
POLS 505
Research Design and Methods
<http://www.uic.edu/classes/pols/pols404/>
TH 6:00-8:30
BSB 1171

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Course Description and Objectives

This course will introduce students to the methods of social science inquiry, focusing on questions, issues and practices within the discipline of political science. Unlike most graduate courses, in this course we will focus on learning *how* to know (inquiry), rather than *what* to know. In other words, this course is about investigating relationships, designing studies to test relationships, and critiquing the methods employed by other researchers in existing studies of political and social phenomena. The logic of inquiry is not limited to specific approaches, phenomena, or types of observation. It is therefore worth noting that the oft cited distinction between quantitative and qualitative research refers only to the type of observation the researcher makes and not to the actual method of inquiry that is used. The goal of all social science research is to make valid descriptive and especially explanatory inferences, irrespective of the topic, theory, type of observation or method of analysis.

Though our emphasis will be on identifying, critiquing and applying various research designs we will also spend considerable time on the nuts and bolts of social science inquiry: theory, observation (data collection), and analysis. By the end of the semester, students should have a more sophisticated understanding of the logic of inquiry and also be proficient in reading, interpreting, and evaluating research reports and studies found in academic journals and books. Finally, as the list of readings should indicate, we will be examining a wide array of topics and studies conducted by social scientists with vastly different interests and approaches. This should hopefully give students a good idea of what possibilities exist and help them identify their own areas of interest.

Course Format

The first few weeks of class will focus more generally on the basic issues behind all research designs—developing theory, specifying testable hypotheses from theory, assessing the validity of the research design employed, evaluating findings and implications of the research, etc. During these first weeks we will also explore the obstacles all research designs face and survey some available strategies to deal with these obstacles. During these first weeks, I will take primary responsibility for presenting the material and leading class discussions.

For the remainder of the course, we will examine in detail the various methods and techniques of conducting social scientific research. While the readings will include some instructional information regarding the nuts and bolts of these methods, for the most part, they will present applications and illustrations of these methods for specific social scientific theories. We will typically spend the first part of our class time discussing the specific research design and issues under consideration. The majority of the class time will be devoted to a discussion of the articles illustrating the particular method. Each week designated students will provide a brief presentation of these articles and generally lead to the discussion of these readings.

Course Materials

There are three required texts for this course:

- ❖ Becker, Howard S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book or Article*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ❖ King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- ❖ Fankfort-Nachmias, Chava and David Nachmias. 2000. *Research Methods in the Social Sciences, Sixth Edition*. NY: Worth Publishers.

These texts are available at the University Book Store (750 South Halsted Street, 413-5500). If you have any trouble obtaining the books, please notify me as soon as possible. In addition to the three required texts, we will be reading a number of book chapters and articles from academic journals. Many of these are available from JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org/>) or other collections of electronic journals on the library's website. Readings available electronically are indicated with a (☒) in the schedule of readings; remaining readings must be photocopied by students.

Course Requirements¹

This course is structured as a seminar, so attendance and class participation are not only required, but constitute a sizable portion of your grade. You will be expected to have read all of the materials for the week in advance so that you can participate meaningfully in class discussion. Starting January 30, students will submit weekly **1-page** reaction papers on any of the issues or topics included in the empirical readings for that week. Students must submit reaction papers for 11 of 12 weeks. All students must write a reaction paper for the Becker book, which is assigned for spring break week (this is light reading). Reaction papers must be submitted by 5:00 pm on the Wednesday before class. If you submit the assignment via email, you will receive a response from me to acknowledge receipt. If you don't get a response, I did not receive the paper. If you are prone to computer problems, you should avoid submitting your papers at the last minute. Late papers will be returned to students with comments and feedback, but will not be given a grade. In other words, ***students will not get credit for late assignments or assignments that have been lost in cyberspace. There are no exceptions to this policy.***

Reaction papers should include critical analyses of the research conducted in the readings. They should not be summaries of the readings. Casually reading the assigned articles is not likely to produce very good results. You should therefore begin reading well before each class meeting and take notes on what you have read. When you finish reading an article, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- ❖ What theory guided the work? What was the research question the author(s) investigated?
- ❖ What specific hypotheses were tested?
- ❖ What data were used? What method was used to gather the data?
- ❖ Were the data sufficient and appropriate for testing the hypotheses?
- ❖ What methods of analysis were used to test the hypotheses? Did the author(s) make the methods clear? Was sufficient information presented so that you could evaluate the methods?
- ❖ What conclusions did the author(s) reach? Were these supported by the data and methods used?
- ❖ If you were to repeat or extend this study, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?

¹ If you have any conditions or challenges that may make it difficult for you to meet the requirements of this course, or that may cause you to require extra time on assignments, please let me know within the first two weeks of class so that we can make appropriate and equitable alternative arrangements.

In addition to writing weekly reaction papers, students will also be responsible for leading the discussion of the specific readings each week. As a discussion leader, students should first present a brief summary (no more than 5 minutes) of the research and then spend about 10 minutes critiquing various aspects of the research and raising questions about the overall method and findings presented in the article. In most cases, the discussion leader will not have more than 15 minutes in total for his/her presentation. After the presentation, the class (myself included) will have the opportunity to ask questions of the presenter and discuss the article in more detail. I will serve as both moderator and participant in our weekly class discussions. While I don't anticipate the need, should there be a lack of participation amongst other students and/or should the quality of these discussions be sub par due to students' lack of careful reading, I reserve the right to give in-class quizzes on the reading material.

The final component of the course will consist of approximately 5 assignments and a final course project (a carefully developed research proposal on the topic of the student's choice). These assignments will focus on different aspects of the research enterprise and most will be geared toward the final research proposal that students will submit. For the most part, the assignments will serve as stepping-stones for the final research proposal and will ensure that students keep on track with the project. These assignments must be turned in by midnight on the day they are due. The final research proposal will be presented to the class and submitted on Thursday, May 2 (final exam week). Students will receive a detailed handout describing the components, expectations, and grading of the research proposal.

Grades will be determined as follows:

Assignments (approximately 5):	25%
Reaction papers (11):	25%
Presentations and class participation:	25%
Final research proposal:	25%

Course Topics and Schedule of Readings

Jan 10



Course Introduction

Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, Chpts 1 & 2

Jan 17



The Foundations of Empirical Research

Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, Chpts 3, 4, & 7

Jan 24



Causality and Observation in Designing Research

King, Keohane & Verba, Chpts. 1 -4



Assignment 1 due

Jan 31



Experimental Designs

Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, Chpt 5



Kinder, Donald R. and Thomas R. Palfrey. 1993. "On Behalf of an Experimental Political Science." *In Experimental Foundations of Political Science*, eds. Donald Kinder and Thomas Palfrey, 1-39. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.



Weiss, Janet A. 1982. "Coping with Complexity: An Experimental Study of Public Policy Decision-Making." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* (1): 66-87. [Reprinted in Kinder & Palfrey (1993): 185-208.]



Gerber, Alan S & Donald P Green. 2000. "The effect of a nonpartisan get out the vote drive: an experimental study." *Journal of Politics* 62 (3): 846.



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.



Turn in reaction paper Wed., Jan. 30

Feb 7



Quasi-Experimental Designs and Evaluation Research

Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, Chpt 6



Campbell, Donald T. and H. Laurence Ross. 1968. "The Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding: Time Series Data in Quasi-Experimental Analysis." *Law and Society Review* 3 (August): 33-53.



Bird, Graham. 2001. "IMF Programs: Do They Work? Can They be Made to Work Better?" *World Development* 29 (11): 1849-65.



Schneider, Mark, Paul Teske, Melissa Marschall, Michael Mintrom & Christine Roch. 1997. "Institutional Arrangements and the Creation of Social Capital: The Effects of Public School Choice." *American Political Science Review* 91, no. 1 (March): 82-93.



Peffley, Mark & Jon Hurwitz. 1992. "International Events and Foreign Policy Beliefs: Public Response to Changing Soviet-U.S. Relations." *American Journal of Political Science* 36 (2): 431-61.



Assignment 2 due; Turn in reaction paper Wed., Feb. 6

Feb 14



Survey Research

Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, Chpts 8 & 10



Brehm, John. 1989. "How Survey Nonresponse Damages Political Analysis."

Presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Assoc., Atlanta.



Feldman, Stanley and John Zaller. 1992. "The Political Culture of Ambivalence: Ideological Responses to the Welfare State." *American Journal of Political Science* 36, (February): 268-307.



Gibson, James L. and Amanda Gouws. 2000. "Social Identities and Political Intolerance: Linkages Within the South African Mass Public." *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (2): 278-92.



Turn in reaction paper Wed., Feb. 13

Feb 21

Unobtrusive Research: Direct Observation, Secondary Data and Document Analysis



Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, Chpt 13



Schneider, Mark, Melissa Marschall, Christine Roch, and Paul Teske. 1999. "Heuristics, Low Information Rationality, and Choosing Public Schools: Broken Windows as Shortcuts to Information about School Performance." *Urban Affairs Review* 34 (May): 729-41.



Jacobs, Lawrence R. 1992. "Institutions and Culture: Health Policy and Public Opinion in the U.S. and Britain." *World Politics* 44 (January): 179-209.



Abramson, Paul R. and William Claggett. 1986. "Race-Related Differences in Self-Reported and Validated Turnout in 1984." *Journal of Politics* 48 (May): 412-22.



Segal, Jeffrey A. and Albert D. Cover. 1989. "Ideological Values and the Votes of Supreme Court Justices." *American Political Science Review* 83 (June): 558-65.



Turn in reaction paper Wed., Feb. 20

Feb 28

Cross-Level Designs/Contextual Analysis



Przeworski, Adam and Henry Teune. 1970. Chpt. 3, "System Level Variables: Changing the Level of Analysis" (pgs. 47-73). In *Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. NY: John Wiley & Sons.



Marsden, Peter V. 1990. "Network Data and Measurement." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 16: 435-63.



Oliver, J. Eric. 2000. "City Size and Civic Involvement in Metropolitan America." *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (June): 361-74.



Huckfeldt, Robert, Paul Allen Beck, Russell Dalton, and Jeffrey Levine. 1995. "Political Environments, Cohesive Social Groups, and the Communication of Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science* 39 (4): 1025-54.



Turn in reaction paper Wed., Feb. 27

March 7

Field Research Methods I: Participant Observation & Elite Interviewing



Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, Chpts 9 & 12



Berry, Jeffrey M. "Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing." 2001. Paper prepared for delivery at the Workshop on Elite Interviewing, Political Organizations and Parties Section, American Political Science Association, San Francisco, Aug. 2



Fenno, Richard F. 1978. Introduction (pgs. xi-xvi), Chpt. 3, "Home Style: Presentation of Self I (pgs. 54-100), Appendix, "Notes on Method: Participant Observation" (pgs. 249-96). In *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. NY: HarperCollins.



Van Schendelen M.P.C.M. 1984. "Interviewing Members of Parliament." *Political Methodology* 10 (3): 301-21.



Turn in reaction paper Wed., March 6

March 14

Field Research Methods II: Ethnographic Studies, Fieldwork Roles & In-depth Interviewing



Weinberger, Katinka and Johannes Paul Jütting. 2001. "Women's Participation in Local Organizations: Conditions and Constraints." *World Development* 29 (8): 1391-1404.



Venkatesh, Sudhir Alladi. 1997. "The Social Organization of Street Gang Activity in an Urban Ghetto." *American Journal of Sociology* 103 (1): 82-111



Cress, Daniel M. and David A. Snow. 2000. "The Outcome of Homeless Mobilization: The Influence of Organization, Disruption, Political Mediation, and Framing." *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (4): 1063-1104.



Assignment 3 due; Turn in reaction paper Wed., March 13

March 21 Writing in Social Science



Becker. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists*: All.

*Spring Break: Class does not meet.



Turn in reaction paper Wed., March 27

March 28 Longitudinal Designs and Issues



Ragsdale, Lyn and John J. Theis. 1997. "The Institutionalization of the American Presidency, 1924-92." *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (4): 1280-1318.



Massey, Douglas and Kristin E. Espinosa. 1997. "What's Driving Mexico-U.S. Migration? A Theoretical, Empirical and Policy Analysis." *American Journal of Sociology* 102 (4): 939-99.



Eichenberg, Richard C. and Russell J. Dalton. 1993. "Europeans and the European Community: The Dynamics of Public Support for Integration." *International Organization* 47 (4): 507-34.



Meffert, Michael, Helmut Norpoth & Anirudh V. Ruhil. 2001. "Realignment and Macropartisanship." *American Political Science Review* 95 (4): 953-62.



Turn in reaction paper Wed., March 27

April 4 Small-N Designs, Methods and Inference



King, Keohane & Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*, Chpts. 5 & 6.



Mahoney, James. 2000. "Strategies of Causal Inference in Small-N Analysis." *Sociological Methods and Research* 28 (4): 387-408.



Assignment 4 due; Turn in reaction paper Wed., April 3

April 11 Historical and Comparative Case Studies



Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2:131-52.



Lustik, Ian S. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias." *American Political Science Review* 90 (3): 605-18.



John, Peter and Alistair Cole. 2000. "When Do Institutions, Policy Sectors, and Cities Matter? Comparing Networks of Local Policy Makers in Britain and France." *Comparative Political Studies* 33 (2): 248-68.



Turn in reaction paper Wed., April 10

April 18 Formal Models



Fiorina, Morris P. 1975. "Formal Models in Political Science." *American Journal of Political Science* 14, no. 1 (February): 133-59.



Karklins, Rasma and Roger Petersen. 1993. "Decision Calculus of Protestors and Regimes: Eastern Europe 1989." *Journal of Politics* 55 (3): 588-614.



Riker, William H. 1982. Chpt. 1, "The Connection Between the Theory of Social Choice and the Theory of Democracy" (pgs. 1-19), Chpt. 2, "Different Choices from Identical Values" (pgs. 21-40), Chpt. 3, "Simple Majority Decision" (pgs. 41-64). In *Liberalism Against Populism*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.



Assignment 5 due; Turn in reaction paper Wed., April 17.

April 25 Course wrap-up

May 2 Final Presentations