

## PS 817: Empirical Methods of Political Inquiry

Department of Political Science  
University of Wisconsin, Madison  
Fall 2018

Class time: Mondays, 1:20-3:15pm in North Hall 422 (the Ogg Room)  
Professor: Rikhil R. Bhavnani  
Office hours: Thursdays, 9:30-11:30am in 312 North Hall. To ensure that I can see everyone, please sign up in advance at <https://calendar.wisc.edu/scheduling-assistant/public/profiles/DxXsyvez.html>.  
Email: [bhavnani@wisc.edu](mailto:bhavnani@wisc.edu)

**Course overview:** This course introduces the fundamentals of research design in political science. We start by examining how political scientists formulate puzzles and questions, and discuss the processes of theorization, concept formation and measurement. We then study how political scientists test claims using qualitative and quantitative methods. Such methods include description, controlled comparisons, and natural, field and survey experiments. We conclude with a discussion of the role of transparency and replications in political science research.

**Learning outcomes:** Successful students will gain a broad understanding of the political science method as described above. In particular, students will gain an appreciation of the fundamentals of good research design, and the strengths and weaknesses of various qualitative and quantitative research methods.

**Course credits:** This is a three credit class. The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities, which include class meetings of two hours each week, multiple instructor-student meetings over the course of the semester, reading, data collection, analysis, writing, etc.

**Assignments and grading:** The class grade will be based on:

- Active, informed class participation, for 20% of the class grade. Participants are expected to have read the assigned works closely, and reflected on them, including possibly by discussing them with their colleagues before class.
- Five short assignments (3-5 pages), for 10% of the class grade each.
  - **Assignment 1:** Identify a puzzle or question that you find interesting. Hypothesize two to three explanations, drawing on relevant literatures or theories. Due: 10/1
  - **Assignment 2:** From assignment 1 or from a topic of your choosing, identify your dependent variable. Devise two to four different ways in which this might be measured. What are the possibilities of mis-measurement? How can these be minimized? Due: 10/15

- **Assignment 3:** Critique a research design presented in a paper at a colloquium in your field. What problems you see in the research design and what might be done to fix those problems? Due: Anytime before 12/3
- **Assignment 4:** Locate data for your dependent variable from #2. Also locate data for 4-5 independent variables you think will be important. What kind of sample overlap do you have? Do you have missing data problems? Due: 11/12
- **Assignment 5:** Design an experiment (survey, natural, field) to help answer the puzzle you identified in the previous assignments. Assume you have the power of fiat in making your experiment happen. Be sure to identify the exact nature of the treatment. What are possible confounding factors? Due: 12/3
- A term paper, for 30% of the class grade. The paper should pose a clear research question, possibly from previous course assignments, synthesize the relevant literature, and outline a theory and at least two falsifiable hypotheses. In the bulk of the paper, students should develop a tractable research design (including a data collection and analysis plan) that would allow for theory testing. Ideally, students would pursue this project in subsequent classes, resulting in a published paper. Students should discuss their topics with me once by week 6, and a second time by week 11. Papers are due on Canvas one week after the last class, on 12/17.

**Disabilities:** Students needing special accommodations to enable full participation in this course should contact me during the first week of class. All information will remain confidential. You may, in addition to contacting me, contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center ([www.mcburney.wisc.edu](http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu)) at 1305 Linden Drive and 608.263.2741 regarding questions about campus policies and services.

A detailed class plan—subject to revision—follows.

### **Class 1 (9/10): Introduction**

#### **Class 2 (9/17): Puzzles and Questions**

King, Keohane and Verba, Chapters 1, 2.

Gerring, Chapters 1, 2.

Collier and Brady, Chapters 1, 5.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 1.

Keohane, Robert O. 2009. "Political Science as a Vocation." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42: 359-63.

#### **Class 3 (9/24): Theories, Models, Hypotheses**

Gerring, Chapters 3, 6, 8.

Collier and Brady, Chapter 11.

Fearon, James D. 1991. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science." *World Politics* 43: 169-95.

- Kuhn, Thomas S. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Skim pages 1-173.
- Lakatos, Imre. 1968. "Criticism and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes." Paper presented at the Proceedings of the Aristotelian society.
- Clarke, Kevin A., and David M. Primo. 2007. "Modernizing Political Science: A Model-Based Approach." *Perspectives on Politics* 5: 741-53.

#### **Class 4 (10/1): Concepts**

- Gerring, Chapter 5.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Review* 64: 1033-53.
- Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. 1967. *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California. Appendix on Etymology.
- Abdelal, Rawi, Yoshiko M Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott. 2006. "Identity as a Variable." *Perspectives on Politics* 4: 695-711.
- Fisman, Raymond, and Edward Miguel. 2007. "Corruption, Norms, and Legal Enforcement: Evidence from Diplomatic Parking Tickets." *Journal of Political Economy* 115: 1020-48.

#### **Class 5 (10/8): Measurement**

- Gerring, Chapter 7.
- King, Keohane and Verba, pages 150-68.
- Coppedge, Michael, John Gerring, David Altman, Michael Bernhard, Steven Fish, Allen Hicken, Matthew Kroenig, Staffan I Lindberg, Kelly McMann, and Pamela Paxton. 2011. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach." *Perspectives on Politics* 9: 247-67.
- Adcock, Robert and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95: 529-46.
- Grimmer, Justin. 2010. "A Bayesian Hierarchical Topic Model for Political Texts: Measuring Expressed Agendas in Senate Press Releases." *Political analysis* 18: 1-35.

#### **Class 6 (10/15): Data Collection and Description**

- Gerring, John. 2012. "Mere Description." *British Journal of Political Science* 42: 721-46.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, John M De Figueiredo, and James M Snyder Jr. 2003. "Why Is There So Little Money in US Politics?" *Journal of Economic perspectives* 17: 105-30.
- Dal Bó, Ernesto, Frederico Finan, Olle Folke, Torsten Persson, and Johanna Rickne. 2017. "Who Becomes a Politician?" *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 132: 1877-914.
- Bonica, Adam. 2014. "Mapping the Ideological Marketplace." *American Journal of Political Science* 58: 367-86.
- Grimmer, J., 2015. "We are all social scientists now: how big data, machine learning, and causal inference work together." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 48(1), pp.80-83.

#### **Class 7 (10/22): Case Selection, Case Methods, Sampling and Generalization**

- Brady and Collier, Chapters 6, 10 and 11.

- Gerring, John. 2004. "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" *American Political Science Review* 98: 341-54.
- Flyvbjerg, Bent. 2006. "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research." *Qualitative inquiry* 12: 219-45.
- Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political analysis* 2: 131-50.
- Gisselquist, Rachel M. 2014. "Paired Comparison and Theory Development: Considerations for Case Selection." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47: 477-84.

### **Class 8 (10/29): Participant Observation and Interviews**

- Simmons, Erica S. 2016. "Market Reforms and Water Wars." *World Politics* 68: 37-73.
- Cramer, Katherine J. 2016. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1, 2 and appendices.
- Morris, Zoë Slote. 2009. "The Truth About Interviewing Elites." *Politics* 29: 209-17.
- Martin, Cathie Jo. 2013. "Crafting Interviews to Capture Cause and Effect." In *Interview Research in Political Science*, ed. Layna Mosley: Cornell University Press. 109-24.
- Mosley, Layna. 2013. "Introduction: "Just Talk to People"? Interviews in Contemporary Political Science." In *Interview Research in Political Science*, ed. Layna Mosley: Cornell University Press. 1-28.

### **Class 9 (11/5): Regression, Fixed Effects, Difference-in-Difference, Matching**

- Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97: 75-90.
- Miller, Grant. 2008. "Women's Suffrage, Political Responsiveness, and Child Survival in American History." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123: 1287-327.
- Sekhon, Jasjeet S. 2009. "Opiates for the Matches: Matching Methods for Causal Inference." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 487-508.
- Dube, Arindrajit, Oeindrila Dube, and Omar García-Ponce. 2013. "Cross-Border Spillover: Us Gun Laws and Violence in Mexico." *American Political Science Review* 107: 397-417.

### **Class 10 (11/12): Instrumental Variables and Regression Discontinuity Estimators**

- Acemoglu, Daron, James Robinson, and Simon Johnson. 2001. "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation." *The American Economic Review* 91: 1369-401.
- Hansford, Thomas G., and Brad T. Gomez. 2010. "Estimating the Electoral Effects of Voter Turnout." *American Political Science Review* 104: 268-88.
- Lee, Alexander, and Kenneth A Schultz. 2012. "Comparing British and French Colonial Legacies: A Discontinuity Analysis of Cameroon." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 7: 365-410.
- Lee, David S. 2008. "Randomized Experiments from Non-Random Selection in U.S. House Elections." *Journal of Econometrics* 142: 675-97.

### **Class 11 (11/19): Natural Experiments**

- Bhavnani, Rikhil R. 2009. "Do Electoral Quotas Work after They Are Withdrawn? Evidence from a Natural Experiment in India." *American Political Science Review* 103: 23-35.

- Erikson, Robert S, and Laura Stoker. 2011. "Caught in the Draft: The Effects of Vietnam Draft Lottery Status on Political Attitudes." *American Political Science Review* 105: 221-37.
- Baldwin, Kate, and Rikhil R Bhavnani. 2015. "Ancillary Studies of Experiments: Opportunities and Challenges." *Journal of Globalization and Development* 6: 113-46.
- Hyde, Susan D. 2007. "The Observer Effect in International Politics: Evidence from a Natural Experiment." *World Politics* 60: 37-63.

### **Class 12 (11/26): Laboratory and Field Experiments**

- Ostrom, Elinor, James Walker, and Roy Gardner. 1992. "Covenants with and without a Sword: Self-Governance Is Possible." *The American Political Science Review* 86: 404-17.
- Fearon, James D, Macartan Humphreys, and Jeremy M Weinstein. 2015. "How Does Development Assistance Affect Collective Action Capacity? Results from a Field Experiment in Post-Conflict Liberia." *American Political Science Review* 109: 450-69.
- Wantchekon, Leonard. 2003. "Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin." *World Politics* 55: 399-422.
- Gerber, Alan S, and Donald P Green. 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 94: 653-63.

### **Class 13 (12/3): Surveys and Survey Experiments**

- Schaeffer, Nora Cate, and Stanley Presser. 2003. "The Science of Asking Questions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29.
- Sniderman, Paul M. 2018. "Some Advances in the Design of Survey Experiments." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21: 259-75.
- Tomz, Michael R., and Jessica L. P. Weeks. 2013. "Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace." *American Political Science Review* 107: 849-65.
- Lupu, Noam. 2013. "Party Brands and Partisanship: Theory with Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Argentina." *American Journal of Political Science* 57: 49-64.
- Barabas, Jason, and Jennifer Jerit. 2010. "Are Survey Experiments Externally Valid?" *American Political Science Review* 104: 226-42.
- Hainmueller, Jens, Dominik Hangartner, and Teppei Yamamoto. 2015. "Validating Vignette and Conjoint Survey Experiments against Real-World Behavior." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112: 2395-400.

### **Class 14 (12/10): Replication and Transparency in Research**

- Franco, Annie, Neil Malhotra, and Gabor Simonovits. 2014. "Publication Bias in the Social Sciences: Unlocking the File Drawer." *Science* 345: 1502-05.
- Isaac, Jeffrey C. 2015. "For a More Public Political Science." *Perspectives on Politics* 13: 269-83.
- Fowler, Anthony, and Andrew B Hall. 2016. "Do Shark Attacks Influence Presidential Elections? Reassessing a Prominent Finding on Voter Competence." *The Journal of Politics*.
- Lupia, Arthur, and Colin Elman. 2014. "Openness in Political Science: Data Access and Research Transparency: Introduction." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47: 19-42.
- <https://www.bitss.org/2015/11/12/dart-statement-pushback-and-response/> and links.

Jones, Zachary M. 2013. "Git/Github, Transparency, and Legitimacy in Quantitative Research." *The Political Methodologist* 21: 6-7.

Miguel, E., Camerer, C., Casey, K., Cohen, J., Esterling, K.M., Gerber, A., Glennerster, R., Green, D.P., Humphreys, M., Imbens, G. and Laitin, D., 2014. "Promoting transparency in social science research." *Science*, 343(6166), pp.30-31.

**Final papers due on Canvas, 12/17**