Overview

This course will introduce you to the various ways in which political scientists, and other social scientists, study political and social phenomena. We will consider a variety of research methods, including historical case study research, field research, quantitative analysis, survey research, experiments, and more. Whatever the research method, one of the central objectives of the course is for students to come away with a clear understanding of how to evaluate the causes of interesting phenomena in the political and social world.

In learning about these tools, we will supplement the textbook readings with a variety of real-world applications.

Course Information

Lectures
Lectures are a key component of the course and will contain material that is not found in the readings. There will also be opportunities for extra credit in lecture (e.g. participation via Tophat).
Grading
Your final grade is comprised of the following:
  Weekly discussion sections: 20%
  Assignments: 40%
  Midterm: 15%
  Final Exam: 25%

The course structure provides many different opportunities for you to show what you have learned, and there are also opportunities for extra credit.

We will use the following scale for translating any numerical grades into final letter grades:

  A = 93.00 +
  AB = 87.00-92.99
  B = 83.00-86.99
  BC = 77.00-82.99
  C = 73.00-77.99
  etc.

Discussion Section
20% of your grade is based on weekly discussion sections led by the Teaching Assistants. Your section grade will be based on attendance, participation, and short additional assignments at the discretion of your TA. You are allowed one unexcused absence. After that, your participation grade will be affected if you miss section for a non-approved reason.

Assignments
Over the course of the semester, you will have 5 applied assignments. Please turn these in electronically via Canvas. They are due by 1.00pm on the due date.
  • Assignment #1 (Developing a Research Question)
  • Assignment #2 (Survey Research)
  • Assignment #3 (Large-N Research)
  • Assignment #4 (Qualitative Research)
  • Assignment #5 (Experimental Research)

Each assignment is worth 10% of your grade. We will drop your lowest assignment. Late assignments will receive a one letter-grade reduction for every 24 hours that they are late (or portion thereof).

Exams
You will have a midterm (15% of your grade) and a final exam (25% of your grade). There will be no make-up exams without a university-excused absence. If you have a university-excused reason to miss an exam, please contact me well in advance. In the case of an emergency, I require written documentation in all instances. Please share your exam schedule with your family and plan your personal travel around the exams.
Readings
The course has one required textbook, which is available in the student bookstore and via various online vendors.


All other readings are either available on the course’s Canvas website (those readings are denoted with a “*”), or are available to the public on the internet (URL provided).

Tophat
We will use Tophat, a system that allows students to ask and answer questions (including anonymously), take polls, take quizzes, and give feedback during class. Participation in Tophat is required for the course. Students can use any web-enabled device (laptop, tablets, smartphones) to participate, or you can use text messaging to submit answers. The subscription is $16 for the semester, and I have cut down the number of textbooks to accommodate this cost. Please follow the instructions at https://kb.wisc.edu/luwmad/page.php?id=59937 to sign up. Our course join code is 854030.

Tophat will record your participation in the course. We will use this when determining final letter grades, boosting people who are close to the cutoff for their particular grade depending on their Tophat score.

Course Website
Our course website is available via Canvas. Please check the course website frequently for announcements, information about assignments, and to access non-textbook readings and other materials.

Office Hours
We (the professor and TAs) encourage you to see us during office hours with any questions. Please see above for weekly office hours.

Accommodation for Disabilities and Religious Observance
For anyone who needs accommodations for a documented disability, please let your TA know right away. I am happy to work through the McBurney Disability Resource Center, 905 University Avenue, 263-2741.

If your religious observance creates a conflict with any aspects of the course, please let us know well in advance and we will schedule accommodations.

Commitment to Inclusivity
This class strives to be an inclusive learning community. As a community, we aim to be respectful to all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, political affiliation, or sexual orientation. Please feel free to let me know your preferred gender pronoun or if you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster.
**Academic Integrity**
I take the issue of plagiarism and cheating very seriously. If you are caught plagiarizing or cheating on any assignment or exam, you will receive a failing grade for the class. In addition, the matter will then be referred to the Dean of Students for a formal hearing. The University’s policy and description of academic misconduct is fully described at the University’s webpage.

**Course Learning Outcomes**
Students will develop an understanding of the research methods used in political science, including applications to American Politics, Comparative Politics, and International Relations, with relevance to important theoretical and pragmatic questions. Students will learn how to analyze relations among individuals, civil society, political institutions, and states, and analyze the motivations and consequences of political decision-making. They will gain an understanding of diverse research methods, including quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, surveys, experiments, and more.

**Credit Hours/Workload**
This class meets for three 50-minute class periods each week (2 lecture, 1 section) over the semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, assignments, studying, etc) for about 2 hours out of the classroom for every class period (e.g. 6 hours outside of class per week, on average). Some weeks will be more intensive than others, so please plan ahead. The syllabus includes additional information about meeting times and expectations for student work.
## Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (9/5)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 (9/10 - 9/12)</td>
<td>What is Social Science and Why is it Valuable?</td>
<td>Formulating a Research Question</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 (9/17 – 9/19)</td>
<td>Choosing a Research Design</td>
<td>Establishing Causation</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 (9/24 – 9/26)</td>
<td>Measuring Concepts *Assignment #1 Due</td>
<td>Sampling and Case Selection</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 (10/1 – 10/3)</td>
<td>Survey Research 1</td>
<td>Survey Research 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 (10/8 - 10/10)</td>
<td>Large-N Data 1</td>
<td>Large-N Data 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 (10/15 – 10/17)</td>
<td>Large-N Data 3 *Assignment #2 Due</td>
<td>Large-N Data 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 (10/22 – 10/24)</td>
<td>Review Session</td>
<td>*Midterm Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 (10/29 – 10/31)</td>
<td>Introduction to Qualitative Research</td>
<td>Process Tracing</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 (11/5 – 11/7)</td>
<td>Archival Research, Field Research &amp; Interviews *Assignment #3 Due</td>
<td>Field Research &amp; Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 (11/12 – 11/14)</td>
<td>No lecture – use time to work on your assignment</td>
<td>Experiments 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 (11/19 – 11/21)</td>
<td>Experiments 2 *Assignment #4 Due</td>
<td>Experiments 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 (11/26 – 11/28)</td>
<td>Can We Trust Social Science 1</td>
<td>Can We Trust Social Science 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 (12/3 – 12/5)</td>
<td>Normative and Ethical Issues 1</td>
<td>Normative and Ethical Issues 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 (12/10 – 12/12)</td>
<td>Review *Assignment #5 Due</td>
<td>Review</td>
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Sept 5 – Introduction and course overview

Sept 10 – What is social science, and why is it valuable?

   DSS Ch. 1
   DSS Ch. 2

Sept 12 – Formulating social scientific research questions and developing theories and hypotheses

   *Leanne Powner, *Empirical Research and Writing*, pp. 21-28 and 41-48

Sept 17 – Research designs

   DSS Ch. 4

Sept 19 – Establishing causation

   *Kellstedt & Whitten, “Evaluating Causal Relationships”

Sept 24 – Measuring concepts

   **Assignment #1 Due on Canvas 1.00pm (Developing a Research Question)**

   DSS Ch. 5

Sept 26 – Sampling and Case Selection

   DSS Ch. 6

Oct 1 – Survey Research 1

   DSS Ch. 8

Oct 3 – Survey Research 2
“An Evaluation of 2016 Election Polls in the U.S.”, American Association for Public Opinion Research


Oct 8 – Large-N Data 1

*Powner Chapter 7

Oct 10 – Large-N Data 2

DSS Ch. 12

*Powner, pp. 200-205

Oct 15 – Large-N Data 3

**Assignment #2 Due on Canvas 1:00pm (Survey Research)


Optional further reading:


Oct 17 – Large-N Data 4

“Ten Things to Know About Reading A Regression Table.” Evidence of Governance in Politics.

http://egap.org/methods-guides/10-things-know-about-reading-regression-table

Oct 22 – Review Session

Oct 24 – **MIDTERM**
Oct 29 – Introduction to Qualitative Research

DSS pp. 313-324

Re-read Ross “Oil, Islam, and Women”

Oct 31 – Process Tracing

*Arthur Conan Doyle, “Silver Blaze”

*Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing”

Nov 5 – Archival research; Field research and in-depth interviews

**Assignment #3 Due on Canvas 1.00pm (Large-N Research)

DSS Ch. 9

“Using Archives: A Practical Guide for Researchers”
[http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/04/0416_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/04/0416_e.html)

“A Survival Guide for Archival Research”

Nov 7 – Field research and in-depth interviews (cont)


*Thalhammer, Christina. “What Are the Pathways to Human Rights Activism?”

Nov 12 – NO LECTURE

Nov 14 – Experiments 1

DSS Ch. 7
Nov 19 – Experiments 2

**Assignment #4 Due on Canvas 1.00pm (Qualitative Research)**


Nov 21 – Experiments 3

Revisit Bargh article above


Nov 26 – Can We Trust Social Science? 1

“What is Motivated Reasoning? How Does it Work? Dan Kahan Answers.”

http://www.scienceandreligiontoday.com/2011/05/04/what-is-motivated-reasoning-and-how-does-it-work/

[https://slate.com/health-and-science/2017/06/daryl-bem-proved-esp-is-real-showed-science-is-broken.html](https://slate.com/health-and-science/2017/06/daryl-bem-proved-esp-is-real-showed-science-is-broken.html)

### Nov 28 – Can We Trust Social Science? 2


David Broockman and Joshua Kalla. 2015. “We Discovered One of Social Science’s Biggest Frauds. Here’s What We Learned.” *Vox*.

[https://www.vox.com/2015/7/22/9009927/lacour-gay-homophobia-study](https://www.vox.com/2015/7/22/9009927/lacour-gay-homophobia-study)

### Dec 3 – Normative and Ethical Issues 1

DSS Ch. 3

### Dec 5 – Normative and Ethical Issues 2

### Dec 10 – Review Session 1

**Assignment #5 Due on Canvas at 1.00pm (Experimental Research)**

### Dec 12 – Review Session 2

### Final Exam: December 14, 2.45pm – 4.45pm