

POSC 6101: Contemporary Political Research

Marquette University, Dept. of Political Science
Spring 2020; Monday 4:00-6:40, Wehr Physics 418

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Office Hours: Wednesday 1:00-4:00 or by appointment

Course Overview:

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to fundamental ideas in political science methodology, research design, and analysis. Upon completion of this course, you should be able to identify, assess, and critique the methodology used in published articles in the discipline. This includes understanding the logic of regression analysis, the comparative method, and case study research. You also should have the first pieces in place to embark on your own research project, if you choose to do so.

This course proceeds in three units. The first five weeks are devoted to a set of concerns and theoretical underpinnings related to social science methodology. We will discuss the basic components that motivate any research project in the positivist social sciences: a research question, hypotheses and variables. In the second unit, we address quantitative (i.e. more than 30 cases) strategies for data collection and analysis, including regression, experiments, and working with observational data. The third unit deals with qualitative research designs, including strategies for analysis (case studies, process tracing) and for collecting data (interviews, observation, archival).

Course Objectives:

1. Acquire the tools to read and critique methodological choices in Political Science readings.
2. Learn how to design a research project to respond to a research question and to write the “research design” section of a research paper.
3. Identify and apply norms of ethical research, including the use of humans as research subjects.

Student Assessment:

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

25%	Attendance, Participation
5%	Research Questions Memo (Due 1/24)
60%	Research Design Memos (4 x 15% each)
10%	In-Class Presentation, Discussion Leader

Attendance and Participation

You are expected to attend every class session. If you must miss a class due to illness or some other exceptional circumstance, please notify the professor no later than the day before class. Participation is also part of your grade. As a seminar-style course, it is essential that students have completed the assigned reading prior to showing up for class and are prepared to discuss it.

Research Questions

Students will prepare three research questions. These questions may be related to each other—dealing with the same topic—or may be unrelated. Revised versions of these research questions will form the motivation for the research design memos that students will write throughout the semester. For each research question, students will write one paragraph about the puzzle that the question relates to, based either on existing literature or evidence from the real world. This is due on Friday January 24. I strongly recommend that you visit office hours prior to this deadline to discuss your research questions with me.

Research Design Memos

The main written assignment in the course are four research design memos, which should be roughly 1,500 words each. You can choose which weeks during the semester that you would like to write these memos (weeks 6 through 14), which should employ the method being discussed that day in class. **Memos are due by noon on the day of class and should be submitted to the D2L Dropbox.**

Each of these will include the following components:

1. Research question
2. Hypothesis or hypotheses to be tested
3. Conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement of 2-3 main variables
4. Description and justification of data *collection* technique and case selection
5. Description and justification of data *analysis* strategy

In-Class Presentation, Discussion Leader

Each student will have one class where they act as discussion leader and presenter. That day, the student will have three responsibilities:

1. Submit list of 8-10 discussion questions to D2L Discussion board by 12:00pm on the day of class. These should be based on *all of the required readings* for the week. If there are two discussion leaders in a given week, they may coordinate in preparing these questions or may submit separate lists of questions.
2. Throughout this session, the leader(s) will share the responsibility with me to move the conversation along and to involve their classmates in discussion.
3. Present and critique one of the “exemplar” readings in roughly 15 minutes during the second part of class. (If you would like to choose an alternative reading that is not on the list of exemplars, great! I only ask that you verify your selection with me in office hours or over email in the week prior to your presentation.) These presentations should address the following questions:

- What is the research question?
- What are the main independent and dependent variables and how are they measured?
- What is the research design strategy?
- What are the pros and cons of the chosen strategy? What would the potential payoff have been to choosing a different strategy?

Required Readings:

You are required to attain copies of the following two books. These books are available at Bookmarq, the university bookstore, or you may acquire them through alternate means.

Gerring, John. 2012. *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework (Second Edition)*. Cambridge University Press.

Spiegelhalter, David. 2019. *The Art of Statistics: How to Learn From Data*. Basic Books.

Additional readings will be posted to D2L. Most of these are mandatory, but at times I post recommended readings. These will be noted as recommended in the syllabus below.

EXEMPLARS:

For most weeks of the course, I include a list of “exemplars” readings. These are examples of applications of the research method that we are discussing during that class session. You should come to class with some familiarity with *at least two* of the readings. If you would like to find additional readings that use that method and come prepared to discuss those as well, please do so! I’m happy to help students identify exemplar readings in office hours. During weeks where we have a guest speaker, articles by that guest speaker will be mandatory reading for the whole class.

Course Policies:

Communication

- *Office hours:* Office hours are for you, the student. Please come to discuss course material, assignments, or any other thoughts or concerns you may have.
- *Checking your email:* I expect you to check your email daily. I will send course announcements over email. It is your responsibility to make sure that the email account that is registered in D2L is the one that you check regularly.
- *Professor’s email:* If you have a very short clarifying question, it may be appropriate to email the professor. I only ask that prior to emailing me you consult the syllabus and ask your classmates to see if it is something that has already been covered.

Laptops and Other Electronic Devices

Research has shown that students retain information better when they take notes by hand than when they take notes on a computer. For this reason, I have a no-device policy in my classroom. Laptops may only be used by those with special learning needs that have

consulted with me in advance. If you need advice on how to take notes effectively using paper and pen, you can come to office hours and I can suggest note-taking strategies. Cell phones should be turned off during class. If you have a special need to keep your cell phone on, such as to monitor a sick child, see me *before* class and I will make an accommodation.

Academic Dishonesty

All students have participated in training activities at Marquette to learn about what constitutes academic dishonesty. Any instance of academic dishonesty in this course such as plagiarism, copying others' work, or consulting unauthorized sources during exams will be handled according to university policy. Violating students will automatically receive a zero on the assignment or exam in question and be referred to the Marquette University Honor Council: <http://www.marquette.edu/provost/integrity-index.php>. If you have any uncertainty about whether you are adhering to academic honesty standards, please consult with me in advance.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction (Jan. 13)

Gerring, 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.

Week 2: Research Questions (Jan. 20)

******Submit research questions by Friday January 24******

Gerring, ch. 2-4

Day, Christopher, and Kendra L. Koivu. 2019. "Finding the Question: A Puzzle-Based Approach to the Logic of Discovery." *Journal of Political Science Education* 15(3): 377–86.

Schwedler, Jillian. 2013. "Puzzle." *Qualitative and Multi-Method Research* 11(2): 27–30.

RECOMMENDED:

Knopf, Jeffrey W. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39(1): 127–32.

Week 3: Philosophy of Science and Public Engagement (Jan. 27)

VISIT FROM PROFESSOR JULIA AZARI

Brady, Henry E. 2008. "Causation and Explanation in Social Science." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*.

Bevir, Mark, and Jason Blakely. 2018. "Why Political Science Is an Ethical Issue." *Political Studies* 66(2): 425–41.

Smith, Rogers M. 2015. "Political Science and the Public Sphere Today." *Perspectives on Politics* 13(2): 366–76.

Azari, Julia. 2016. "People like that are the only people here": Political Science and the New Politics of Shock:

<https://www.vox.com/mischiefs-of-faction/2016/11/18/13667618/politics-of-shock>

Visit the following websites with examples of public scholarship:

[Monkey Cage](#), [Scholars Strategy Network](#), [Mischiefs of Faction](#), [Democratic Erosion Consortium](#)

RECOMMENDED:

Kuhn, Thomas S. 1970. "Logic of Discovery or Psychology of Research?" In *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, eds. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1–24.

Popper, Karl. 1970. "Normal Science and Its Dangers." In *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, eds. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 51–58.

Week 4: Variables—Conceptualization and Operationalization (Feb. 3)

VISIT FROM PROFESSOR LOWELL BARRINGTON

Gerring, ch. 5-6

Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Review* 64(4): 1033–53.

Barrington, Lowell W. 1997. "'Nation' and 'Nationalism': The Misuse of Key Concepts in Political Science." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 30(4): 712–16.

EXEMPLARS:

Holland, Alisha C. 2016. "Forbearance." *American Political Science Review* 110(2): 232–46.

Wedeen, Lisa. 2002. "Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science." *American Political Science Review* 96(4): 713–28.

Collier, David, and John Gerring, eds. 2009. *Concepts & Method in Social Science: The Tradition of Giovanni Sartori*. New York: Routledge.

[CHAPTERS ON REVOLUTION, CULTURE, DEMOCRACY, PEASANT, AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION]

Week 5: Variables—Measurement (Feb. 10)

Gerring, ch. 7

Spiegelhalter, ch. 1-2

Collier, David, Jody LaPorte, and Jason Seawright. 2012. "Putting Typologies to Work: Concept Formation, Measurement, and Analytic Rigor." *Political Research Quarterly* 65(1): 217–32.

EXEMPLARS (BOTH MANDATORY):

Munck, Gerardo L., and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices." *Comparative Political Studies* 35(1): 5–34.

Coppedge, Michael et al. 2011. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(2): 247–67.

Week 6: Quantitative Approaches—Inference and Causation (Feb. 17)

Gerring, ch. 8-9

Spiegelhalter, ch. 3-4

Sen, Maya, and Omar Wasow. 2016. "Race as a Bundle of Sticks: Designs That Estimate Effects of Seemingly Immutable Characteristics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19(1): 499–522.

EXEMPLARS:

Page, Benjamin I., Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright. 2013. "Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans." *Perspectives on Politics* 11(1): 51–73.

Posner, Daniel N. 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.

Varshney, Ashutosh. 2001. "Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond." *World Politics* 53(3): 362–398.

Weaver, Vesla M., and Amy E. Lerman. 2010. "Political Consequences of the Carceral State." *American Political Science Review* 104(4): 817–833.

Week 7: Quantitative Approaches—Regression (Feb. 24)

Spiegelhalter, ch. 5, 9, 10

Jackman, Robert W. 1985. "Cross-National Statistical Research and the Study of Comparative Politics." *American Journal of Political Science* 29(1): 161–82.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Harvard University Press. PAGES 288-301.

EXEMPLARS:

Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 75–90.

Fish, M. Steven. 2002. "Islam and Authoritarianism." *World Politics* 55(1): 4–37.

Han, Hahrie et al. 2011. "The Relationship of Leadership Quality to the Political Presence of Civic Associations." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(1): 45–59.

Htun, Mala, and S. Laurel Weldon. 2012. "The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975–2005." *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 548–69.

Week 8: Quantitative Approaches—Experiments (March 2)

Gerring, ch. 10

Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. 2008. "Field Experiments and Natural Experiments." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*.

Banerjee, Abhijit V., and Esther Duflo. 2014. "The Experimental Approach to Development Economics." In *Field Experiments and Their Critics: Essays on the Uses and Abuses of*

Experimentation in the Social Sciences, ed. Dawn Langan Teele. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 78–114.

Deaton, Angus. 2014. "Instruments, Randomization, and Learning about Development." In *Field Experiments and Their Critics: Essays on the Uses and Abuses of Experimentation in the Social Sciences*, ed. Dawn Langan Teele. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 141–84.

Dunning, Thad et al. 2019. "Voter Information Campaigns and Political Accountability: Cumulative Findings from a Preregistered Meta-Analysis of Coordinated Trials." *Science Advances* 5(7).

EXEMPLARS:

Gerber, Alan S., 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(1): 33–48.

McClendon, Gwyneth H. 2014. "Social Esteem and Participation in Contentious Politics: A Field Experiment at an LGBT Pride Rally." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(2): 279–90.

Dunning, Thad, and Lauren Harrison. 2010. "Cross-Cutting Cleavages and Ethnic Voting: An Experimental Study of Cousinage in Mali." *American Political Science Review* 104(1): 21–39.

Caughey, Devin, and Jasjeet S. Sekhon. 2011. "Elections and the Regression Discontinuity Design: Lessons from Close U.S. House Races, 1942–2008." *Political Analysis* 19(4): 385–408.

Hainmueller, Jens, and Dominik Hangartner. 2013. "Who Gets a Swiss Passport? A Natural Experiment in Immigrant Discrimination." *American Political Science Review* 107(1): 159–87.

NO CLASS MARCH 9 SPRING BREAK

Week 9: Quantitative Approaches—Surveys and Observational Data (March 16)

Farr, James. 1995. "Remembering the Revolution: Behavioralism in American Political Science." In Farr, et al, eds. *Political Science in History: Research Programs and Political Traditions*: 198–224.

Brady, Henry E. "Contributions of Survey Research to Political Science." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 33.1 (2000): 47-58.

Golden, Miriam, and Brian Min. 2013. "Distributive Politics Around the World." *Annual Review of Political Science* 16(1): 73–99.

EXEMPLARS:

Auerbach, Adam Michael, and Tariq Thachil. 2018. "How Clients Select Brokers: Competition and Choice in India's Slums." *American Political Science Review* 112(4): 775–91.

Bateson, Regina. 2012. "Crime Victimization and Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 570–87.

Cohen, Dara Kay. 2013. "Explaining Rape during Civil War: Cross-National Evidence (1980–2009)." *American Political Science Review* 107(3): 461–477.

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.

Kramon, Eric, and Daniel N. Posner. 2013. "Who Benefits from Distributive Politics? How the Outcome One Studies Affects the Answer One Gets." *Perspectives on Politics* 11(2): 461–474.

Wallace, Sophia J., Chris Zepeda-Millán, and Michael Jones-Correa. 2014. "Spatial and Temporal Proximity: Examining the Effects of Protests on Political Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(2): 433–448.

Week 10: Qualitative Approaches—Case Studies (March 23)

Przeworski, Adam, and Henry Teune. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*, "Chapter Two: Research Designs," pp. 31–46.

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

Slater, Dan, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2013. "The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison." *Comparative Political Studies* 46(10): 1301–1327.

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.

Snyder, Richard. 2001. "Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36(1): 93–110.

RECOMMENDED:

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

EXEMPLARS:

González, Yanilda. 2019. "The Social Origins of Institutional Weakness and Change: Preferences, Power, and Police Reform in Latin America." *World Politics* 71(1): 44–87.

Palmer-Rubin, Brian. 2019. "Evading the Patronage Trap: Organizational Capacity and Demand Making in Mexico." *Comparative Political Studies* 52(13–14): 2097–2134.

Singh, Prerna. 2015. "Subnationalism and Social Development: A Comparative Analysis of Indian States." *World Politics* 67(3): 506–62.

Steinmo, Sven. 1989. "Political Institutions and Tax Policy in the United States, Sweden, and Britain." *World Politics* 41(4): 500–535.

Weeks, Ana Catalano. 2018. "Why Are Gender Quota Laws Adopted by Men? The Role of Inter-and Intraparty Competition." *Comparative Political Studies* 51(14): 1935–1973.

Week 11: Qualitative Approaches—Process Tracing and Historical Methods (March 30)

Tilly, Charles. 2001. "Mechanisms in Political Processes." *Annual Review of Political Science* 4(1): 21–41.

George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. MIT Press, pp. 205–232.

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

Pierson, Paul. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review* 94(2): 251–267.

Mahoney, James, and Kathleen Thelen. 2015. "Comparative-Historical Analysis in Contemporary Political Science," in Mahoney and Thelen, eds. *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 3–36.

EXEMPLARS:

Fairfield, Tasha. 2013. "Going Where the Money Is: Strategies for Taxing Economic Elites in Unequal Democracies." *World Development* 47: 42–57.

Lupu, Noam. 2014. "Brand Dilution and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America." *World Politics* 66(4): 561–602.

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.

Weaver, Vesla M. 2007. "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy." *Studies in American Political Development* 21(2): 230–65.

Week 12: Qualitative Approaches—Field Research (April 6)

VISIT FROM PROFESSOR JESSICA RICH

Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren M. MacLean, and Benjamin L. Read. 2015. *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles*. Cambridge University Press, chapters 1 and 6.

Fujii, Lee Ann. 2017. *Interviewing in Social Science Research: A Relational Approach*. Routledge, chapters 2-4.

Cyr, Jennifer. 2017. "The Unique Utility of Focus Groups for Mixed-Methods Research." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50(4): 1038–1042.

Cronin-Furman, Kate, and Milli Lake. 2018. "Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51(3): 607–614.

EXEMPLARS:

Brass, Jennifer N. 2012. "Why Do NGOs Go Where They Go? Evidence from Kenya." *World Development* 40(2): 387–401.

Levitsky, Steven. 2001. "Organization and Labor-Based Party Adaptation: The Transformation of Argentine Peronism in Comparative Perspective." *World Politics* 54(1): 27–56.

Mattingly, Daniel C. 2016. "Elite Capture: How Decentralization and Informal Institutions Weaken Property Rights in China." *World Politics* 68(3): 383–412.

Tsai, Lily L. 2007. "Solidary Groups, Informal Accountability, and Local Public Goods Provision in Rural China." *American Political Science Review* 101(2): 355–372.

Rich, Jessica AJ. "Grassroots Bureaucracy: Intergovernmental Relations and Popular Mobilization in Brazil's AIDS Policy Sector." *Latin American Politics and Society* 55(2) (2013): 1-25.

NO CLASS APRIL 13, EASTER

Week 13: Qualitative Approaches—Ethnography (April 20)

VISIT FROM PROFESSOR NOELLE BRIGDEN

Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read, chapter 7.

Wedeen, Lisa. 2010. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 255–272.

Brigden, Noelle K. 2018. "Gender Mobility: Survival Plays and Performing Central American Migration in Passage." *Mobilities* 13(1): 111–125.

EXEMPLARS:

Desmond, Matthew. 2012. "Eviction and the Reproduction of Urban Poverty." *American Journal of Sociology* 118(1): 88–133.

Fu, Diana. 2017. "Disguised Collective Action in China." *Comparative Political Studies* 50(4): 499–527.

Simmons, Erica S. 2016. "Corn, Markets, and Mobilization in Mexico." *Comparative Politics* 48(3): 413–431.

Wacquant, Loïc J. D. 1995. "The Pugilistic Point of View: How Boxers Think and Feel about Their Trade." *Theory and Society* 24(4): 489–535.

Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2012. "Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 517–532.

Week 14: Mixing Methods or New Advances? (April 27)

READINGS TBD