
Strategies of Inquiry in Political Science

PS 671

Fall 2011

Course Time: TTh 2:00-3:15PM

Location: Chem/Phys 297-cp

Instructor: Dr. Clayton Thyne

Office Hours: TTh 8-9:15am or 3:30-4:30pm

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URL for Course Syllabus: http://www.uky.edu/~clthyn2/PS671/PS671_syllabus_F2011.htm

Course Summary and Objectives

The purpose of this course is to introduce beginning graduate students to the methodology of political science research. The course begins with an overview of the scientific method and how it is applied in the social sciences. We then proceed by examining each of the stages of the research process, including the formulation of the research question, concept formation, theory construction, research design, sample selection, measurement, and observational strategies. While this is intended to be a broad course in research design, the emphasis in this course will be on political science research designs for quantitative data. Yet, we do spend some time in this course on qualitative research designs and their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, while we do consider some epistemological issues at the beginning and end of the course, this is not a course on epistemology. Students interested in learning more about epistemology and qualitative methods are advised to supplement this course with additional coursework.

The format for this class will consist of lectures and guided discussion by the instructor, in addition to structured (as well as unstructured) participation by the students. I will keep you informed ahead of time of the format for the upcoming week so you know what to anticipate.

Course Requirements

Although I will lecture fairly often, I still consider this to be a seminar course, which means that student participation is mandatory. While it is important that you participate on a regular basis to get full credit for this component of your grade, you will also be evaluated based on the *quality* of your contributions to class. This means that it is essential that you read all of the material in its entirety prior to the first day of class each week. If I do not feel that students are adequately prepared, I reserve the right to administer a quiz on the week's readings to count toward your participation grade.

In addition to class participation, a large component of your grade will also come from weekly assignments. These assignments will all be written in nature, and will range in form from general reaction papers to specific questions about the readings. Perhaps the most important component of this course is a detailed research design that aims to investigate a specific question in the political science literature that is of interest to you. Detailed instructions for this assignment are

available here: [Research Design Instructions](#). Finally, there will be a comprehensive final exam. The weighting used to determine your final grade will be:

Class Participation: 15%
Weekly Assignments: 25%
Research Design: 30%
Final Exam: 30%

Disabilities/ Medical Conditions

If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (Room 2, Alumni Gym, 257-2754, email address jkarnes@email.uky.edu) for coordination of campus disability services available to students with disabilities.

Missed exams and assignments

Make-up exams (for missed examinations) will only be given for documented excused absences as defined by the University (Senate Rule V.2.4.2) and are scheduled as needed. All missed work will result in a score of zero unless an acceptable written excuse is presented within 48 hours of the due date.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Students are advised to retain all notes and drafts for all work until after they receive their final grade. Students should also be aware that the instructor takes matters of plagiarism and cheating very seriously and is prone to imposing the most severe penalty allowed by university rules, which includes, but is not limited to, issuing an automatic grade of 0.0 for the entire course. All assignments, projects, and exercises completed by students for this class should be the product of the personal efforts of the individual(s) whose name(s) appear on the corresponding assignment. Misrepresenting others' work as one's own in the form of cheating or plagiarism is unethical and will lead to those penalties outlined in the University Senate Rules (6.3.1 & 6.3.2). The Ombud site also has information on plagiarism.

Reading

The required books are available at the local bookstores. You are also encouraged to order the books from an online bookstore (but be sure to pay for expedited shipping). I have listed a couple of recommended books that are inexpensive and could be useful to you not only in this course, but throughout your graduate career. You will also be responsible for reading a number of journal articles and book chapters in this course. I will provide links or copies of all articles and book chapters.

Required Books:

1. Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava and David Nachmias. 2008. *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 7th Edition. NY: Worth Publishers. (ISBN: 978055173)

2. King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (ISBN: 0691034710)
3. Gerring, John. *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001.(ISBN: 0521805139)

Recommended for Writing:

1. Becker, Howard S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press
2. *Style Manual for Political Science*, Washington: American Political Science Association, 2001. (Available online at <http://www.uky.edu/~clthyn2/PS671/APSASStyleManual2006.pdf>)

READING SCHEDULE

Note: I may need to edit the schedule from time to time. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to use the online syllabus as it will always be the most current.

I. What is (Political) Science? (08/30, 09/01)

A. Political Science Research Outlets

1. Garand and Giles, "[Journals in the Discipline: A Report on a New Survey of American Political Scientists.](#)" *PS*, April 2003.
2. Robert A. Dahl, "[The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument](#)" *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 55, No. 4. (Dec.1961), pp. 763-772.
3. Dryzek, John. 2006. "[Revolutions Without Enemies: Key Transformations in Political Science.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 100(4): 487-492.

Assignment 1

(Due 09/01): Read through the Garand and Giles article carefully. Pick 5 journals that you think would be relevant to your area of study. Browse the most recent issue of each of these journals. Count the number of articles that use quantitative methods (statistics) and the number of articles that do not use quantitative methods (most easily determined by the absence of tables of statistical coefficients). Record this information in the form of a short (half-page) report and bring it to class.

B. The Scientific Method and its Practice in the Social Sciences (09/06, 09/08)

1. Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (Chapter 1 – The Scientific Approach)
2. King, Keohane and Verba (Chapter 1 – The Science in Social Science)
3. Gerring (Preface, Chapters 1-2)
4. Gordon, Scott. 1991. *The History and Philosophy of Social Science*. Routledge, Ch. 18, The Foundations of Science, pp.589-668. Read section B especially closely.
 - Ch. 18, [Section A-1](#)
 - Ch. 18, [Section A-2](#)
 - Ch. 18, [Section A-3](#)
 - Ch. 18, [Section B](#)
5. Stephen Thornton. 1997. "Karl Popper." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://www.ul.ie/~philos/vol1/popper.html>

- Alexander Bird. 2004. "Thomas Kuhn." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/thomas-kuhn/>

Assignment 2

(Due 09/08): In approximately 1-2 single-spaced pages, answer the following two questions.

- Briefly summarize the basic features of the scientific method discussed in your readings. What are some of the challenges facing social scientists in applying the scientific method to social/human/political behavior?
- What is "scientific progress" according to Thomas Kuhn and how and why/how does it occur? How do Kuhn's thoughts on scientific progress differ with those of Popper?

II. Concepts and Theories in Political Science (09/13-09/22)

A. Concept Formation (09/13, 09/15)

- Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (Chapter 2 – Conceptual Foundations of Research)
- Gerring (Chapters 3-4)

Application

- David Collier and Steven Levitsky. 1997. "[Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research.](#)" *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Apr., 1997), pp. 430-451.

Assignment #3

(Due 09/15): In approximately 2 double-spaced pages, answer the following two questions concerning David Collier and Steven Levitsky's article, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research."

- According to Collier and Levitsky, what is the problem within the democratization literature that they are trying to address?
- How do they propose to solve this problem? Are they successful?

B. Theory Construction (09/20, 09/22)

- Gerring (Chapters 5-7)
- King, Keohane and Verba (Chapters 2-3)

Applications

3. Zeev Maoz; Bruce Russett, "[Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946-1986.](#)" *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 3. (Sep., 1993), pp. 624-638.
4. Zilber and Niven. 1995. "['Black' versus 'African-American': Are Whites' Political Attitudes Influenced by the Choice of Racial Labels?'](#)" *Social Science Quarterly* 76: 655-664.
5. William H. Riker; Peter C. Ordeshook, "[A Theory of the Calculus of Voting.](#)" *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 62, No. 1. (Mar., 1968), pp. 25-42.

SEPTEMBER 23th: Research Question Due (see [Research Design Instructions](#))

Assignment #4

(Due 09/22): In approximately 2 single-spaced pages, answer the following questions:

1. For each of the three articles, identify and summarize:
 - a. The research question
 - b. The theory
 - c. The main hypotheses tested by the authors
2. Choose one of the articles to focus on for this question. Critically evaluate the theory presented in the article using the criteria established in your readings. (Note that I don't expect that you will be able to cover ALL the criteria in your readings, but perhaps you could focus in on a few that seem important to you).

III. Research Designs: Experimental Designs (09/27, 09/29, 10/04)

1. Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (Chapter 3 – Basic Elements of Research; Chapter 5 – Experiments)
2. Campbell and Stanley, "[Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research.](#)" (pages 1-34; especially sections titled "Factors Jeopardizing Internal and External Validity," and "Three True Experimental Designs.") (Provided by instructor)
3. Mintz, Alex, Steven B. Redd and Arnold Vedlitz. 2006. "[Can We Generalize from Student Experiments to the Real World in Political Science, Military Affairs, and International Relations?'](#)" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50(5):757-776.
4. Druckman, James N., Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. 2006. "[The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 100(4): 627–35.

Applications

5. Iyengar, Shanto, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder. 1982. "[Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 76: 848-58.
6. Schram, Sanford F., Joe Soss, Richard C. Fording and Linda Houser. 2009. "[Deciding to Discipline: A Multi-Method Study of Race, Choice, and Punishment at the Frontlines of Welfare Reform.](#)" *American Sociological Review*, 74(3), 398-422.
7. 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* 102:33–48.

Assignment #5

(Due 10/04): In approximately 2 single-spaced pages, answer the following questions.

1. For each of the three application readings, identify and diagram (using the notation in Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias) the specific type of experimental design employed by the authors.
2. Choose one of the three studies to focus on for this question. Evaluate the internal validity and external validity of the study you have chosen.

IV. Research Designs: Non-Experimental/Quasi-Experimental Designs (10/06, 10/11, 10/13)

A. Overview

1. Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (Chapter 6 – Cross-Sectional and Quasi-Experimental Designs)
2. Gerring (Chapter 8)
3. Campbell and Stanley, "Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research." (remainder)
4. King, Keohane and Verba (Chapter 5, sections 5.2 - 5.6)

Applications

5. Stack, S. and Gunlach, J. (1992) "[The Effect of Country Music on Suicide.](#)" *Social Forces* 71: 211–18.

6. Lawrence S. Rothenberg; Mitchell S. Sanders, "[Severing the Electoral Connection: Shirking in the Contemporary Congress.](#)" *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 44, No. 2. (Apr., 2000), pp. 316-325. (Difference-in-difference)

Assignment #6

(Due 10/13): In approximately 2 single-spaced pages, answer the following questions.

1. For each of the two application readings, identify and diagram (using the notation in Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias) the specific type of experimental design employed by the authors.
2. Choose one of the three studies to focus on for this question. Evaluate the internal validity and external validity of the study you have chosen.

B. Additional Strategies for Improving Causal Inference when Using Nonexperimental Data (10/18, 10/20)

Applications

7. David S. Lee, Enrico Moretti, Matthew J. Butler. 2004. "[Do Voters Affect Or Elect Policies? Evidence From The U. S. House.](#)" *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 119:3, 807-859.
8. Alan Gerber. 1998. "[Estimating the Effect of Campaign Spending on Senate Election Outcomes Using Instrumental Variables.](#)" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (Jun., 1998), pp. 401-411.
9. Susan D. Hyde. 2007. "[The Observer Effect in International Politics: Evidence from a Natural Experiment.](#)" *World Politics*, Volume 60, Number 1, pp. 37-63.
10. Barabas, J. 2004. "[How Deliberation Affects Policy Opinions.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 98(4):687-702.

NO WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT THIS WEEK.

Please read these articles carefully and be prepared to discuss the following in class:

- A. The research question, theory/hypotheses, research design and findings.**
- B. For each article, what specific threats to internal validity do the authors claim to overcome with the research designs that they employ?**

V. Measurement: (10/25, 10/27)

1. Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (Chapter 7 – Measurement)
2. Carmines, Edward G. and Richard A. Zeller. 1979. [Reliability and Validity Assessment](#). Newbury Park, CA.:Sage Publications. (pp. 9-48)

3. King, Keohane and Verba (Chapter 5, Introduction and Section 5.1)

Applications

4. Zachary Elkins, "[Gradations of Deocracy? Empirical Tests of Alternative Conceptualizations.](#)" *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 44, No. 2. (Apr., 2000), pp. 293-300.
5. Edward N. Muller; Mitchell A. Seligson, "[Inequality and Insurgency.](#)" *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 81, No. 2. (Jun., 1987), pp. 425-452.
6. Charles D. Brockett, "[Measuring Political Violence and Land Inequality in Central America.](#)" *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 1. (Mar., 1992), pp. 169-176.

Assignment #7

(Due 10/27): In approximately 2 single-spaced pages, answer the following questions.

1. Summarize Elkins' critique of dichotomous measures of democracy and his strategies/findings concerning tests of validity and reliability. What does Elkins conclude? Is he correct? Why or why not?
2. Summarize Brockett's criticisms of the measurement choices made by Muller and Seligson. Are the problems he cites fatal to Muller and Seligson's findings? Why or why not?

VI. Sampling: (11/01, 11/03)

1. Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (Chapter 8 – Sampling and Sample Designs)
2. King, Keohane and Verba (Chapter 4)
3. Barbara Geddes. 1990. "[How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics.](#)" *Political Analysis*, 2:1, 131-150.

Applications

4. William Reed, "[A Unified Statistical Model of Conflict Onset and Escalation.](#)" *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Jan., 2000), pp. 84-93
5. Richard Timpone. 1998. "[Structure, Behavior and Voter Turnout in the United States.](#)" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92 (1): 145-158.

Assignment #8

(Due 11/03): In approximately 2 single-spaced pages, answer the following questions.

1. What is the problem of sample selection bias in social science research and how can it affect causal inference?
2. For each of the two application articles (Reed and Timpone), briefly summarize the nature of the selection bias problem and the implications that it has had for past research.

VII. Survey Research: (11/08, 11/10)

1. Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (Chapter 10 – Survey Research, Chapter 11 – Questionnaire Construction)

Applications

2. James H. Kuklinski; Michael D. Cobb; Martin Gilens, "[Racial Attitudes and the "New South."](#) *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 59, No. 2 (May, 1997), pp. 323-349.
3. Canache, Damarys, Mondak, Jeffery J., & Seligson, Mitchell A. (2001). "[Meaning and measurement in cross-national research on satisfaction with democracy.](#)" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 65, 506-528.

Assignment #9

(Due 11/10): In approximately 2 single-spaced pages, answer the following questions.

1. What is the source of response error that Kuklinski, Cobb and Gilens seek to correct for in their research and how do they do so? Briefly offer an evaluation of their findings. Are they sound?
2. What is the source of response error that Canache, Mondak and Seligson document? Summarize their findings. What implications might this have for past research on satisfaction with democracy?

VIII. Qualitative/Small-N Research (11/15, 11/17, 11/22)

1. Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (Chapter 9 – Observational Methods; Chapter 12 – Qualitative Research)
2. Gerring, (Chapters 9-10)
3. King, Keohane and Verba (Chapter 6)

4. James Mahoney. 2010. "[After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research.](#)" *World Politics* Volume 62, Number 1, pp. 120-147.
5. Dvora Yanow. 2003. "[Interpretive Political Science: What Makes This Not a Subfield of Qualitative Methods.](#)" Qualitative Methods Section (APSA) Newsletter, 2nd Issue, Fall 2003.

Applications

6. David J. Harding, Cybelle Fox, and Jal D. Mehta. 2002. "[Studying Rare Events through Qualitative Case Studies: Lessons From a Study of Rampage School Shootings.](#)" *Sociological Methods & Research*. 31(2): 174-217.
7. Janet Gilboy. 1992. "[Penetrability of Administrative Systems: Political 'Casework' and Immigration Inspections.](#)" *Law & Society Review*. 26: 273-314.

Assignment #10 (Your Final Essay Assignment!)

(Due 11/22): In approximately 2 single-spaced pages, answer the following questions for each of the 2 application articles.

1. Describe how/why qualitative methods were valuable to study the research questions addressed in the article.
2. What are the main weaknesses of the research, in your view?
3. Discuss how the research question might be tested using a quantitative/large-N design? Would this be preferable? Why or why not?

11/24 – THANKSGIVING (Academic Holiday)

IX. Ethics in Social Research (11/29, 12/01)

1. Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (Chapter 4 – Ethics in Social Research)
2. "Obedience" (video documentary)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3f6LLV3fkXg>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkmQZjZSjk4&feature=related>
3. Complete the "IRB" - "Initial HSP" online training course. Follow these instructions:
http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/ORIForms/42-CITI_instructions.pdf

X. Presentation of Research Designs (12/06, 12/08)

12/09: Final Draft of Research Design Due by **4:30pm (electronic OR printed copy)**

12/12: Take-Home Final Exam Administered

12/15: Final Due Date for Completion and Submission of Final Exam (4:30 p.m.)