

Political Science 504: Research Design

for M.A. Students in Political Psychology

Class Time: Mondays 10:00am-1:00pm

Class Location: Social and Behavioral Sciences, N703

Instructor: Professor Elizabeth C. Connors

Office: Social and Behavioral Sciences, S749

Office Hours: Monday 2:00pm-5:00pm or by appointment

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Course Description

This course introduces students to the logic underlying the scientific study of political psychology and politics. We will cover a variety of research methods that can be used to study attitudes and opinions in addition to other possible outcomes and applications. Major course topics include theory development, conceptualization and measurement, hypothesis testing, validity, and causality. Many of the concepts will be demonstrated with published examples. Other than two exams, the major course requirement is an independent research design, which requires students to develop a research question and a study capable of testing it using the appropriate methods. It is advantageous to take this course in addition to or along with graduate-level classes on statistics being offered in the Department of Political Science.

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. The Blackboard system is available from any computer with access to the Internet at the following website, <http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu>. Logging into Blackboard requires a NET ID and a Password. Use this page to obtain additional readings, electronic copies of assignments, and other course handouts and resources.

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 exams are 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, and, obviously, study before the exams. You are encouraged to bring your textbook and readings to class, as my lectures neatly coincide with the assigned readings. Also, feel free to ask questions during class or slow me down if you do not understand something—I want you to learn!

Grading:	% of Final Grade
Class Participation	25%
Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Final Project and Presentation	25%

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. The instructor reserves the right to give unannounced pop quizzes that will contribute toward the participation grade. In general, aim for quality rather than quantity when it comes to participation.

Exams: The exams will test your knowledge of the material presented as well as your ability to apply the techniques we cover. Both exams will be multiple choice, with 50 questions each, and they will be cumulative in the sense that anything covered up to the day of the exam may be relevant. There will be no make-up exams 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 an 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: By the end of the semester you will be asked to submit a final research design project (which need not include data analyses) that incorporates the principles and techniques you will have learned. The best projects will have the potential to be published one day. Specific objectives for the research design project and presentation will be discussed in class at a later date.

Final Grading Scheme

935 - 1000 points	A
895 - 934	A-
865 - 894	B+
835 - 864	B
795 - 834	B-
765 - 794	C+
735 - 764	C
695 - 734	C-
665 - 694	D+
595 - 664	D
0 - 594	F

Subject to Change Notice

All material, assignments, and due dates are subject to change (with prior notice of course). It is your responsibility to review the course site regularly to stay up to date on any potential changes.

Disability Support Services (DSS) Statement

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services (631) 632-6748 or <http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/>. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website: <http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities/asp>.

Academic Integrity Statement

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instance of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>

Critical Incident Statement

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, and/or inhibits students' ability to learn.

Schedule

August 28th—Week 1

Introduction & Course Expectations

September 11th—Week 2

The Basics of Research—What is a theory? What is a research question? What is a hypothesis? What is operationalization? How do you make a general idea become concrete research? Internal validity, external validity, construct validity, statistical conclusion validity

- Elster—Generating Hypotheses
- Brooks (2011)—Normative Questions & Research

September 18th—Week 3

Experiments 1—General Design

- Brader (2005)—Emotions in Political Advertisements
- Turner (2007)—Effect of Source Cues

September 25th—Week 4

Experiments 2—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

October 2nd—Week 5

Observational Data

- Barabas (2006)—The Stock Market & Public Opinion
- Berinsky and Lenz (2011)—Education and Political Participation
- Fraile and Gomez (2015)—Latin America Gender Gap in Political Knowledge
- Kohut et al (2012)—Representativeness of Public Opinion Surveys

October 9th—Week 6

Semi-Observational 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

Review for Exam 1

October 16th—Week 7

Exam 1

October 23rd—Week 8

Exam 1 Feedback

Research on Human Subjects—Ethics

- Connors et al (under review)—Research Transparency & Human Subjects

October 30th—Week 9

Discussion of Final Project Expectations

Measurement—Survey Wording, Operationalization, Construct Validity

- Clifford and Jerit (2015)—Increasing Respondent Attention
- Guess (2014)—Online Media Exposure Measurement
- King et al (2004)—Measurement in Survey Research
- Kraft (forthcoming)—Measuring Open-Ended Responses

November 6th—Week 10

Conclusion on Research Design—Statistical Power, Settings, Moderation/Interaction vs. Mediation

- Arceneaux et al (2012)—Choice in an Experimental Setting
- Jerit et al (2013)—Settings & Interactions
- Zaller (2002)—Statistical Power

Review for Exam 2

November 13th—Week 11

Exam 2

November 20th—Week 12

Project Preparation Week—*No Class Meeting, One-on-One Meetings Instead*

November 27th—Week 13

Exam 2 Feedback

Project Workshop: Come prepared with your project for discussion

December 4th—Week 14

Project Presentations

December 11th—Week 15

Projects Due by midnight