

Research in Politics
POL 550
Fall 2021
T 1:00 PM-3:30 PM
Location: Deupree Room 131

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Office Hours
8:30 AM - 9:30 AM Wednesdays
or by appointment

Office Hours - Zoom Only
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM Mondays
and by appointment
Zoom ID: 5853715819
Passcode: POL

Course Description

This course is designed to familiarize new graduate students and advanced undergraduate students with the fundamentals of conducting research in political science. We will begin the first half of the class by examining some critical basic concepts in the philosophy of science before turning to more specific problems of constructing (and critiquing) research design, including the general problem of determining the observable implications of social science theory, and the more individualized issues of sampling, measurement, and interpretation of findings. In the second half of the class, we will walk through practical matters of crafting a research design, including the process of formulating specific hypotheses from a research topic, the specifics of data collection and management for different types of research designs, and concluding with an examination of the process of writing up and presenting research.

Making useful sense of these abstract concepts of philosophy, causal inference, and data management is far easier if we examine them in the context of political science research which is of personal interest. As such, in Part I of the class, each of you will pick a recent article in the *American Political Science Review* which is intriguing to you, and then critique that article according to the concepts discussed in class. In Part II, you will apply the concepts discussed by constructing an original research design which you will be able to draw upon in future classes and milestones in graduate studies.

Objectives

To introduce students to a set of key works on research design and philosophy of science

To provide students with the ability to critique and summarize political science research using accepted standards of evaluation

To develop understanding of different styles of political science research, and assess the methodological strengths and weaknesses of each

To foster the ability to generate appropriate causal explanations, hypotheses, and research designs necessary to answer political science questions of interest to your academic career

To familiarize students with the structure of commonly available data, data generating and collection processes, and available data sources relevant to political science research

To inculcate a grasp of the conceptual frameworks of measuring and comparing relationships among variables required to conduct statistical inference in the second semester of the methods sequence

Required Course Materials

Hempel, Philosophy of Natural Science 1966.

Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 3rd Edition 1996.

Little, Varieties of Social Explanation 1991.

King, Keohane, and Verba, Designing Social Inquiry 1994.

Powner, Empirical Research and Writing 2014.

Grading

Participation 20%; Reflection Essays 10%; Midterm Article Essay 30%; Research Design Paper 40%.

Class participation counts for 20% of your final grade. This course is a seminar for the first half of the class. Though the instructor will spend some time during each meeting introducing the material and (when needed) clarifying the technical aspects of the readings, the primary purpose of our class meetings is student-led critique and discussion of the readings. As such, Part I's classes will consist of student-led discussions of the readings for that week. I require all students to show up to class prepared to contribute critiques and questions for discussion.

Weekly one page *reflection essays* on the readings and their applicability to your selected *APSR* article (for Part I) and your research design project (for Part II) will contribute 10% of your final grade. These essays should be emailed to the TA before class.

One midterm article essay constitutes 30% of your final grade. Students must consider arguments about progress in and explanation in social and natural sciences applied to your selected *APSR* article, and also analyze the sample, measurement, and specification problems in that article. The essay has a maximum length of 10 double-spaced pages. (Undergraduates will write a shorter 5 page essay applying arguments about progress and explanation to their article alone.) The midterm article review must be submitted online to Dr. Klingler by the start of class on October 19. You should be prepared to present and discuss your essay in class.

A research design paper will be used to calculate 40% of your final grade. Each student must develop a research design on a topic of personal interest, and it should be a clear application of the course

materials. In a 10-12 page paper you should:

1. Sketch a research project that involves normal science within political science and which includes collection of new empirical data. The sketch should indicate the previous research to which it is related, the contribution it will make, the methods of the study, the types of empirical data to be examined, the mode of analysis, and the nature of conclusions anticipated. This section should be 7-8 pages. (Undergraduates will write only this section in 5-6 pages.)
2. Provide an analytic critique of your design, indicating its strengths and weaknesses in contributing to progress in political science. This section should be 3-4 pages. (This section will not be completed by undergraduates.)

The proposal must be explained to the class in a 10 minute presentation at the end of the semester on December 9. Undergraduates do not need to present their proposal.

Fostering Independent Learning for Graduate Students

This course is designed to introduce graduate students to a core set of foundational readings on the philosophy of science and generate reflective writings and discussions about the implications of those readings for independent investigation of empirical phenomena. These takeaways are then applied to the tasks of independent scholarship in the form of an ongoing critique of an existing political science article as well as the development of an original empirical research design which is suitable for further development in the next semester of the graduate program. As such, the deliverables in this class provide a foundation for future methods classes to build upon in the process of forming the ability for independent scholarship in the profession.

Grade Scale

Below is how your final percentage grade will be mapped into a letter grade. There are opportunities for extra credit in this class so there will be no rounding. If you get an 87.99999999%, (for example) when the semester is over your final grade will be a B+. **No exceptions.**

Percentage Point Range	Letter Grade
92-100	A
88-91.99...	A-
85-87.99...	B+
81-84.99...	B
78-80.99...	B-
75-77.99...	C+
71-75.99...	C
68-70.99...	C-
65-67.99...	D+
62-64.99...	D
60-61.99...	D-
0-59.99...	F

Class Policies

Changes to the syllabus may be made in order to correct errors, adjust the schedule, fine tune course details, or address unforeseen issues. Changes will be discussed and announced in class. It is the student's responsibility to attend class to be aware of any syllabus changes. The official syllabus will always be available on Blackboard.

Policy on In-Person Class Meetings

All students present must have properly worn face coverings or face masks. Students who have a diagnosed health concern which interferes with the wearing of face coverings or face masks may contact SDS to seek a University-approved accommodations. Students will not be allowed in meeting spaces when they are out of compliance with the University's COVID-19 guidelines.

Policy on Readings and Assignment Expectations

Reading and any additional assignments should be completed before the official start time for class on the day assigned. This means that email copies of assignments must be in the instructor's possession at the official start time for class or the assignment is late. Pay careful attention to the syllabus and to any adjustments that may occur.

There a lot of assigned reading for this class, particularly in Part I. I have selected these readings in order to introduce you to classic works in the philosophy of science, social science methods, and political science methods. As we will be operating as a seminar in Part I, I do expect that you read all 80-110 pages assigned, so that we are able to have a fruitful discussion on each assigned reading.

Part II is focused on practical application and assigns roughly 50 pages of reading per week, and will be accompanied by lectures which will supplement those readings. The lectures will cover the material from a different perspective than the readings.

Policy on Missed Classes and Assignments

The University requires that all students have a verified attendance at least once during the first two weeks of the semester for each course. If attendance is not verified, then a student will be dropped from the course and any financial aid is adjusted accordingly by the University. In this course, attendance is defined as participation in the course meetings in our seminar room.

Late and makeup assignments will be allowed only with a doctor's note or other equally serious documented reason for the absence. **Excused absences will only be given for dates listed in the documentation provided. Keep this in mind when requesting doctors notes or obtaining other documentation such as memorial programs in the event of a funeral.** Excused absences from mental health conditions such as depression, bereavement, or anxiety require a note from a doctor mentioning specific dates under which attendance was prevented as a result of the mental health condition. If no date is provided in the documentation, there will be no excused absence given.

Policy on COVID-19

Students are expected to comply with the University's protocols when they are in effect. Currently, a mask requirement is in place for vaccinated and unvaccinated people. As a result, proper mask wearing is required indoors and in the classroom. Current protocols can be found at <https://coronavirus.olemiss.edu>. Students who have a diagnosed health concern that interferes with the wearing of face masks may contact the Student Disabilities Services (SDS) Office to seek a University-approved accommodation. Please contact SDS at <https://sds.olemiss.edu/> for more information. If students test positive for COVID-19 at any health care facility, they must contact the Student Health Center at 662-915-7274. University Health Services will coordinate contact tracing to lessen the likelihood of spread. Students with COVID-19 should seek medical attention at the Student Health Center and contact Dr. Klingler to let them know that they will be missing class due to a health-related issue. If you are exposed to someone with COVID-19, you should contact the Student Health Center to get tested three to five days following exposure and follow the guidance recommended by the Health Center. If you are not fully vaccinated, you should follow quarantine protocols found at <https://coronavirus.olemiss.edu/students>.

Currently, COVID-19 guidelines for the Fall 2021 semester include face masks for vaccinated and unvaccinated people inside University buildings; therefore, students should not be in classroom spaces when they are out of compliance with these guidelines unless they have an accommodation approved by Student Disability Services. The University's Academic Conduct and Discipline Policy states that "disorderly behavior that disrupts the academic environment violates the standard of fair access to the academic experience." Failure to adhere to health requirements during the COVID-19 emergency will be deemed as disruptive to the classroom and will be enforced following the Academic Conduct and Discipline procedures. The University of Mississippi has adopted a tiered disciplinary protocol for non-adherence to COVID-19 health requirements. This disciplinary protocol is maintained by the Office of Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct: <https://conflictresolution.olemiss.edu/covidupdates>.

Policy on Grade Appeals

All grade appeals must be made in writing to the instructor. No grade appeals will be considered within the first 24 hours of a grade being posted or an assignment/exam being returned; those that come in within the first 24 hours will be discarded. All grade appeals must be received within ten calendar days of the grade being posted or the assignment/exam being returned; those that come in after this deadline will be discarded. All appeals must contain the following information:

The name of the assignment in question

The reason why you believe your grade should be higher. Be specific and discuss this in the context of the requirements of the assignment.

Determine whether you believe it is an error of calculation (the instructor/TA incorrectly tabulated points), judgment (the grade received does not reflect the quality of the work), or both.

If the instructor/TA determines that an error of calculation is present, then the correct grade will be calculated and the correct grade will be allocated. If it is argued by the student that an error of judgment is present, then the student has the option to have the assignment graded *de novo* by the instructor. As this will be a regrade from scratch, there is the possibility that the grade given to

the regraded assignment will be lower than the initial grade given. All decisions by the instructor are final.

Policy on Disabilities

Students facing disabilities or mental health concerns who are not registered should apply for accommodation with Student Disability Services (SDS). Any student who has a documented disability and has received recommendations for accommodations from SDS should speak with the instructor as soon as possible regarding accommodations.

Policy on Email

Email communication must be used to make requests to the instructor/TA (e.g. for meetings outside of office hours) so that everyone has a record of the request and decision. For emails sent between Monday and Thursday, inclusive, please allow the instructor/TA up to 48 hours to respond. For those sent between Friday and Sunday, inclusive, please allow the instructor/TA up to 96 hours to respond.

It is the student's responsibility to check his/her Ole Miss email daily, since Blackboard works through Ole Miss email addresses and this is how I am able to communicate with you. If you prefer another email address, set up forwarding from your Ole Miss address.

Writing a professional email is an important skill one should master before graduation. All emails to the instructor/TA should include the following: a subject line briefly explaining the topic of the email and that it pertains to POL 704; a greeting more professional than "Yo" or "Hey" (I prefer "Professor Klingler" or "Dr. Klingler."); a clear question or request; and should identify the sender by name. Emails lacking any of these criteria will not be returned. Before sending an email, please make sure you cannot easily get the answer from another source, such as the syllabus or other class documents.

Policy on Technology

This course relies heavily on access to computers and the Internet. At some point during the semester you will have a problem with technology. Your laptop will die, a file will become corrupted, a server will go down, or something else will occur. These are facts of life, not emergencies. Technology problems will not normally be accepted as excuses for unfinished work. Expect that "stuff" will happen and protect yourself by doing the following:

Plan ahead - start early, particularly if you'll need something hard to get.

Save work often at multiple stages - at least every ten minutes.

Make regular backups of files in a different location from the originals - there are several free cloud services that you can use to do this automatically.

When editing an image, set aside the original and work with a copy.

On your personal computer, install and use software to control viruses and malware.

When submitting any assignment electronically in this course, you are responsible for any technological problems (e.g. Internet connection difficulties, corrupted files, misspelled email addresses,

delayed email delivery, etc.). To prevent problems along with the associated penalties for late assignments, you should submit assignments well before the deadline and take proactive steps to make sure that files were not corrupted and that assignments were received. Again, please do not trust your computer to function as expected at the last minute.

Policy on Respect and Civility

The exchange of ideas is an essential part of learning, and you are encouraged to frequently ask questions and share your thoughts during regular class. *Disagree without being disagreeable*. We will be discussing some polarizing issues in class, and conversation should remain civil and conducted in a good faith exchange. In order to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning, students should use professional language in class discussions and written work and behave professionally. No offensive slang or profanity is permitted and unwanted physical contact of another student is a serious offense which will be reported for disciplinary action.

Disruptive behavior will result in a recommendation of appropriate sanction including grade reduction in minor cases and stronger action in more severe cases. If your behavior is disruptive enough to distract me, it can distract the people around you as well, and is a threat to the learning environment. The instructor reserves the right to ask all students in the vicinity of disruptive behavior or conversations to leave the class for the day.

Policy on Academic Discipline

Academic honesty is expected, and academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Examples of academic misconduct are explored in the M Book and include plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation), using someone else's work as your own, allowing someone else to represent your work as their own, gaining or attempting to gain an unfair advantages, giving false information or altering documents, harming academic support facilities, and any act that violates the principles of honesty or fairness that does not fall into these categories.

Turn in material that you have completed yourself and respect the learning environment. Acts of academic misconduct are serious offenses that will be reported for disciplinary action and appropriate sanction after discussion with the student. Please see the University's Student Academic Conduct and Discipline Policy, the University's Academic Regulations in the M Book and/or speak with Prof. Klingler if you have questions in this area.

Course Outline

Note: Please pay attention to the policy on reading expectations on page 3.

Part I: What Is Political Science?

Week 1 (Aug 24) Introduction

Week 2 (Aug 31) Intuitive Evaluation of Political Science Research

Choose one article published in the *APSR* between 2011 and 2021. Be prepared to present the contents and to discuss the article's strengths and weaknesses as political science.

Riker, "The Two-Party System." *APSR*, Dec. 1982. 753-766.

Week 3 (Sep 7) Philosophy of Empirical Social Science

Hempel, Philosophy of Natural Science 1966. Chapters 1-6.

Week 4 (Sep 14) Progress in Empirical Social Science

Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 3rd Edition 1996. Chapters 1-9.

Week 5 (Sep 21) Causal Explanations in Social Science

Little, Varieties of Social Explanation 1991. Chapters 1-4; skim Chapters 5-8.

Week 6 (Sep 28) Research Design and Causal Inference

King, Keohane, and Verba, Designing Social Inquiry 1994. Chapters 1-3

Week 7 (Oct 5) Perils and Pitfalls in Research Design

King, Keohane, and Verba, Designing Social Inquiry 1994. Chapters 4-6.

Week 8 (Oct 12)

NO CLASS

Week 9 (Oct 19) Summarizing and Critiquing Research

Be prepared to discuss your article's strengths and weaknesses as political science using the concepts discussed in class.

Powner, Empirical Research and Writing 2014. Chapter 10.

Midterm Article Essay Due

Part II: Designing Political Research for Real

Week 10 (Oct 26) The Journey from Topic to Hypothesis

Powner, Empirical Research and Writing 2014. Chapters 1-2.

Week 11 (Nov 2) Selecting a Research Design

Powner, Empirical Research and Writing 2014. Chapters 3-4.

Week 12 (Nov 9) Qualitative Data Collection and Management

Powner, Empirical Research and Writing 2014. Chapters 5-6.

Please email Dr. Klingler a short description of your planned research design by November 9.

Week 13 (Nov 16) Quantitative Data Collection and Management

Powner, Empirical Research and Writing 2014. Chapters 7-8.

Week 14 (Nov 23) Thanksgiving Break

NO CLASS

Week 15 (Nov 30) Writing up and Presenting Your Research

Powner, Empirical Research and Writing 2014. Chapters 9 and 11.

Week 16 (Dec 9) Presentations

Research Design Presentations 12 PM

Research Designs Due