

# Political Science 803: Experiments

## Spring 2020

**Class Time:** Thursdays 2:50pm-5:40pm

**Class Location:** Gambrell 335

**Instructor:** Dr. Elizabeth Connors

**Office:** Gambrell Hall 323

**Office Hours:** by appointment (please email)

**Email:** connors4@mailbox.sc.edu [Note: may take up to 24 hours to respond]

### Course Description

This course will use lectures, academic articles, discussions, an exam, and a research project—from beginning stages (research question) to end (writing the final paper and submitting it)—to introduce students to experimental political science. We will cover a variety of experimental methods that can be used to study attitudes and behaviors and will cover topics including theory development, conceptualization and measurement, hypothesis testing, validity, and causality. Many of the concepts will be demonstrated with published examples. Other than the exam, the major course requirement is a research project, which requires students to develop a research question and a study capable of testing it using the appropriate methods. Then, as a class, we will code up the survey, run it online, analyze the data, and write up a final paper. The hope is to finish this class with a piece submitted to a journal and eventually get it published.

### Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of POL 504 students will be able to:

1. Understand the challenges of establishing causal generalizations;
2. Understand the relationship between theory and evidence;
3. Develop original and practical solutions to test research puzzles and hypotheses; and
4. Critique and improve upon existing methods and published work.

### Required Texts

There are no required texts. All readings will be uploaded to Blackboard.

### Course Website

Blackboard will allow students to access course materials. Use this page to obtain readings, grades, and other announcements.

### Course Requirements

You are expected to attend class regularly and be prepared by reading the assigned material *before* class. You should also take notes during the lecture—you can do this with either a laptop or a notebook—I have no preference, but there is research that suggests taking notes by hand is more effective than by typing. *And*, not having a laptop saves you from yourself (e.g., going on Facebook or watching cat videos during class).

The exam is comprised of the reading material and lectures, so make sure to pay attention to *both* of these! The best way to do well in this course is to read the assigned material carefully and before class, attend every class session, take notes each lecture, study before the exam, and work

hard throughout the semester on the final project. You are encouraged to bring your readings to class, as we will be discussing them in detail. Also, feel free to ask questions during class or slow me down if you do not understand something—I want you to learn!

<b>Grading:</b>	<b>% of Final Grade</b>
Class Participation & Contributions	20%
Research Question	10%
Experimental Design	10%
Exam	20%
First Presentation	10%
Critique	10%
Final Paper & Presentation	20%

**Participation:** Students are expected to attend class and participate in discussions. If you have an emergency situation and cannot fulfill these requirements, you must let me know immediately. I reserve the right to give unannounced pop quizzes that will contribute toward the participation grade.

**Exam:** The exam will test your knowledge of the material presented as well as your ability to apply the techniques we cover—it will be multiple choice. There will be no make-up exam except under the most extraordinary circumstances as determined by the instructor. “Extraordinary circumstances” consist of severe student illness or death in the family. In either case, adequate documentation will be required. In the event that you are unable to take the exam you must contact me no later than the day of the exam. Any make-up exams will be in a different format (e.g., essay, oral).

**Final Project and Presentation:** Throughout the semester we will be working on a final research project as a class that incorporates the principles and techniques that you will have learned. We will design, code, run, analyze, and write up this project as a class—and, if we are satisfied with the end result, submit it to an academic journal. Specific objectives for the research design project and presentation will be discussed in class at a later date.

The first few steps will be done alone as we choose a research question and design. Your proposed research question will be based on the suggested readings at the end of the syllabus—this should only be a paragraph long but *specific*. Your experimental design should be to answer your research question and should only be a page (single-spaced) but also *very specific*. As you think about these two assignments, consider the following:

- This will need to be an online survey experiment
- What are your conceptual, research, and statistical hypotheses
- What is your general design?
- What is(are) your independent variable(s)—i.e., what is your treatment and what is your control? What are you *varying*?
- What is(are) your dependent variable(s)—i.e., what are your outcome variables?
- What non-experimental demographic variables do you need to measure so that we can understand the composition of our samples? (measure these pre-treatment!)

- What non-experimental demographic variables do you need to measure because they might change the effect of your treatment (i.e., moderate your treatment effect or interact with your treatment)? (measure these pre-treatment!)
- Specifically, how are *all* of these variables operationalized?
- What steps can you take to minimize extraneous or confounding variables?
- Other than your treatment, do you need to randomize anything else

Once these steps are completed, I will choose among the proposed research questions and experimental designs and we will settle on one *to complete as a class*. There will be assignments as well as labs that will give us all a chance to work together—collecting and analyzing data—and a chance for you to ask questions to your colleagues and to me. Your final paper will be based on this class research question, design, and results, but will be written alone. This should be a maximum 4,000 words and single-spaced with a Times 12-point font. You will also complete a critique of a colleague’s work and then edit your own paper based on critiques of your paper. We will end the semester with everyone’s final papers and presentations based on the class research question, experimental design, and results. If we feel satisfied with our findings and papers, we will work to turn it into a journal submission!

Final Grading Scheme:

92 – 100	A
89 – 91	B+
83 – 88	B
80 – 82	C+
74 – 79	C
71 – 73	D+
65 - 73	D
0 - 64	F

# Schedule

## January 16<sup>th</sup>—Week 1

Introduction

Course Expectations

For Next Class:

- Read all 4 articles
- Look at potential research topics (research questions due January 30<sup>th</sup>)

## January 23<sup>rd</sup>—Week 2

The Basics of Research

Causal Inference (Part I)

General Design

- Elster—Generating Hypotheses
- Brooks (2011)—Normative Questions & Research
- Brader (2005)—Emotions in Political Advertisements
- Turner (2007)—Effect of Source Cues

For Next Class:

- Read all 5 articles
- Look at potential research topics (research questions due January 30<sup>th</sup>)

## January 30<sup>th</sup>—Week 3

[Research Questions Due—1 paragraph]

Causal Inference (Part II)

Construct Validity (part I)

- King et al. (2004)—Measurement in Survey Research
- Klar et al. (2019)—Posttreatment Bias
- Clifford and Jerit (2015)—Increasing Respondent Attention
- Jamieson and Weller (2019)—Incentives on Effort and Knowledge Accuracy
- Ciuk and Yost (2019)—Item Non-Response

For Next Class:

- Read all 5 articles
- Consider experimental design—*must be online survey experiment*—for research question (experimental designs due February 13<sup>th</sup>)

## February 6<sup>th</sup>—Week 4

Construct Validity (part II)

- Guess (2014)—Online Media Exposure Measurement
- Kraft (2018)—Measuring Open-Ended Responses

Statistical Power

- Zaller (2002)—Statistical Power

Settings

- Arceneaux et al. (2012)—Choice in an Experimental Setting

Interactions & Moderation vs. Mediation

- Jerit et al. (2013)—Settings & Interactions

For Next Class:

- Read all 5 articles
- Consider experimental design—*must be online survey experiment*—for research question (experimental designs due February 13<sup>th</sup>)

**February 13<sup>th</sup>—Week 5**

[Experimental Designs Due—1 page single-spaced]

Sample Considerations

- Barabas and Jerit (2010)—External Validity of Survey Experiments
- Berinsky et al. (2012)—Mturk Samples
- Druckman and Kam (2011)—Student Samples
- Krupnikov and Levine (2014)—Sample Comparisons
- Klar and Leeper 2019—Purposive Sampling

For Next Class:

- Read all 5 articles
- Study for exam (exam on February 27<sup>th</sup>)

**February 20<sup>th</sup>—Week 6**

Semi-Experimental Data

- Coppock and Green (2015)—Voting as Habit Forming
- Gerber and Green (2000)—Example of Clean Field Experiment
- Huber and Arceneaux (2007)—Effects of Presidential Advertising

Research on Human Subjects

- Connors et al. (2019)—Research Transparency & Human Subjects

Review for Exam

For Next Class:

- Study for exam (exam on February 27<sup>th</sup>)

**February 27<sup>th</sup>—Week 7**

[Exam Today]

For Next Class:

- Create 5-minute presentation of research question and experimental design (again, this must be an online survey experiment)

**March 5<sup>th</sup>—Week 8**

[Presentations Due—5 minutes long]

Exam Feedback

Discussion of Final Project

Presentations of Research Questions and Experimental Designs

For Next Class:

- Complete IRB certification

**March 15<sup>th</sup>—No Class (Spring Break)**

### **March 19<sup>th</sup>—Week 9**

Lab:

- Submit IRB application
- Code Survey Experiment (Qualtrics)
- Code Survey Experiment (Amazon's Mechanical Turk—Mturk)

For Next Class:

- Work on literature review (paper due April 9<sup>th</sup>)

### **March 26<sup>th</sup>—Week 10**

Lab:

- Run Survey Experiment
- Watch Qualtrics, Mturk, and Email (make sure everything is running correctly)
- Create Paper Template

For Next Class:

- Finish literature review and fit to paper template (paper due April 9<sup>th</sup>)

### **April 2<sup>nd</sup>—Week 11**

Lab:

- Analyze Results
- Conduct Robustness Checks
- Discuss Substantive Findings from Empirical Results

For Next Class:

- Add results and discussion to paper (paper due April 9<sup>th</sup>)

### **April 9<sup>th</sup>—Week 12**

[Paper Due]

Lab:

- Exchange Papers with Classmates
- Begin Critique of Articles (critiques due April 16<sup>th</sup>)

For Next Class:

- Finish critique of articles (critiques due April 16<sup>th</sup>)

### **April 16<sup>th</sup>—Week 13**

[Critique Due]

Lab:

- Begin Incorporating Feedback

For Next Class:

- Update paper (final papers due April 23<sup>rd</sup>)
- Create 5-minute paper presentation (presentations due April 23<sup>rd</sup>)

### **April 23<sup>rd</sup>—Week 14**

[Final Paper & Presentation Due]

## Literature to Inspire Final Project

- Berinsky, Adam J. 2004. "Can We Talk? Self-Presentation and the Survey Response." *Political Psychology* 25(4): 643-659.
- Carlson, Taylor N., and Jaime E. Settle. 2016. "Political Chameleons: An Exploration of Conformity in Political Discussions." *Political Behavior* 38(4): 817-859.
- Cialdini, Robert B., Raymond R. Reno, and Carl A. Kallgren. 1990. "A Focus Theory of Normative Conduct: Recycling the Concept of Norms to Reduce Littering in Public Places." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 58(6): 1015.
- Connors, Elizabeth C. 2019. "The Social Dimension of Political Values." *Political Behavior*, doi: 10.1007/s11109-019-09530-3.
- Connors, Elizabeth C., Yanna Krupnikov, John Barry Ryan. 2019. "How Transparency Affects Survey Responses." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 83(S1): 185-209.
- 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(1): 33-48.
- Huckfeldt, Robert, Jeffrey J. Mondak, Matthew Hayes, Matthew T. Pietryka, and Jack Reilly. 2013. "Networks, Interdependence, and Social Influence in Politics." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, edited by Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy. Oxford University Press.
- Huddy, Leonie, Liliana Mason, and Lene Aarøe. 2015. "Expressive Partisanship: Campaign Involvement, Political Emotion, and Partisan Identity." *American Political Science Review* 109(1): 1-17.
- Iyengar, Shanto, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2012. "Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76(3): 405-431.
- Iyengar, Shanto, Tobias Konitzer, and Kent Tedin. 2018. "The Home as a Political Fortress: Family Agreement in an Era of Polarization." *Journal of Politics* 80(4): 1326-1338.
- Klar, Samara. 2014. "Partisanship in a Social Setting." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(3): 687-704.
- Klar, Samara, and Yanna Krupnikov. 2016. *Independent Politics: How American Disdain for Parties Leads to Political Inaction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Klar, Samara, Yanna Krupnikov, and John Ryan. 2018. "Affective Polarization or Partisan Disdain?: Untangling a Dislike for the Opposing Party from a Dislike of Partisanship." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 82(2): 379-390.

- Levendusky, Matthew and Neil Malhotra. 2016a. "(Mis)perceptions of Partisan Polarization in the American Public." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 80(S1): 378-391.
- Levendusky, Matthew and Neil Malhotra. 2016b. "Does Media Coverage of Partisan Polarization Affect Political Attitudes?" *Political Communication* 33(2): 283-301.
- Mutz, Diana C. 2002. "Cross-cutting Social Networks: Testing Democratic Theory in Practice." *American Political Science Review* 96(1): 111–126.
- Westwood, Sean, Erik Peterson, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2019. "Are There Still Limits on Partisan Prejudice?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 83(3): 584-597.
- White, Ismail K., Chryl N. Laird, and Troy D. Allen. 2014. "Selling Out?: The Politics of Navigating Conflicts Between Racial Group Interest and Self-Interest." *American Political Science Review* 108(4): 783-800.
- Zaller, John, and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36(3): 579- 616.