

Concepts and Methods in Political Science Research

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Objectives and Purpose

During this course, students will learn about the theoretical and methodological frameworks that underpin political science. Learn how logical investigation into political phenomena varies from the way we often discuss politics, and students will participate in a reasonable criticism of that rational approach to better deal with the limitations of social scientific research. In the scientific method, questions are asked that can be proven or disproved, and other answers are rigorously ruled out by empirical observation. Course topics include: qualitative case studies, historical institutionalism and experimentation, as well as research methods like surveys and content analysis and statistical modelling that practitioners employ to apply this approach to theoretical concerns.

In order to prepare students for more advanced seminars and courses in the department, this course focuses on teaching students how to critically analyse political science research, which they will encounter. Rather of relying on out-of-date theory, we'll use cutting-edge research to ground our discussions of political science technique. Thus, you will become a better social science consumer wherever and whenever you meet it. Second, students will learn how to perform scientific study on social behaviour, which will help many students prepare for more advanced research projects, such as a senior thesis. To test an original theory, students will design their own research project and collaborate with others to conduct it. Through an active analysis of published material and an attempt to duplicate their results, students will show their knowledge of the strategies covered in this session. Students aren't required to

have any prior knowledge of statistical modelling. There are various methods to scientifically examine politics, and this course starts with the basics..

Course Requirements and Grade Distribution

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Group Paper "Defense"	March 5	5%
Peer Review	May 10 & 12	5
Paper Proposal	March 19	15
Attendance and Participation	Ongoing	20
Data Presentation	May 3	20
Final Paper	May 15	35

An introduction to social science research methodology is provided in this course. The sum of the two pieces is what you get in the end. You'll be judged on the theoretical component of your performance based on your ability to participate in discussions about your study in a knowledgeable and open manner.

It is via the completion of a group research project and a "data presentation" that your practical comprehension of the course content will be evaluated. Your final grade is made up of six components, each of which is given a letter grade. An "F" grade will be given to students who fail to complete or submit the following: Participation and Attendance: Each and every class meeting must be attended and participated in. If you show up to class prepared and engaged, you will get a high grade from your instructor. If you want to have a successful debate, you need to be able to go back to

the text at all times, thus having the reading material on hand is essential. A brief write-up (a paragraph, maybe two) or a post-class assignment that assesses your grasp of the content may be required from you from time to time.

It is important to me that they are completed thoroughly, and I will be cognizant of the amount of time you will need to prepare for them. The reading schedule and topic framework are provided below. Attending class with a laptop is highly recommended, particularly as we get into the second half of this semester. Each student will participate in a research project with a group of at least two other students. Each group must schedule a meeting with me in my office by the end of September to discuss their study. While we're here to discuss your study idea, I'd want to get your thoughts on the following three points:

- In order to answer the research question, you must first understand what it is.
- Why do you think other academics have answered your question incorrectly?
- In what ways is your study method better than those of the past researches? Each of these questions should be answered in advance. I plan to have 30 minute meetings. This assignment is graded "pass/fail."

In addition to the paper defence, each team will submit a paper proposal for evaluation. I will take into account your final paper as well as any comments or recommendations I have made so far in relation to your paper proposal. For this task, I'll provide you with more detailed guidelines. Each group will deliver a brief presentation to the class on the status of their study (about 10-15 minutes). Once you've finalised your group's membership, we'll start looking at dates for your presentation. Your research question is what you're trying to answer with this project. In addition to your own presentation, you'll be graded on how well you interact with other groups' presentations, both by asking questions and providing constructive criticism. For this task, I'll provide you with more detailed guidelines. Our last two class sessions will be devoted to peer-review and assessment of your draught research plans. If you've made it this far in the semester, you should have a final paper that covers all of the material specified below. Please read and comment on two additional groups, and bring your remarks to class for discussion.

Each group is required to complete a 15-20 page research report as their final product.

- a) student-chosen political problem a) is examined;
- b) explains the relevance of the research;
- c) summarises the relevant literature;
- d) hypotheses and specific plans for dealing with such hypotheses are laid forth in d).
- e) explains the findings in relation to the study strategy;
- f) is an instrument that may be used for data collecting or statistical inference;
- g) examines their hypothesis and either verifies or disproves the connection they have hypothesised;
- h) examines the political consequences of their test.

Throughout the semester, I highly urge you to come to me with any questions or concerns you may have concerning your work. We may brainstorm together and look for materials that could be helpful to your endeavours. Your senior thesis or a good writing sample for a job application is what I want you to have as a result of this session. For this task, I'll provide you with more detailed guidelines.

Absences and Participation in Readings

The majority of the readings for this course will come from scholarly publications authored by political scientists. What works and what doesn't work in the study of politics will be examined by reading these. Bring them to school. There are a number of articles authored by the teacher and other academics in this department that we will study in this course. I want students to come to class and publicly discuss their own research, to answer questions about it, and to openly disclose the issues they're having. My coworkers and I are no exception. My goal in giving this task is to start a dialogue about our shared research aim and about the legitimate disagreements we may have regarding social science. For this course, you'll need to buy one book. I've requested used copies from the bookshop, but the book is also accessible online.

The Dread from the Data: Naked Statistics by Charles Wheelan. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, NY The rest of the readings are available for free download on the internet. NB: The syllabus is "clickable" and will connect you to PDF files of each

week's non-textbook readings that are accessible online and for download. As previously stated, students are required to participate and attend every class meeting. Consider the term "participation" in its broadest sense. Bringing up a question or two at the start of each session is a great approach to start a conversation. I'm sure you've never heard or read anything like this before, and for many of the texts, there are several interpretations of the same point. Finally, most students will not be able to get by with just turning up to class with the information they've already read. Make notes while you read to capture any questions, concerns, or observations you have. Preparation is essential.

Other Grading Policies: It is common for students to have issues or questions concerning their grade. In the event that this is the case, please inform me within 24 hours after receiving a grade. When it's convenient for both of us, we'll set up a time to meet face-to-face. Your work and a prepared explanation of why you believe it should have earned a higher mark must be brought to class today. It is just for the sake of ensuring that our talk is fruitful. As a courtesy to you, I'll present an example assignment that you may use as a model for your own work. Late papers will not be accepted. You may, however, seek for an extension on a paper if you need it for any reason. An email requesting a deadline extension must be received at least one week prior to the original deadline. As a reminder, the final paper must be submitted by the due date given by the University. You are expected to be aware of the university's policy against cheating and plagiarism and the possible penalties: <http://www.colby.edu/academicintegrity/>. No punishment for being careful in the process of preparing an assignment if you have issues about whether you have broken academic integrity standards. Your Happiness: Gender-based, sexual, domestic, or other types of power-based personal abuse may affect anybody. The Office of the Dean of Students, at (208) 859-4250, has numerous services accessible for those who need them.

Your teacher and I care about you and your well-being, and we're ready to help in any way we can. The University's Title IX Coordinator will ensure that you receive the resources and support you need while also reviewing the information presented to determine whether further action is necessary to ensure survivor safety and the safety of the University community as a whole as your instructor, which means that I am required by College policy and federal law to report what you tell me about

power-based personal violence. Similarly, if you are experiencing any difficulties in class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can find a solution before it has a negative impact on your performance. If you need assistance balancing work and personal difficulties throughout the semester, don't hesitate to reach out to your class's dean.

Reading Schedule and Concept Outline

Week of February 10th

Can We Scientifically Evaluate Politics?

Class Meetings this Week are Virtual

What to Do on Wednesday: Scientific, Non-Scientific, and Political Interests Using the links below, you may use the Colby Library's Political Science Database to locate a peer-reviewed journal article on any of the following topics:

Political Science Review

a) Journal of Politics in the United States of America

Politics & Public Policy In the Journal of Politics d) Write 1-3 sentences on each of the following after reading the abstract and introduction (and maybe conclusion):

a) What piqued your curiosity in the article?

b) What are the writers attempting to demonstrate?

How would you describe it as "scientific" in your opinion? Prepare to read your responses aloud to the class when you arrive for class.

Tomorrow: The Characteristics of Scientific Investigation Read the articles below and write a paragraph summarising the differences between them. Which of the following is the best answer? Be prepared to present your text in class. The following article by M. Steven Fish, "Islam and Authoritarianism," appeared in *World Politics* 55 (1): 4-37 in 2002. "Islam and Liberal Democracy," by Bernard Lewis, 1993. Issues 89-98 of the *Atlantic Monthly*, published in February.

The week of February 15th.

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Speculations and Propositions

Theories and operationalization are covered on Monday. You may do this by filling out the following survey, which will only be used for research reasons. For your reading pleasure: Robert B Putnam. Thinking About Social Change in the United States: Chapter One Bowling Alone: The Decline and Resurrection of American Social Networking. Simon & Schuster, New York City. Reliability and Construct Validity - Measurement will be covered on Wednesday Malcolm Gladwell's "The Order of Things: What College Rankings Really Tell Us" (2011) is a good place to start. February 6, New Yorker

Friday: Hypothesis Testing Using Reliability and Construct Validity Robert Yeh et al. 2018: Recommended Reading If you're going to jump out of a plane, it's important that you use a parachute. The British Medical Journal 363:k5094.. Christopher Joyce, please. Can you tell the difference between a violin and a guitar? Public radio station npr, broadcast on January 2. [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN.](#)

Week of the 22nd of February

Making a Difference in the World of Ideas

On Monday, we'll be doing hypothesis tests.

To do: Send me an email by Monday morning at 9:00 a.m. with a plausible idea on any current political phenomena that: the independent and dependent variables are properly defined

- defines a potential connection between the two in terms of b)
- A wider philosophy of political life may be drawn from this study.

Wednesday: Taking time to read scholarly materials I recommend that you read the following: Amelia Hoover Green. "Four Steps to Reading Political Science." Larry M. Bartels and Christopher H. Achen. What Shark Attacks Do to Democracy. "Blind Retrospection." 2012. Vanderbilt University's Working Paper Archive (5-2013). Afternoon Tea: Creating and Deconstructing Knowledge

To do: Each member of the group will individually identify and synthesise three articles for their project's literature review. All articles (6-9) will be combined into a single document by the students as a group to begin their literature study (by the end of the weekend).

The following issues are addressed in a synthesis:

- a) What are the paper's main points of contention?
- b) In political science, why is the argument relevant?
- c) How does the article support their claim?
- d) In what ways does the research fall short?
- e) When it comes to my own hypothesis, how does the paper's conclusion connect to it?
- f) As a researcher, how does this article compare to previous studies in the field?

A Sample of Research Paper Proposals to Consider: (Identified On-Line)

"PATHOLOGY OF IMPRISONMENT" by Philip Zimbardo Society 9, no. 6 (Summer 2006): 4-8

The first week of March

Validity both internally and externally

Monday: Validity from the Inside and the Outside

Nicholas F. Jacobs's 2018 book is recommended. "How I Learned to Love the Null: Building Robust Survey Experiments in Political Science." Research Methods Cases from SAGE Wednesday: Natural and Field Experiments Carrie LeVan. "Breaking the Vicious Cycle: The Effects of an Experimental Intervention to Increase Turnout Amongst Low Propensity, Low Status, Latino and Non-Latino Voters." Working Papers.

Friday: Abstract and Survey Environment Experiments

The task at hand is to devise an experiment to verify the hypothesis outlined in your study plan. There aren't any limitations in terms of money or morals. This thought exercise is meant to assist you in identifying the relationships between variables in your study's research design.

Group Defense Week of March 8th Qualitative Research Designs is the last day to schedule meetings.

Monday: There will be no classes because of spring break.

Selection of a case for Wednesday

To read: Kenneth A. Rodman, forthcoming, 2019. In the marginalisation of war criminals, the prosecutorial agency's realistic limits are examined in "When Justice Leads, Does Politics Follow?" 17 (1): 13-44 in *International Criminal Justice*.

On Friday, we'll be tracing the steps of the process. Lindsay Mayka is the author of the book you should read. Forthcoming. Reforms in Brazil's health sector have led to the emergence of strong institutional design that is based on participation and policy reform. pp. 275-294 in *Comparative Politics* 51 (2)

March 15th through March 22nd

Designing Behavioral Research Projects

Interviews and focus groups begin on Monday.

The book to read is Katherine Cramer Walsh. Rural awareness and the power of perspective: putting inequality in its proper context, 2012. *Political Science Review* 106: 517-532.

Analysis of content on Wednesday

Martin Gilens, 1996, "Race and Poverty in America: Public Misperceptions and the American News Media," is a good resource. *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 60 (4): 515-41.

Practice on Friday.

To Do: Each group will create a 10-minute interview protocol relating to their paper proposal following our class discussion and the examples shown in class. Behavioral or "attitudinal" aspects of the proposed endeavour must be addressed in the protocol.

*****Deadline for Paper Proposal*****

The deadline for submitting proposals is Saturday.

Monday, March 19 at 9:00 a.m.

The week of March 22nd

Design Methods for Behavioral Research 2

Getting Started with Survey Design on Monday Recommended by Daniel M. Shea and Rebecca C. Harris. In 2006, "Women and Local Party Leadership in the United States." 61-85 in the *Journal of Women, Politics, and Policy*.

Polling and sampling will be place on Wednesday. Read: Carrie LeVan; Nicholas Jacobs; and Daniel Shea. 'To Read' 2020. This is a story about how much we missed Maine's independence. *The Portland Tribune*.

On Friday, we'll look at the results of our survey.

Think back to our discussion on "Thinking About Social Change in America" and review Putnam's chapter on social capital.

March 29th through April 2nd

Management of Measurements and Data

On Monday, data will be collected.

Do this: Download STATA to your PC by contacting Colby ITS: <https://www.colby.edu/its/support/>

In STATA, practise by changing the directory and uploading example files available on course website on Wednesday for Data Measurement I.

Data Measurement II will take place on Friday.

To Do: Find a dataset that is relevant to your group's study. The data should be able to directly test your group project or link to the principles that your research question is based on.. Labels and variable names in the dataset or codebook should indicate the analysis unit, chosen variables, and measurement units. Have one member of your team send the dataset to me, along with a brief description of how you intend to utilise it in your project. Please contact me if you're experiencing trouble using any of the following resources.

1) <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/>

In addition, you may check out:

- <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/>
- <http://www.datazoa.com>

After April 5th, 2014 Statistical Indicators and Graphs Means, Medians, and Modes: Monday's Topics To complete, go to the course website and get the sample dataset (see email for this week).
Descriptive Statistics: Charles Wheelan. 2013. "Chapter 2: Uncovering the Horrors of Data with Naked Statistics. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, NY.

Tables and Cross-tabulations, Wednesday

Chapter 3: Deceptive Description by Charles Wheelan, 2013. Uncovering the Horrors of Data with Naked Statistics. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, NY.

Today through tomorrow: Making Graphs (Time and Distribution)

The next step is to choose three variables of interest from the dataset you just discovered (maybe an IV, DV, and control). Calculate the average, median, and standard deviation for each of the variables you've chosen to study. Each member should send me an email with a paragraph summarising and elaborating on these core beliefs.

Charles Wheelan. 2013. "Chapter 7: Data's Importance." Uncovering the Horrors of Data with Naked Statistics. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, NY.

This is the week of March 12th to April 1st

What you need to know about Probability.

Chances on Monday: I

To complete, go to the course website and get the sample dataset (see email for this week).

To be read: "Chapter 5: Basic Probability" by Charles Wheelan, published in 2013. Uncovering the Horrors of Data with Naked Statistics. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, NY.

Probability II will be covered on Wednesday.

This chapter, "Problems with Probability," by Charles Wheelan, published in 2013, is recommended reading. Uncovering the Horrors of Data with Naked Statistics. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, NY.

SPRING BREAK II: NO CLASS, FRIDAY

Week beginning on Monday, April 19th

Correlation and regression

Download the sample dataset from the course website here on Monday for correlation. "Chapter 4: Correlation" by Charles Wheelan may be found here. Uncovering the Horrors of Data with Naked Statistics. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, NY.

Significance and Error: Wednesday

What to Read: "Chapter 9: Inference" by Charles Wheelan, 2013. Uncovering the Horrors of Data with Naked Statistics. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, NY. Charles Wheelan's Regression To Read: Friday. 2013. "Regression Analysis" is the topic of Chapter 11. Uncovering the Horrors of Data with Naked Statistics. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, NY.

Week of April 26-29, 2019

Correlation and regression

On Monday, we'll be looking into regression analysis.

To Do: Download the associated dataset and do file for the article linked below to get started (see weekly email). The authors Nicholas F. Jacobs and B. Kal Munis are recommended reading. Place-Based Resentment and Recent American Elections: Anger from afar. Working Papers.

No class on Wednesday due to the Colby Liberal Arts Symposium (CLAS)**.

Regression Training on Friday! "Chapter 12: Regression Mistakes." Charles Wheelan. 2013. Uncovering the Horrors of Data with Naked Statistics. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, NY.

To do: Each member of your team should send me an email with a paragraph explaining a correlated connection between two variables used in your group's study (preferably their IV and DV). A statistical and substantive analysis should be included in this section.

After May 3rd,

Presentations of Data

On Monday, I'll be presenting data to the public.

Wednesday: The Second Round of Data
Demonstrations

Friday is Data Presentations III day.

The week of May 10th.

The End of the Projects

Peer Review I is due Monday.

To Do: Each group must give me a draught of their final paper before the start of class on Monday. As stated in the directions, this document should specify each of those components that are required to complete the task.

Afternoon: Second Peer Review

Prepare for your peer review by reading the second paper. Please bring two copies of your comments and questions to class in duplicate.

*****THE FINAL PAPERS WILL BE DUE ON MAY 15TH AT 9:00 AM! *****