

POLS 503: Political Science Research Methods

**Washington State University, Spring 2013
Wednesdays, 2:10-5 p.m., Todd 303**

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Introduction

The goal of this course is plain and simple: to teach you how to do rigorous social scientific research. That's a big goal given we only have 14 weeks to accomplish it, but I can almost guarantee you that your ability to do research will have advanced by leaps and bounds by the end of this course. A few points to ponder:

--Our emphasis in this class will be on the practical (e.g., how to get an interview, how to come up with an idea for a project) without ignoring the theoretical (e.g., how I know what I know, how can I "prove" one thing caused another).

--For the length of this course we will be (or pretend to be) methodological pluralists. That is, we will not privilege one method of research over another. Our only bias is in favor of well conceived and well executed research—something that can be accomplished using almost any research method.

Readings

There are two books available for purchase:

Asher, Herbert. 2007. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, 7th edition. CQ Press. The 6th edition of this textbook (2004) is also acceptable.

Neuman, W. Lawrence. 2006. *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 2nd edition. Pearson: Boston.

There will also be several other readings that I will place in the main office. Please DO NOT remove them from this room. The only exception is for the brief time you might need to make photocopies.

Grading

Your final grade in this course will depend on your success in five areas:

1. Three short papers (30%). For each of these papers, you will “try out” a methodology and write about your experience using it. You will:

A. Conduct a short (approximately 10 questions) face-to-face or telephone survey in which you ask at least 25 respondents about a topic of interest to you. You must fill out the human subjects approval form (the exemption determination application) found at <http://www.irb.wsu.edu/forms.asp>. Turn in this form to me. You do not need to submit it to the Institutional Review Board for approval unless you plan to use the survey responses in your own research. Please avoid sensitive topics, and find respondents age 18 or older. After completing the survey, answer the following questions:

- What was your research question?
- How well do you believe your survey results answered that question?
- How did you choose your respondents? Was that a good choice?
- How might your choice of respondents have affected the results you received?
- What difficulties did you encounter in writing the questions?
- What are some potential threats to the internal validity of your research?
- What are some potential threats to the external validity of your research?
- What was the most difficult part of doing the research?
- What would you do differently next time?

Include a copy of your questionnaire in your write-up. DUE WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 2:10 P.M.

B. Participate as a subject in an experiment. Several researchers on campus conduct experiments as part of their research, and I will alert you to opportunities that I come across. After participating as a subject in the experiment, answer the following questions:

- What was the researcher’s question or was it unclear to you as a subject? If you had to guess, what do you believe the researcher was trying to find out?
- Describe your experience from beginning to end. Were you ever confused by what you were supposed to do? How were you treated?
- What difficulties did you encounter in participating as a subject?
- What are some potential threats to the internal validity of the research?
- What are some potential threats to the external validity of the research?
- What would you have done differently had you been the researcher?

DUE WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2:10 P.M.

C. Conduct either participant or non-participant observation. Pick a setting to observe for an hour or two, either as a participant or non-participant. The possibilities are many, and may include a classroom, a courtroom, a public park, the local pub, a church service or coffee hour, and many more. You must 1) avoid settings in which there are likely to be many people under age 18 (e.g., a daycare center) and 2) get approval of your location from me before you begin your research. Upon completion of your research, answer the following questions:

- What was your research question?
- Did you have a theory going into your research or was your research intended to help you develop theory? That is, was your research more deductive or inductive?
- What, in general, did you learn from your observation?

- Did your observation generate new research questions?
- Did those you observed know that you were observing them? Do you believe that affected their behavior? How could you tell?

DUE WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2:10 P.M.

2. A literature review (15%). You will select a research question (we will talk about how to do this in week 3) and then write an approximately 8-10 page paper that reviews the literature that speaks to the topic you have chosen. You should use at least 20 sources, and they should be academic sources (i.e., books that can be found in the library or articles from scholarly journals such as the *American Political Science Review* or *American Journal of Sociology*). This literature review will serve as a basis for your research design. DUE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 5 p.m.

3. A research design (25%). You will propose a research project (possibly a future conference paper, your master's thesis or dissertation) on an important question in your area of interest. About 15-20 pages is a good length for this assignment. Your proposal should include a statement of your research question, a review of the literature on the topic, a discussion of your theory and the hypotheses you derived from it and a plan for how you will answer your question. I will give you a detailed handout describing how to write a research design, and we will discuss this in depth during week 6 of class. DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 26, 5 p.m.

4. A final exam (15%). This will be a take-home exam on which you will answer a few essay questions of the type likely to appear on a prelim exam. I will make the exam questions available on Monday, May 3. DUE FRIDAY, MAY 3, 5 p.m.

5. Class participation and attendance (15%). Class participation and attendance are required. *Notify me beforehand if you must be absent from class.* I also expect that everyone will make contributions to our class discussions.

Other information

If there are things I talk about in class that you do not understand, do not hesitate to talk to me about them. I am here to help you learn the course material. And if there are other matters that you think should be brought to my attention, let me know.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS. Assignments must be at my office by 5 p.m. on the date they are due or they will be considered late. For each day an assignment is late, I will subtract 10 percent of the assignment's total point value from your score.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT. I do not tolerate plagiarizing or cheating of any kind. Such behavior will result in *failing the course* and other disciplinary action. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, see me immediately.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully

participate in this class, please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC). All accommodations MUST be approved through the DRC (Washington Building, Room 217). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability specialist.

Course Outline

I. Introduction

1. Introduction to Research (Jan 9)

Prisoners of silence [videorecording]—in class

2. Research Ethics (Jan 16)

Miles, Matthew and Michael Huberman. 1994. “Ethical Issues in Analysis.” *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage. p.288-97.

Complete human subjects training through CITI (citiprogram.org). Register and complete the training under the “Basic Human Subjects: Social and Behavioral Focus” heading.

Obedience [videorecording] / Stanley Milgram (in class)

Neuman, Ch 3.

II. Designing Research

3. Finding and Developing Ideas: Theory, Theories, and Hypotheses (Jan 23)

Blalock, Herbert M. 1969. *Theory Construction*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall. Ch 3.

Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Ch. 2

Gerring, John. 2001. *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*. Ch.6

Neuman. Chapter 1, 2.

4. Concepts and Indicators (Jan 30)

Carmines, Edward G. and Richard A. Zeller. 1979. *Reliability and Validity Assessment*. Sage. p. 9-51.

Collier, David and Robert Adcock. 1999. “Democracy and Dichotomies: A Pragmatic Approach to Choices about Concepts.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 537-565.

Collier, David and James E. Mahon. 1993. "Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 84: 845-55.

Gerring, John. 1999. "What Makes a Concept Good?" *Polity* 31: 357-93.

Neuman. Chapter 5.

5. Data Issues (Feb 6)

Altman, Micah and Gary King. 2006. "A Proposed Standard for the Scholarly Citation of Quantitative Data." http://gking.harvard.edu/files/cite_0.pdf

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. Ch. 6.

King, Gary and Paul Herrnson. 1995 "Replication, Replication." and "Replication, Verification and Secondary Analysis, and Data Collection in Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics*: 443-455.

Nagler, Jonathan. 1995. "Coding Style and Good Computing Practices." *The Political Methodologist* 6(2). http://www.nyu.edu/classes/nagler/quant2/coding_style.html

Neuman. Ch. 6.

Sears, David O. 1986. "College Sophomores in the Laboratory: Influence of a Narrow Data Base on Social Psychology's View of Human Nature." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 51: 515-30.

Squire, Peverill. 1988. "Why the 1936 Literary Digest Poll Failed." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 52:125-33.

Ward, Artemus. 2004 "How One Mistake Leads To Another: On the Importance of Verification/Replication." *Political Analysis* 12: 199-200.

6. Writing a Research Design, Journal Article, Book or Funding Proposal (Feb 13)

Bem, Daryl J. "Writing the Empirical Journal Article."

Bonjean, Charles M. and Jan Hullum. 1978. "Reasons for Journal Rejection: An Analysis of 600 Manuscripts." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 11(4): 480-483.

King, Gary. 2006. "Publication, Publication." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39(1): 119-125.

McGranahan, Matthew. "Guidelines on writing a research proposal."
<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~matt/proposal.html>

Neuman. Chapter 4, 14.

III. Research Methods

7. Surveys (Feb 20)

Asher. All

Neuman. Chapter 7.

8. Experiments (Feb 27)

Cover, A.D. and B.S. Brumberg. 1982. "Baby Books and Ballots: The Impact of Congressional Mail on Constituent Opinion." *American Political Science Review* 76: 347-59.

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): 627-636.

Gaines, Brian J., James H. Kuklinski, and Paul J. Quirk. 2007. "The Logic of the Survey Experiment Reexamined." *Political Analysis* 15: 1-20.

Gerber, Alan, Donald P. Green and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102: 33-48.

Neuman. Ch. 8

9. Participant and Non-Participant Observation (Mar 6)

Barnett, Michael N. 1997. "The UN Security Council, Indifference, and Genocide in Rwanda." *Cultural Anthropology* 12: 551-78.

DeWalt, Kathleen M. and Billie R. DeWalt. 2002. *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press. Ch. 2.

Fenno, Richard. "The Political Scientist as Participant Observer." *Watching Politicians: Essays on Participant Observation*. Ch 3.

Neuman. Ch. 11.

Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2004. *Talking about Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch 5, Appendix 1.

10. Interviews and Focus Groups (Mar 20)

Conover, Pamela Johnston, Ivor Crewe and Donald Searing. 1991. "The Nature of Citizenship in the United States and Great Britain: Empirical Comments on Theoretical Themes." *Journal of Politics* 53: 800-832.

Kreuger, Richard A. and Mary Anne Casey. 2000. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Ch. 2

Leech, Beth. 2002. Symposium on Interview Methods in Political Science. *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 35: 665-682.

Morgan, David L. 1996. "Focus Groups." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22: 129-152.

11. Case Studies and Comparative Social Inquiry (Mar 27)

Dion, Douglas. 1998. "Evidence and Inference in the Comparative Case Study." *Comparative Politics* 30: 127-145

Frendreis, John P. 1983. "Explanation of Variation and Detection of Covariation: The Purpose and Logic of Comparative Analysis." *Comparative Political Studies* 16: 255-72.

George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. Ch. 3-6.

Gerring, John. 2004. "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?" *American Political Science Review* 98: 341-354.

King, Gary, Christopher J.L. Murray, Joshua A. Salomon, and Ajay Tandon. 2003. "Enhancing the Validity and Cross-Cultural Comparability of Survey Research." *American Political Science Review* 97: 567-83

Neuman. Ch. 12.

12. Historical Analysis (Apr 3)

Carson, Jamie L., Jeffrey A. Jenkins, David W. Rohde and Mark A. Souva. 2001. "The Impact of National Tides and District-Level Effects on Electoral Outcomes: The U.S. Congressional Elections of 1862-63." *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 887-98.

George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. Ch 10.

Griffin, Larry J. 1993. "Narrative, Event-Structure Analysis, and Causal Interpretation in Historical Sociology." *American Journal of Sociology* 93: 1094-1133.

Lustick, Ian S. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias." *American Political Science Review* 90: 605-18.

Skocpol, Theda, Marshall Ganz and Ziad Munson. 2000. "A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 94 (3): 527-546.

13. Game Theory (Apr 17)

Axelrod, Robert. 1984. *The Evolution of Cooperation*. Basic Books. Ch.1 and 2.

Morrow, James D. 1994. *Game Theory for Political Scientists*. Princeton University Press. Ch. 2-3.

Riker, William H. 1992. "The Entry of Game Theory into Political Science." In *Toward a History of Game Theory*, Ed. E. Roy Weintraub. Durham: Duke University Press.

Schelling, Thomas C. 1967. "What Is Game Theory?" In *Contemporary Political Analysis*, Ed. James C. Charlesworth. New York: Free Press.

14. Mixed Methods Approaches and QCA (Apr 24)

Brady, Henry E. and David Collier. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, 2nd ed. Ch. 6, 7, 10, 11.

Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research." *Political Analysis* 14: 227-249

Beck, Nathaniel. 2010. "Causal Process 'Observation': Oxymoron or (Fine) Old Wine." *Political Analysis* 18(4): 499-505.

David Collier, Henry E. Brady, and Jason Seawright. 2010. "Outdated Views of Qualitative Methods: Time to Move On" *Political Analysis* 18(4): 506-513.

Rihoux, Benoit and Charles C. Ragin. 2008. *Configurational Comparative Methods: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Techniques*. Ch. 1-6