

POLS 208: Research Design

Emory University

Fall 2016

Meeting room: Anthropology 303
Meeting times: Tuesday and Wednesday, 8:30am – 9:45pm
Instructor: Jeffrey K. Staton
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Office hours: Tuesday, 10:00am–11:30 am or by appointment

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the theory and method of contemporary political analysis. The course covers how to formulate research questions, theoretical models and empirical hypotheses; how to design a research plan; and how to communicate the results of a study. The course introduces common research strategies for descriptive and causal inference, which students will use to conduct original research in a group setting. POLS 208 is mandatory for majors in Political Science or International Studies at Emory University. The department strongly encourages all students to take this course during their first two years to prepare themselves for upper-level coursework.

Course Goal

The goal of this course is to prepare you to read, interpret, critique and construct research in political science. In particular, you will be able to evaluate strategies for descriptive and causal inference in political science applications.

Required Texts

Please purchase both of the following texts, which are available in the Emory bookstore.

Dahlia K Remler and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. *Research methods in practice: Strategies for description and causation*. Sage Publications, 2nd edition, 2015.

All other readings on the syllabus are available through the the Emory Libraries Reserves Direct system, <http://ereserves.library.emory.edu> and via the course page on Canvas <http://classes.emory.edu>

Software

Quantitative social science research requires the use of computers to analyze data. We will be using a free statistical software package called **R** and a front end to that package called **RStudio**. Using a free package allows you to work on your own computers and save money. You should attend all classes and recitations to learn how to use R for each assignment and to budget time on assignments for the inevitable trial and error that will occur while learning to use it. Over

the course of the term, we will also produce notes that will help you complete specific tasks in R. This class, though, is not a test of your R ability; you should always feel free to ask the professor or teaching assistant for help.

Grading and Evaluation

Your final grade is a weighted average of the following components:

Grades in the course will be based on the following items:

1. Discussion section and Lab assignments: 10%
2. Midterm Exam: in-class, on ????: 20%
3. Final Exam: in-class, on ???: 30%
4. Research Project: email: on ????: 40%

Discussion Section In addition to the bi-weekly lectures, each of you is required to attend a laboratory session once per week. The purpose of the lab sessions will be to assist you with learning the statistical software employed in the class, conducting data analysis for your lab assignments, and the design, analysis and write-up of your research project. In addition, you can get extra assistance from your TA on questions surrounding the lecture material, course assignments, computer software, exams, or any other area of concern.

Attendance and class preparation. Attendance is mandatory in this class. This includes coming to class on time. The exams will cover both what is included in the readings and what is taught in lecture. Since not everything I discuss in class will be in the course reading material, you will be at a significant disadvantage if you miss class. You are also responsible for consulting the syllabus and reading all of the assigned chapters and articles prior to each class. Doing so will considerably increase the value to you of the class meetings.

Midterm and Final Exams. An in-class midterm exam will be give on ????. An in-class final exam will be given on ??? (the regularly schedule exam period). Review sessions will be help prior to the exams. The format of the exams will be discussed in the time period leading up to each exam.

Missed exams. Missed exams may be re-taken under the following circumstances only:

1. Death in the immediate family (parent, spouse, sibling) within two weeks before the exam.
2. Participation in an official Emory-sponsored academic or sporting event.
3. Unforeseeable medical emergency affecting yourself, your spouse, or your child (something beyond feeling under the weather—car accident, major sickness, or the like).

In the case of reasons (1) or (2), you must give me at least 24 hours advance notice (such as an email or phone call) that you will miss the exam or it may not be made up. I may require supporting documentation. Conflicts with a work schedule and leaving for a non-academic trip or vacation are not an excuse to miss an exam or any other assignment in this class; I suggest that you consult the course schedule in advance and drop the course if you cannot be present for the classes and assignments.

Research project (30%) Each student will complete an individual research project . The results of the project will be communicated via a research paper. The final draft of this paper will be due on ??? by 11:59 pm. The project will involve original empirical research on a topic of the student's choosing that addresses a theoretically-grounded research question of interest to political scientists. The student will be expected to design and carry out a study to evaluate a single hypothesis or set of hypotheses pertaining to the political phenomenon under study. Your goal will be to use an empirical study to draw a causal inference related to your hypothesis. For example, you might seek to answer whether a decrease in economic growth causes states to be vulnerable to regime change. Each student should begin to consider possible research topics as soon as possible. Specifically, projects develop in the following stages.

1. Topic Proposal (September ??) Students must propose a research topic in writing by September 2??. You will turn in your proposal via CanvasCanvas. A research topic describes generally the subject of your analysis. For example, topics include concepts like violent conflict, terrorism, voting behavior, economic development, rights protection, or government formation. Your teams proposal should specify a topic and suggest several lines of inquiry that might be of interest to you. So, for example, suppose that you are interested in the topic of violent conflict. You might be interested in understanding why very weak states sometimes engage in conflict with very powerful states. You might also be interested in the ways that conflict might influence development or the distribution of wealth. The instructor will approve topics on September ?? or require the team to make a new proposal.
2. Literature Reviews (October ?) Each student must conduct a literature review. Your literature review should summarize at least 15 academic articles on your topic. A summary of the literature review is due via Canvas on October ?. We will discuss the precise format of this summary in class.
3. Research question (October ?) SEach student must propose their final research questions via Canvas by October ??. A research question proposal must offer a precise, researchable question. So, for example, whereas regime survival is a topic, it is not a research question. A research question on the topic of regime survival is Do natural resource reserves destabilize democratic regimes? The research question proposal should articulate why this question is important and what implications there will be of answering it correctly.
4. Research plan (November ?) Students will submit a research plan via Canvas on November ??, which will serve as a first draft for your final paper.
5. Final draft (December ?) The final draft is due on December ? by 11:59 pm, as described above. A final paper should include the following components:
 - (a) An introduction in which you explain the relevance of the topic and specify your research question.
 - (b) A literature review in which you discuss prior efforts to answer this question.
 - (c) A theoretical argument (this does not need to be an original argument. You can "borrow" one from your literature review). This argument should give an answer to the research question you propose. It should provide an explanation. So, if you are asking whether natural resources destabilize states, then your argument has to explain the mechanism by which it does or does not.

- (d) An empirical implication of your argument, which you can test empirically (using a quantitative or qualitative design).
- (e) An empirical design section, in which you explain how you will use observable information to draw a causal inference. This section should include a discussion of the measurement of your key concepts.
- (f) A results section in which you present the outcomes of your study. Your results section should also address threats to your inference.
- (g) A conclusion that relates your study back to the general topic. You should discuss implications of your research and new questions that have emerged.

In addition, you must submit to our course Canvas site a replication folder. Your replication folder should contain the original data that you used for your study. You should also include a replication statement, outlining the procedures that you used to draw the inferences you drew. The goal is to make it possible for another person to be able to conduct the same study without having to speak to you about what you did. We will speak in class about precisely how you can ensure that your study can be replicated. Finally, please include an electronic copy of your paper.

Final Course Grades

Final course letter grades will reflect the Department of Political Science's grading standards, detailed below. Clearly, it is impossible for each assessment to reflect the standard exactly. Instead, the assessments, taken as a whole, are designed to produce a final grade that reflects the departments standards.

A Exceptional Performance Consistently outstanding work on all course-related tasks at a level that distinguishes the student from other members of the class. A comprehensive and incisive command of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A frequently demonstrated exceptional capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. The ability to master and integrate large amounts of factual material and abstract theories. An outstanding ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

A- Excellent Performance Consistently strong work on all course-related tasks. A comprehensive command of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A clearly demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. Understands well and can integrate the relevant factual and theoretical material central to the course. A strong ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

B+ Very Good Performance Consistently above average work on all course-related tasks. A very good grasp of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A generally demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical, and logical thinking. A very good command of factual and theoretical material, and some capacity to integrate the two. A solid ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

B Good Performance Good and generally consistent work on all course-related tasks. A general understanding of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. Modest evidence of the capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. A good understanding of factual and theoretical material, but limited evidence of the capacity to integrate the two. A basic ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

B- Satisfactory Performance Satisfactory work on course-related tasks. A reasonable understanding of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. An infrequently demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking. Understands at a basic level the facts and theories related to the course, but demonstrates weak integration skills. A limited or inconsistent ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills.

C+/C/C- Adequate Performance Adequate performance on course-related tasks. An understanding of the basic elements of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A rarely demonstrated capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking (C+). An inability to go beyond a recitation of basic factual material related to the class (C). Demonstrated weaknesses in the ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills (C-).

D/D+ Minimal Passing Performance Barely acceptable work on course-related tasks. A generally superficial and often inconsistent familiarity with the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. A failure to demonstrate the capacity for original, creative, critical and logical thinking related to course content (D+). An uneven understanding of basic factual material related to the course; no evidence of fact/theory integration. Demonstrates significant gaps in the ability to discuss effectively course subject matter using both written and oral communication skills (D).

F Unacceptable Performance Fails to meet minimum course expectations. Unable to understand even the most basic elements of the issues, literature, and substantive information relevant to the course. Demonstrates an inability to engage in coherent written or oral discussion of course material. Does not satisfy specific course expectations with respect to attendance, deadlines, participation, etc.

Grading scale. The numerical to letter grade mapping for this course is as follows:

100-93%:	A	82.9-80%:	B-	69.9-67%:	D+
92.9-90%:	A-	79.9-77%:	C+	66.9-60%:	D
89.9-87%:	B+	76.9-73%:	C	<59.9%:	F
86.9-83%:	B	72.9-70%:	C-		

Peer Tutoring

For additional help outside of class, I strongly encourage you to make use of Emory's Peer Tutoring program, EPASS. More information about this program, as well as instructions on how to schedule an appointment, may be found at college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/tutoring. EPASS tutors are limited, so it is best to plan ahead, especially closer to the end of the semester.

Incomplete Grades

No incomplete grades will be given unless there is an agreement between the instructor and the student **prior** to the end of the course. The instructor retains the right to determine legitimate reasons for an incomplete grade.

Late Assignments

You will be penalized for late assignments or missed exams, unless the absence/delay is due to documented serious illness or is otherwise excused by the instructor in advance (such as for certain official Emory-sponsored activities). The penalty for unexcused late papers is one full letter grade per day. In this course, the policy applies directly and clearly to the individual literature review, the exams and the final draft of the paper. Failure to submit on time the topic and question proposals as well as the rough draft will be penalized via the overall paper grade. An example helps clarify. Suppose that your group produces A level work (a 95 out of 100 points for example) on your final paper, but you submitted your rough draft one day late. You will all receive a B for the overall course grade (i.e., 85 out 100) component of the research project assignment.

Extra-Credit Work

Under no circumstances will extra credit work be permitted.

Office Hours and Email Policy

The large size of this class makes it difficult for the TAs and/or I to respond to email as quickly as you would like. If you have questions about the class that are of a procedural nature—for example, regarding attendance, late assignments, due dates, or class schedules—you may email the TAs or I and expect a response within one working day. Unfortunately, however, we can not answer any questions over email that are of a substantive nature concerning the class material, assignments, or exams. Substantive issues are best discussed in person. Please stop by during the TA's or my office hours or email me to make an appointment. Please email your TA to make arrangements to meet with them.

Integrity of Scholarship

The honor code is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, to deviate from the teachers instructions about collaboration on work that is submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You agree that the teacher is entitled to move you to another seat during examinations, without explanation. You also affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the honor council. <http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>

Access, Disability Services and Resources

Emory University is committed under the Americans with Disabilities Act and its Amendments and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to providing appropriate accommodations to individuals with documented disabilities. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, provide the instructor(s) with an accommodation notification letter from Access, Disabilities Services and Resources office. Students are expected to give two weeks-notice of the need for accommodations. If you need immediate accommodations or physical access, please arrange to meet with instructor(s) as soon as your accommodations have been finalized.

Class schedule

August 25: Course Introduction

August 30: Research Questions and your Research Project What makes a research question a good research question in political science? How do you review a literature? What are the goals of your research project? How will you reach those goals in one semester?

RvR, Chapter 17

September 1: Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association - NO CLASS

September 6: Theoretical Models of Politics What is a model? What are features of good models? How do you go about building a model? How can you most easily communicate your model to another person?

Lave and March, Chapter 2

Research teams constructed

September 8: Conceptualization and Measurement Introduction to conceptualization. What does it mean to conceptualize? How do we measure concepts? How do we evaluate what makes a measure a “good” measure? We will discuss how to establish validity and reliability of a measure.

RvR, Chapter 4

September 13: Data visualization How can data be best visualized? We will discuss some common rules for data visualization, which should prove useful in the presentation of your research as well as the process by which you identify interesting questions to ask.

Priti Shah and James Hoeffner. Review of graph comprehension research: Implications for instruction. *Educational Psychology Review*, 14(1):47–69, 2002.

September 15: NO CLASS

September 20: Inference How do we use what we can see to infer what we cannot?

RvR, Chapter 5

Research Topic Proposal due via Blackboard

September 22: Causation What does it mean to say that X causes Y ? What are some typical threats to inferring causation from associations between measures of concepts?

RvR, Chapter 11

Research Topic Approved

September 29: Randomized Experiments What is a randomized experiment? Under what conditions will an experiment allow for the identification of a causal effect?

RvR, Chapter 14

Andrew Healy, Alexander G Kuo, and Neil Malhotra. Partisan bias in blame attribution: When does it occur? *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 1(02):144–158, 2014.

October 4: Field Experiments What are the challenges and opportunities of doing experimental research in the “field?”

Alan S Gerber, Donald P Green, and Christopher W Larimer. Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment. *American Political Science Review*, 102(01):33–48, 2008.

October 6: Midterm Course Review

Individual Literature Reviews Due via Blackboard

October 12: Midterm exam due The exam will be released to you on October 7 at 8:00 am. You will have 75 minutes to complete the exam. You may turn as late as October 12 at 11:59 pm.

October 11: FALL BREAK - NO CLASS

October 13: Visit from Dr. O’Reilly Dr. O’Reilly from Woodruff Library will attend class to discuss with you the library’s resources that may prove useful to your projects.

October 18: Observational Studies What are the key challenges to causal inferences presented by observational data? How can matching be used to draw causal inferences in observational data?

RvR, Chapter 12

Research question due via Blackboard

October 20: Linear Regression Under what conditions can we interpret a regression coefficient as a causal effect?

RvR, Chapter 13

October 25: Natural and Quasi-Experiments What is the difference between a natural and a quasi-experiment?

RvR, Chapter 15, pp. 466-484

Adam N Glynn and Maya Sen. Identifying judicial empathy: Does having daughters cause judges to rule for women's issues? *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(1):37–54, 2015.

Daniel Posner. The political salience of cultural difference: Why chewas and tumbukas are allies in zambia and adversaries in malawi. *American Political Science Review*, null:529–545, 11 2004.

November 1: Difference-in-Differences How to use cross-sectional and temporal variation to estimate causal effects in observational data.

RvR, Chapters 15, pp. 484-490

Alan B. Krueger David Card. Minimum wages and employment: A case study of the fast-food industry in new jersey and pennsylvania. *The American Economic Review*, 84(4):772–793, 1994.

November 3: Regression Discontinuity What can we learn about causation from arbitrary if not random assignment?

RvR, Chapter 15, p. 492

Daniel J Hopkins. Translating into votes: The electoral impacts of spanish-language ballots. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(4):814–830, 2011.

November 8: Instrumental Variables

RvR, Chapters 15, p. 490-492

Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson. The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation. *American Economic Review*, 91(5):1369–1401, 2001.

November 10: Comparative Case Studies

RvR Chapter3, pp. 76-86

Richard F Doner, Bryan K Ritchie, and Dan Slater. Systemic vulnerability and the origins of developmental states: Northeast and southeast asia in comparative perspective. *International organization*, 59(02):327–361, 2005.

November 15: Process Tracing

Chapters 10 and 12 of Rethinking Social Inquiry

Henry E Brady and David Collier. *Rethinking social inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010.

November 17: The Ethics and Politics of Research

RvR Chapter 16

Please be on the look out for a few popular press articles on this subject.

Research plan due. Submit via Blackboard.

November 22: American Politics Research at Emory

Alan I Abramowitz and Steven Webster. The rise of negative partisanship and the nationalization of us elections in the 21st century. *Electoral Studies*, 41:12–22, 2016.

November 24: THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

November 29: Comparative Politics and International Relations Research at Emory

Miguel R Rueda. Small aggregates, big manipulation: Vote buying enforcement and collective monitoring. *American Journal of Political Science*, 2016.

Danielle F. Jung and James D. Long. Social sanctioning and voter turnout in emerging democracies. Working paper. Emory University.

December 1: Michael Alexander, Atlanta Regional Commission

Reading: TBA

December 6: Public Policy Research at Emory

David C Wilson, Michael Leo Owens, and Darren W Davis. How racial attitudes and ideology affect political rights for felons. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 12(01):73–93, 2015.

December 7: FINAL DRAFT OF PAPER due by 11:59 pm

December 10: Final exam due by 11:59 pm The exam will be released to you December 9, in the morning.