they structure our debates, both substantive and methodological? We pay special attention to how communities develop research questions and research practices. We then turn to the related processes of conceptualization, measurement and the development of theoretical models.

September 4 : The Field of Political Science

We will discuss class culture and class goals, the syllabus and where this course fits in the curriculum. We then will discuss the history of the discipline. What is political science and what are its origins? In what ways do the origins of the field influence how work is done in 2017? What are the key debates about how political science is done? How much should you care about those debates? And if you care about them, when is the right time to engage in these debates?

Required Readings:

Albert Somit and Joseph Tanenhaus. *The development of American political science: from burgess to behavioralism*. New York: Irvington Publishers, 1982.

Gary King. Restructuring the social sciences: reflections from harvard's institute for quantitative social science. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 47(1):165–172, 2014.

Jeffrey C Isaac. Restructuring the social sciences? a reflection from the editor of perspectives on politics. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 47(2):279–283, 2014.

Gregory Kasza. *Perestroika: For an ecumenical science of politics*, 2001.

September 11: Theoretical Modeling

What is a model? What are the components of a model? What makes a model a good model? How are good questions connected to good models? I will provide you a copy of Lave & March, *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*. You'll need to read. Chapters 1, 2, & 3. In addition, you will need to read the following.

Required Readings:

Charles A Lave and G James. March. 1975. an introduction to models in the social sciences.

Kevin A Clarke and David M Primo. Modernizing political science: A model-based approach. *Perspectives on Politics*, 5(4):741–753, 2007.

September 18: Conceptualization and Measurement

What do political scientists mean by conceptualization? Why does clear conceptualization matter? What common challenges do social researchers confront in the process of conceptualization?

Due: Topic introduction

Required Readings:

Mike Brown. *How I killed Pluto and why it had it coming*. Spiegel & Grau, 2012.

Jeremy Waldron. Is the rule of law an essentially contested concept (in florida)? *Law and Philosophy*, 21(2):137–164, 2002.

Guillermo O'donnell. *Polyarchies and the (un) rule of law in Latin America*. Instituto Juan March de Estudios e Investigaciones, 1998.

Gerardo Munck and Jay Verkuilen. Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: Evaluating alternative indices. *Comparative Political Studies*, 35(1):5–35, 2002.

September 25: Conceptualization and Measurement

What makes a measure of a concept a good measure? On what grounds do we evaluate measures? What is the value of descriptive inference in modern political science? What about pure description as in the presentation of simple facts about politics?

Required Readings:

Shawn Treier and Simon Jackman. Democracy as a latent variable. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(1):201–217, 2008.

Agustín Echebarria-Echabe and Emilia Fernández Guede. A new measure of anti-arab prejudice: Reliability and validity evidence. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 37(5):1077–1091, 2007.

John Gerring. Mere description. *British Journal of Political Science*, 42(4):721–746, 2012.

Part II

The second part of our class will consider the challenge of learning about the causes of political phenomena via a variety of empirical approaches. Our goal in this section is to learn about the logic of experimental and observational studies.

October 2: Causation I

What does it mean to say that something is the cause of something else? Today we will discuss a variety of theories of causation.

Required Readings:

Stephen Mumford and Rani Lill Anjum. *Causation: a very short introduction*. OUP Oxford, 2013.

Due: Research question due

October 9: Causation II

How do political scientists think about causation in their work? Today we will discuss the role of counterfactual reasoning in the field. We will discuss the fundamental problem of causal inference and introduce the Neyman-Rubin causal model. I will send out the reading for Imbens and Rubin. Please read Chapter 2 of Angrist and Pischke.

James D Fearon. Counterfactuals and hypothesis testing in political science. *World politics*, 43(2):169–195, 1991.

Guido W Imbens and Donald B Rubin. *Causal inference in statistics, social, and biomedical sciences*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Joshua D Angrist and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. *Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion*. Princeton university press, 2008.

October 16: Experimental Methods

Randomized experiments are often characterized as the gold standard for evaluating causation. How do experiments address the fundamental problem of causal inference? Today we will consider three types of experimental designs.

Required Readings:

Andrew Healy, Alexander G Kuo, and Neil Malhotra. Partisan bias in blame attribution: When does it occur? *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 1(02):144–158, 2014.

James H Kuklinski, Michael D Cobb, and Martin Gilens. Racial attitudes and the “new south”. *The Journal of Politics*, 59(2):323–349, 1997.

Adam N Glynn. What can we learn with statistical truth serum? design and analysis of the list experiment. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 77(S1):159–172, 2013.

Jens Hainmueller and Dominik Hangartner. Who gets a swiss passport? a natural experiment in immigrant discrimination. *American political science review*, 107(1):159–187, 2013.

Due: Research question due

October 23: Experimental Methods

Today we will consider two experiments in the “field.”

Required Readings:

Robert A Blair, Sabrina M Karim, and Benjamin S Morse. Establishing the rule of law in weak and war-torn states: Evidence from a field experiment with the liberian national police. *American Political Science Review*, 113(3):641–657, 2019.

Alan S Gerber, Donald P Green, and Christopher W Larimer. Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment. *American Political Science Review*, 102(01):33–48, 2008.

October 30: Observational Studies I

The next few weeks will consider observational studies, focusing on designs that primarily make use of quantitative methodology. We will consider natural and quasi experimental designs. We will also consider how scholars treat observational studies that are not natural experiments or quasi-experiments as if they were.

Required Readings:

Thad Dunning. Improving causal inference: Strengths and limitations of natural experiments. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2):282–293, 2008.

Jasjeet S Sekhon and Rocio Titiunik. When natural experiments are neither natural nor experiments. *American Political Science Review*, 106(1):35–57, 2012.

Adam N Glynn and Maya Sen. Identifying judicial empathy: Does having daughters cause judges to rule for women's issues? *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(1):37–54, 2015.

November 6: Observational Studies II

Observational studies continued. Today we consider the difference in differences design. Read Angrist and Pischke, Chapter 5 through p. 243. Required Readings:

Joshua D Angrist and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. *Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion*. Princeton university press, 2008.

Anthony Fowler. Electoral and policy consequences of voter turnout: Evidence from compulsory voting in australia. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 8(2):159–182, 2013.

November 13: Observational Studies III

Observational studies continued. Today we consider matching. Required Readings:

Michael J Gilligan and Ernest J Sergenti. Evaluating un peacekeeping with matching to improve causal inference. *QJ Polit. Sci*, 3(2):89–122, 2008.

Elizabeth A Stuart. Matching methods for causal inference: A review and a look forward. *Statistical science: a review journal of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics*, 25(1):1, 2010.

Due: Theoretical model and implications due

November 20: Qualitative Research Designs

For the next two weeks, we will discuss qualitative research designs. As you know, the original method of political science involved comparative historical analysis. Scholars still make use of comparative case studies. What can be learned from such methods? We address this question first. Required Readings:

David Collier. Understanding process tracing. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(4):823–830, 2011.

Henry E Brady. Data-set observations versus causal-process observations: The 2000 us presidential election. *Rethinking social inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards*, pages 267–272, 2004.

Jasjeet S Sekhon. Quality meets quantity: Case studies, conditional probability, and counterfactuals. *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(2):281–293, 2004.

Macartan Humphreys and Alan M Jacobs. Mixing methods: A bayesian approach. *American Political Science Review*, 109(4):653–673, 2015.

November 27: Qualitative Research Designs

Qualitative research designs continued. How can you learn about causation from one case? What standards exist for evaluating such data? Read Chapter 12 of the Brady and Collier text. Required Readings:

Arthur Conan Doyle and Sidney Paget. *The adventure of silver blaze*. Mary McLaughlin and M. Einisman for the Scotland Yard Bookstore, 1892.

David Collier. Understanding process tracing. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(4):823–830, 2011.

Henry E Brady. Data-set observations versus causal-process observations: The 2000 us presidential election. *Rethinking social inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards*, pages 267–272, 2004.

Macartan Humphreys and Alan M Jacobs. Mixing methods: A bayesian approach. *American Political Science Review*, 109(4):653–673, 2015.

December 4: Human Subjects and Transparency

What is human subjects research? What are your obligations to human subjects in your research? How do you ensure that your research is ethical? What processes must you follow in order to conduct human subjects research? Prior to class, you must complete CITI training at Emory.

You can begin the training here: <http://www.irb.emory.edu/Training/courses/citi.html>

In addition, please read the following piece. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/11/02/how-to-make-field-experiments-more-ethical/?utm_term=.13df8e987f5e

<http://egap.org/methods-guides/10-things-you-need-know-about-multiple-compari>

.13df8e987f5e <http://egap.org/methods-guides/10-things-you-need-know-about-multiple-compari>

Required Readings:

Alan S Gerber, Donald P Green, and David Nickerson. Testing for publication bias in political science. *Political Analysis*, 9(4):385–392, 2001.

December 11: Presentations!

Due: Research Presentation

December 13 – Research Design Due