

# POLI 7961: Approaches to the Study of Politics

Fall 2015  
Room: Stubbs 210  
M 3:00 - 5:50

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## Course Description

This course provides an overview of the scope, methods, and norms of empirical research in the social sciences. After outlining the scientific method and its application in the various subfields of political science, we will move onto more specific discussions of concept formation, hypothesis construction, measurement development, and basic tests of cause-and-effect relationships. Within this general framework, we will examine cross-case and case-specific quantitative analysis, interview and survey methods, experimental design in both laboratory and field settings, mixed methods analysis, and formal theoretical and computational modeling. Finally and perhaps most importantly, priority will be placed on hands-on, task-oriented learning to include: typesetting research manuscripts with LaTeX; organizing and managing databases with Stata; practicing transparent research with peer review and replication exercises; and drafting a full-length research proposal.

## Course Objectives

The primary objectives of this course are fourfold. First, students should develop an aptitude for consuming, discussing, and critically evaluating empirical research in the field of political science. Second, students should develop a working understanding of the scientific method as well as how this method maps into various types of social inquiry. Third, students should begin to cultivate a familiarity with the different subfields of the discipline and choose one of these subfields in which

## Grading Rubric

Final grades will be assigned in accordance with the rubric that appears below. Keep in mind that LSU has recently migrated to a plus-minus grading system, which translates numerical scores to alphabetical grades in more fine grained detail. I am philosophically opposed to the idea that someone would earn a perfect A+ in this course, thus the rubric checks in at an A.

Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
94-100	A	83-86	B	73-76	C	63-66	D
90-93	A-	80-82	B-	70-72	C-	60-62	D-
87-89	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+	< 60	F

## Requirements and Evaluation

### *Participation – 20 points*

For each week

## Additional Information.

Laptops. For three of our course meetings, we will conduct computing-intensive lab sessions. It is imperative that you bring a laptop to these class periods. In the event that you do not own a laptop, I will partner you with a peer for the exercise.

Course readings. Readings have been made available for you on the LSU Moodle portal for this course. Although we will typically read 5-7 items for each meeting, the reading load for this course varies from week to week. I would suggest scanning through the readings a week before class to come up with a plan ahead of time for how to allocate your effort across the manuscripts.

Software. You will need access to Stata as well as versions of the open-access typesetting software programs LaTeX and Biblalex. You must procure Stata on your own before November 2; we will go over in class how to access and install LaTeX and Biblalex during our Sept. 28 meeting. I would suggest also having Microsoft Word and Excel (or comparable programs) on hand.

## Survival Strategies and Recommendations

There are many ways to teach an introductory seminar in research design. Political science is an extremely diverse discipline with all manner of methodological outlooks and approaches. Practitioners of political science are steeped in different backgrounds and each approach comes with its fair share of biases and blinders. I have great respect for methodological pluralism and I hope to have discussions in this class that are inclusive of multiple approaches to research design.

You also have your own biases, whether you're aware of them at this point or not. To a large extent, your experience with the material is mediated by your academic background, your interests, and your ability to roll up your sleeves and put in a good day's work. For this reason, you will find that you and your peers will understand concepts at different rates, develop certain facilities with greater intensities, and harbor divergent preferences over which questions and manuscripts are interesting, effective, and successful. Here are some general principles to keep in mind:

You will not quickly "get" most things. Graduate school is a difficult process where you read hard materials, wrestle with challenging concepts, and labor intensively on nailing down seemingly minute details. You will feel lost and you may feel lost **often**. That's fine. Take a deep breath and plow ahead. Understanding comes with time and iteration.

Patience and work trumps intelligence quotient. Get into the habit of working 12 hour days and weekends. Grow accustomed to running down rabbit holes, meticulously collecting data, and writing multiple drafts of course papers. Step away from the internet, set aside the cell phone, and turn off the television. The life of the successful scholar is characterized by focused, quiet contemplation. Brilliance is biological, but learnedness is acquired through labor.

There is no dignity here, but also no shame. If you spend time trying to maintain a facade of intelligence in front of your peers, you'll be wasting most of that time. We are all essentially idiots moonlighting as smart people. Learn to take criticism, internalize it, and adapt in line with its suggestions. Learn to hazard a guess, take a risk in discussion, and get corrected.

## How to Read

Of necessity, there is a rather large reading load in this course. You will probably find yourself getting overwhelmed at points and, to an extent, this is by design. Learning how to “skim” materials or read strategically is a valuable tool you need to develop in the course of your graduate education. This is not to say that you should read superficially; rather, read with a focused aim that extracts from manuscripts important pieces of information.

Our readings can be largely classified into two sets: first, those that are instructional in nature insofar as they summarize or detail an approach to research; second, those that are examples of said approaches. The latter set will be substantively grounded in one of the subfields of political science, while the former set will present materials that are broadly applicable across all subfields.

I would recommend “active” engagement while reading. Rather than simply highlighting or taking notations in the margins, get out a separate piece of paper (or a new Word document) and write (or type) summaries of specific important details within each manuscript. This will constitute a reading journal, of sorts, that you can use for the in-class discussion. Remember that retention is correlated with activity; passive reading will not help you.

## How to Write

I take the evaluation of your written work extremely seriously. There is, in short, no more important task an academic performs than writing. You will be put to a variety of writing tasks this semester, none of which is a full-length research manuscript, but all of which are designed with the underlying goal of preparing you for such a task. Practice clear, analytical writing across all of these assignments. Remember that in the context of this course, you are analysts rather than advocates.

Submitted manuscripts should be carefully proofread, free of typographical errors, and evince a high level of organization. I am very willing to read preliminary drafts and provide feedback in advance of the submission deadline; I am much less willing to read hastily assembled and poorly organized final submissions. Good time management and close consultation with the professor will result in stronger end-of-semester products.

## How to Interact

I exist for you as a resource. I do not keep set office hours because I am almost always willing to meet with students provided that they've given me a bit of notice ahead of time. I'm around a lot and I try to be accessible to you.

In general, building rapport with your professors is the **sine qua non** of a successful graduate school career. I want to know what you're interested in working on; I don't mind hashing out half-formed research ideas; I very much enjoy reading students' work while it is in-progress; and I am happy to provide advice or support if you find yourself in a bind during the semester. As problems or confusions arise, please be proactive and come talk to me. The sooner I am aware of a situation, the more helpful I can be.

## Semester Schedule Matrix

Week	Subject	Assignments	Paper Timeline
1 Aug 24	Subfields: Scope and Content	Readings	
2 Aug 31	Epistemology of Social Science	Readings	
3 Sept 14	Theories, Causality, and Mechanisms	Readings	
4 Sept 21	Topics, Questions, and Ethics	Readings	
5 Sept 28	In-Class Lab: Formatting Manuscripts	Exam 1 Due (10 points)	
6 Oct 5	Conceptualization and Measurement	Readings	Research Brainstorm (5 points)
7 Oct 12	Case Studies and Small- <i>N</i> Analysis	Readings	
8 Oct 19	Observational and Large- <i>N</i> Analysis	Readings	Introductory Section (10 points)
9 Oct 26	Interview and Survey Methods	Readings	
10 Nov 2	In-Class Lab: Managing Data in Stata	Exam 2 Due (10 points)	
11 Nov 9	Laboratory and Field Experiments	Readings	Theory Section (10 points)
12 Nov 16	Game Theory, Social Choice, and ABM	Readings	
13 Nov 30	Reading and Evaluating Published Work	Readings	Data Section (10 points)
14 Dec 7	In-Class Lab: Replicating Published Work	Exam 3 Due (15 points)	
Dec 9	No Class Meeting		Final Paper Draft (10 points)

## Week 1 / Aug 24 / Subfields: Scope and Content

No written work is due this week.

Almond, Gabriel A., G. Bingham Powell, Kaare Strom, and Russell J. Dalton. "Issues in Comparative Politics" in **Comparative Politics: A Theoretical Framework, Fourth Edition**. Pearson Longman Press.

Peters, B. Guy. 1998. "The Importance of Comparison" in **Comparative Politics: Theory and Methods** Washington Square, NY: New York University Press.

Schmidt, Brian C. 2010. "On the History and Historiography of International Relations" in **The Oxford Handbook of International Relations** Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, eds. Oxford University Press.

Flanigan, William H. and Nancy H. Zingale. 2015. Chapter 1 in **Political Behavior of the American Electorate, Eleventh Edition**

Week 3 / Sept 14 / Theories, Causality, and Mechanisms

No written work is due this week. Note: heavy reading load, two weeks to prepare.

## Week 5 / Sept 28 / In-Class Lab: Formatting Manuscripts

Take Home Exam 1 Due.

Powner, Leanne C. Chapter 9 in **Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide**. 2015. CQ Press.

Hitt, Matthew and Benjamin Jones. 2011. "PRISM Introduction to L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X." The Ohio State University.

Cottrell, Allin. 1995. "A Short Introduction to L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X."

Oetiker, Tobias, Hubert Partl, Irene Hyna, and Elisabeth Schlegl. 2014. "The Not So Short Introduction to L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X2 ." Version 5.04.

Chang, Winston. 2014. "L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X2 Cheat Sheet."

Lehman, Philipp, Philip Kime, Audrey Boruvka, and Joseph Wright. 2015. "The Bibl<sub>at</sub>ex Package: Programmable Bibliographies and Citations." **Version 3.0**.

## Week 6 / Oct 5 / Conceptualization and Measurement

Research Brainstorm Due.

Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava, David Nachmias, and Jack DeWaard. 2014. Chapter 7 in **Research Methods in the Social Sciences, Eighth Edition**Worth Publishers.

Goetz, Gary. 2008. "Concepts, Theories, and Numbers: A Checklist for Constructing, Evaluating, and Using Concepts or Quantitative Measures." In **The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology**. Janet M. Box-Stensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, eds. Oxford University Press.

Collier, David, Jody LaPorte, and Jason Seawright. 2012. "Putting Typologies to Work: Concept Formation, Measurement, and Analytic Rigor." **Political Research Quarterly**. 65(1): 217-232.

Lancaster, Thomas D. and Gabriella R. Montinola. 2001. "Comparative Political Corruption: Issues of Operationalization and Measurement." **Studies in Comparative International Development**. 36(3): 3-28.

Mondak, Jeffrey J. 2001. "Developing Valid Knowledge Scales." **American Journal of Political Science** 45(1): 224-238.

Adcock, Robert and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." **American Political Science Review** 95(3): 529-546.



## Week 7 / Oct 12 / Case Studies and Small-N Analysis

No written work is due this week.

Gerring, John. 2007. "The Case Study: What it is and What it Does." In **The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics**. Carles Boix and Susan Carol Stokes, eds. Oxford University Press.

Bates, Robert. 2007. "From Case Studies to Social Science: A Strategy for Political Research." In **The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics** Carles Boix and Susan Carol Stokes, eds. Oxford University Press.

Odell, John S. 2002. "Case Study Methods in International Political Economy" in **Models, Numbers, and Cases: Methods for Studying International Relations** Detlef F. Sprinz and Yael Wolinsky, eds. University of Michigan Press.

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

Munck, Gerardo L. 2004. "Tools for Qualitative Research" in **Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards**. Henry E. Brady and David Collier, eds. Rowman & Littlefield.

Ragin, Charles C. 2004. "Turning the Tables: How Case-Oriented Research Challenges Variable-Oriented Research" in

## Week 9 / Oct 26 / Interview and Survey Methods

No written work is due this week. Circulate Take Home Exam 2.

Aberbach, Joel D. and Bert A. Rockman. 2002. "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews." **PS: Political Science** 35(4): 673-676.

Berry, Jeffrey M. 2002. "Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing." **PS: Political Science and Politics** 35(4): 679-682.

Lilleker, Darren G. 2003. "Interview the Political Elite: Navigating a Potential Minefield." **Politics** 23(3): 207-214.

Wu, Irene S. and Bojan Savić. 2010. "How to Persuade Government Officials to Grant Interviews and Share Information for Your Research." **PS: Political Science and Politics** 43(4): 721-723.

Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava, David Nachmias, and Jack DeWaard. 2014. Chapter 10 in **Research Methods in the Social Sciences, Eighth Edition**Worth Publishers.

Iarossi, Giuseppe. 2002. Chapter 3 in **The Power of Survey Design: A User's Guide for Managing Surveys, Interpreting Results, and Interviewing Respondents**Washington, DC: The World Bank Press.

## Week 10 / Nov 2 / In-Class Lab: Managing Data in Stata

Take Home Exam 2 Due.

Rodríguez, Germán. 2015. "Stata Tutorial: Introduction." **Princes2343uiUBaivheritye**.

## Week 11 / Nov 9 / Laboratory and Field Experiments

Theory Section Due.

Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2007. "Field Research" in **The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics** edited by Carlies Boix and Susan Stokes. Oxford University Press.

Druckman, James N., Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. 2006. "The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science." **American Political Science Review** 100(4): 627-635.

Druckman, James N., Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. "Experiments: An Introduction to Core Concepts" in **Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science** edited by James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. Cambridge University Press.

Gerber, Alan S. "Field Experiments in Political Science" in **Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science** edited by James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. Cambridge University Press.

Iyengar, Shanto. "Laboratory Experiments in Political Science" in in **Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science** edited by James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. Cambridge University Press.

## Week 12 / Nov 16 / Game Theory, Social Choice, and ABM

