Purpose

The purpose of this course is to discuss the nature of research designs in political science. We will discuss general issues concerning the philosophy of science and social science. We will spend most of our time on practical concerns with research design issues that tend to bedevil empirical projects. And while we do not have time to cover all possible problems in that area, we will spend a lot of time on what is now one of the key debates occupying many social scientists - the question of causal identification which often arises from the non-random assignment of treatment conditions.

Class Format and Requirements


The readings for this class are a mixture of books and articles. All three books [KKV; Gerring, and Brady/Collier] are available at the bookstore and online. The course readings are all available online through sources such as JSTOR or simple Google Scholar searches. If I change any of the readings I will give you at least one week of advance notice.

The class will be a mix of seminar and lecture. I hope to lean on the side of seminar, i.e., I expect you to show up having read the material, given it some thought, and armed with questions. In this class, there really are no bad questions - all of you are approaching the class with differing levels of research experience. By the end, there will be some significant convergence in your levels of knowledge, but especially at the beginning, more questions are better than fewer. And even those with some experience can always use a refresher!

I have created a separate handout with writing assignments, including their due dates. When any questions about these assignments arise, please email or make an appointment to stop by. For your major research design paper, I expect to see all of you in my office to discuss the topic and the major points of the design.
Course Grade

Grades will be determined by course participation (20%), homework assignments (30%), and a final research design paper (50%).

Course Schedule

9/7: Introduction

9/14: Puzzles and Questions in Political Science

KKV, Chapters 1-2

Gerring, Chapters 1-2

Collier & Brady, Chapter 1 & Chapter 5


9/21: Evaluating Theories

Geering, Chapter 3


Brady, Chapter 11

Kevin Clarke and David Primo, “Modernizing Political Science: A Model-Based Approach,” *Perspectives on Politics* 5: 741-53.

9/28: Measurement and Validity/Concepts

Collier & Brady, Chapter 3

Gerring, Chapters 5-7

KKV, p. 150-168


10/5: Measurement and Error


10/12: Qualitative Approaches and Methods

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

Gerring, John. "What is a case study and what is it good for?." *American political science review* 98.02 (2004): 341-354.


10/19: Interviews and participant observation


10/26: Quantitative Problems!

KKV, Chapter 6

*omitted variable bias*


*missing data problems/sample problems*


*panel data*


*fixed effects*

Read responses to Green, Kim, and Yoon in *International Organization* 55 (2).

11/2: Causal Inference I

Collier and Brady, Chapters 2 and 9.

Gerring, Chapters 8 and 9.

KKV, Chapter 3.


11/9: Causal inference II

Gerring, Chapters 10-11.


http://www.iq.harvard.edu/blog/sss/archives/2010/10/can_matching_so.shtml

http://cyrussamii.com/?p=33


11/16: experiments and quasi-experiments

KKV, p. 185-99.

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11/19: field experiments

Gerring, Chapter 12

Susan Hyde, 2007, “The Observer Effect in International Politics”, *World Politics* 60 (1).


11/30: survey experiments


12/7: replication and transparency in research


QMMR Newsletter, Spring 2015. [https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/uploadedFiles/moynihan/cqrm/Newsletter%2013_1.pdf](https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/uploadedFiles/moynihan/cqrm/Newsletter%2013_1.pdf) [Read Section on “Transparency About Qualitative Evidence.”]

12/14: Wrap up and reflection
