

POL 504
Research Design
M.A. in Political Psychology
Mondays 10:30-1:20
Fall 2020

Instructor: Robert Vidigal
Class Location: Earth and Space Sciences 181
Office: Social and Behavior Sciences, N723
Office Hours: Mondays 1:30-3:30 and 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 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. Besides in class presentations, 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 class(-es) 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;
4. Critique and improve upon existing methods and published work.

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).

Grading:	% of Final Grade
Class Participation	10%
Project Proposal and Presentation	20%
Homework Assignments	30%
Final Project and Presentation	40%

Grading Scale: Barring any unforeseen changes, the grading scale for the course is as follows:

A 93.50 to 100.00	B- 79.50 to 83.49	D+ 66.50 to 69.49
A- 89.50 to 92.49	C+ 76.50 to 79.49	D 63.50 to 66.49
B+ 86.50 to 89.49	C 73.50 to 76.49	D- 59.50 to 63.49
B 83.50 to 86.49	C- 69.50 to 73.49	F 59.49 and below

If you want to add, drop, or change the grade status of this course, you are responsible for complying with all deadlines in this regard. Such deadlines are a matter of University policy. Please visit the appropriate university website for the deadlines.

Class Participation: Students are expected to attend class and participate in discussions. This is a graduate seminar and not a class lecture, hence theoretical and methodological discussions are expected. In general, aim for quality rather than quantity when it comes to participation. 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.

Project Proposal and Presentation: The main goal of this course is to prepare you to design and run your own experiments. You will propose and present an experimental research design to test a specific research question, convincing your classmates and me of its theoretical contribution, its suitability for an experiment, its design and key variables measurement. In addition to your presentation, please submit a **two-page** project proposal to me. It should briefly (i) summarize existing literature in which your research question is rooted, (ii) clearly state your hypotheses, and (iii) discuss your research design (e.g., treatments, anticipated effects, etc.). The document should also contain a preliminary list of references. **Project proposal and presentations are due November 2nd.**

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. Ideally, your final project will propose an experimental

design. The best projects will have the potential to be published one day. Your 15-minute presentations and final project should include an (i) introduction with research question, (ii) its theoretical framework, (iii) hypotheses, (iv) experimental design, (v) analytical plan. Be prepared to integrate feedback into your final paper. **Presentations are due December 7th and final project submissions are due December 14th.**

Homework assignments (always due by midnight):

HOMEWORK 1: Complete the SBU IRB training course in Human Research protections for social behavioral research and submit the print-out of the final certification page. Go to: <https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/research-compliance/Human-Subjects/Training> Follow the instructions and login through SBU system.

HOMEWORK 2: Pick five political science articles that apply experimental methods to a topic of your substantive interest (*AJPS, APSR, JOP, PolBehav, PolPsych, PolComm*). In a short response, address the following questions:

- 1) What is the theory?
- 2) Is the experiment suitable for the theory? Why?
- 3) What is the experimental design?
- 4) Is there an alternative design (experimental or observational) that could test the same idea?

HOMEWORK 3: Set up a SBU Qualtrics account (<https://it.stonybrook.edu/services/qualtrics>) and design a simple experiment. Write a brief paragraph discussing the nature of the experiment (e.g., experimental manipulations, randomization, etc.) and submit the link to the survey.

HOMEWORK 4: You will be assigned to one of the proposal presentations. Write a helpful one-page critique of the design, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, and provide suggestions that could make the design stronger. This critique will be shared with the presenter.

HOMEWORK 5: Look again at your five political science articles from Homework 2. Examine their dependent and independent variables, answering the following questions:

- 1) What are the dependent and independent variables?
- 2) How are they measured and why?
- 3) Are there any manipulation checks?
- 4) Can you come up with alternative measures that could be used instead?

HOMEWORK 6: Look again at your five political science articles from Homework 2. Examine the experimental design and results section, answering the following questions:

- 1) Which parts of the experiment are reported?
- 2) What statistical methods are used to analyze the data?
- 3) What methods are used to interpret the data analysis?
- 4) Are there any robustness checks or supplementary analyses?

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.

Student Accessibility Support Services (SASC)

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Student Accessibility Support Center, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, Room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, 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 Student Accessibility Support Center. For procedures and information go to the following website: <https://ehs.stonybrook.edu/programs/fire-safety/emergency-evacuation/evacuation-guide-people-physical-disabilities>

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 University Community Standards any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. Further information about most academic matters can be found in the Undergraduate Bulletin, the Undergraduate Class Schedule, and the Faculty-Employee Handbook.

Books

Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H. and Lupia, A. eds., 2011. *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. Cambridge University Press.

[‘CHEPS’ on Course Schedule]

Kellstedt, P.M. and Whitten, G.D., 2018. *The fundamentals of political science research*. Cambridge University Press. Third Edition. **[‘K&W’ on Course Schedule]**

All readings will be uploaded to Blackboard.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 – AUGUST 24: INTRODUCTION & COURSE EXPECTATIONS

WEEK 2 – AUGUST 31 THINKING ABOUT POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

- Krosnick, J.A., 2002. Is political psychology sufficiently psychological? Distinguishing political psychology from psychological political science. In J. H. Kuklinski (Ed.), *Cambridge studies in political psychology and public opinion. Thinking about political psychology* (p. 187–216). Cambridge University Press.
- Rahn, W.M., Sullivan, J.L. and Rudolph, T.J., 2002. Political psychology and political science. In *Thinking about political psychology* (pp. 155-186). Cambridge University Press.
- McGraw, K.M., 2000. Contributions of the cognitive approach to political psychology. *Political Psychology*, 21(4), pp.805-832.
- Berinsky, A.J., 2017. Measuring public opinion with surveys. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20, pp.309-329.

- **BEGIN TO BRAINSTORM AND FORMULATE PROJECTS**

WEEK 3 – SEPTEMBER 7 LABOR DAY: NO CLASS

Homework 1 due.

WEEK 4 – SEPTEMBER 14 THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF POLITICS: EXPERIMENTATION

- K&W Chapter 1 – The Scientific Study of Politics
- Chapter 1 – The Advent of Experimental Political Science. In: Morton, Rebecca B., and Kenneth C. Williams. 2010. *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality: From Nature to the Lab*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H. and Lupia, A., 2006. The growth and development of experimental research in political science. *American Political Science Review*, pp.627-635.
- McDermott, R., 2002. Experimental methodology in political science. *Political Analysis*, pp. 325-342.
- Gaines, B.J., Kuklinski, J.H. and Quirk, P.J., 2007. The logic of the survey experiment reexamined. *Political Analysis*, pp.1-20.

WEEK 5 – SEPTEMBER 21 THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS BUILDING

- K&W Chapter 2 – The Art of Theory Building
- Barakso et al. Chapter 1 – The Challenge of Inference
- Barakso et al. Chapter 3 – Linking Theory and Inference
- Turner, J., 2007. The messenger overwhelming the message: Ideological cues and perceptions of bias in television news. *Political Behavior*, 29(4), pp.441-464.
- Kam, C.D. and Zechmeister, E.J., 2013. Name recognition and candidate support. *American Journal of Political Science*, 57(4), pp.971-986.

- **QUALTRICS DEMO1**

WEEK 6 – SEPTEMBER 28: CAUSAL RELATIONSHIPS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Homework2 due.

- Barakso et al. Chapter 2 – The Research Question
- K&W Chapter 3 – Evaluating Causal Relationships
- K&W Chapter 4 – Research Design
- Chapter 2 – Experiments and Causal Relationships. In: Morton, Rebecca B., and Kenneth C. Williams. 2010. *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality: From Nature to the Lab*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Horiuchi, Y., Imai, K. and Taniguchi, N., 2007. Designing and analyzing randomized experiments: Application to a Japanese election survey experiment. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(3), pp.669-687.

WEEK 7 – OCTOBER 5: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VALIDITY

- CHEPS Chapter 3 – Internal and External Validity (Rose McDermott).
- CHEPS Chapter 4 – Students as experimental participants (James Druckman and Cindy Kam).
- Chapter 7 – Validity and Experimental Manipulations. In: Morton, Rebecca B., and Kenneth C. Williams. 2010. *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality: From Nature to the Lab*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Barabas, J. and Jerit, J., 2010. Are survey experiments externally valid?. *American Political Science Review*, pp.226-242.
- Jerit, J., Barabas, J. and Clifford, S., 2013. Comparing contemporaneous laboratory and field experiments on media effects. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 77(1), pp.256-282.

WEEK 8 – OCTOBER 12: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SURVEY RESPONSES

- Zaller, J. and Feldman, S. 1992. A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences. *AJPS*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Aug.), pp. 579-616.
- Chapter 2 – Respondents' Understanding of Survey Questions. In: Tourangeau, R., Rips, L.J. and Rasinski, K., 2000. *The psychology of survey response*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chapter 6 – Attitude Questions. In: Tourangeau, R., Rips, L.J. and Rasinski, K., 2000. *The psychology of survey response*. Cambridge University Press.
- Leeper, T.J., 2014. Cognitive style and the survey response. *Public opinion quarterly*, 78(4), pp.974-983.

▪ **QUALTRICS DEMO2**

WEEK 9 – OCTOBER 19: THREATS TO SURVEY RESPONSES

Homework 3 due.

- Druckman, J.N. and Leeper, T.J., 2012. Learning more from political communication experiments: Pretreatment and its effects. *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(4), pp.875-896.
- Ciuk, D.J. and Yost, B.A., 2019. Conflicting Cues: Item Nonresponse and Experimental Mortality. *Experimental Methods in Survey Research: Techniques that Combine Random Sampling with Random Assignment*, pp.167-180.
- Bullock, J.G. and Ha, S.E., 2011. Mediation analysis is harder than it looks. *Cambridge handbook of experimental political science*, 508, p.521.
- Montgomery, J.M., Nyhan, B. and Torres, M., 2018. How conditioning on posttreatment variables can ruin your experiment and what to do about it. *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(3), pp.760-775.

WEEK 10 – OCTOBER 26: ENHANCING YOUR SURVEY DESIGN

- Pasek, J. and Krosnick, J.A., 2010. Optimizing survey questionnaire design in political science: Insights from psychology. *Oxford handbook of American elections and political behavior*, pp.27-50.
- Berinsky, A.J., Margolis, M.F. and Sances, M.W., 2014. Separating the shirkers from the workers? Making sure respondents pay attention on self-administered surveys. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(3), pp.739-753.
- Kane, J.V. and Barabas, J., 2019. No harm in checking: Using factual manipulation checks to assess attentiveness in experiments. *American Journal of Political Science*, 63(1), pp.234-249.
- Smith, B., Clifford, S. and Jerit, J., 2020. TRENDS: How Internet Search Undermines the Validity of Political Knowledge Measures. *Political Research Quarterly*, 73(1), pp.141-155.
- "Appendix". In: Morton, Rebecca B., and Kenneth C. Williams. 2010. *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality: From Nature to the Lab*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

WEEK 11 – NOVEMBER 2 PROJECT PROPOSALS PRESENTATIONS

Homework 4.

WEEK 12 – NOVEMBER 9: MEASUREMENT ERROR AND BIAS

- K&W Chapter 5 – Evaluating Measurement and Variations
- Berinsky, A.J., 2004. Can we talk? Self-presentation and the survey response. *Political Psychology*, 25(4), pp.643-659.
- Ansolabehere, S., Rodden, J. and Snyder Jr, J.M., 2008. The strength of issues: Using multiple measures to gauge preference stability, ideological constraint, and issue voting. *American Political Science Review*, pp.215-232.
- Simas, E.N., 2017. Ideology through the partisan lens: Applying anchoring vignettes to US Survey research. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 30(3), pp.343-364.

WEEK 13 – NOVEMBER 16: SAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS

Homework 5 due.

- CHEPS CHAPTER 4 – Students as Experimental Participants (Jamie Druckman and Cindy Kam).
- Berinsky, A.J., Huber, G.A. and Lenz, G.S., 2012. Evaluating online labor markets for experimental research: Amazon. com's Mechanical Turk. *Political analysis*, 20(3), pp.351-368.
- Krupnikov, Y. and Levine, A.S., 2014. Cross-sample comparisons and external validity. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 1(1), p.59.
- Klar, S. and Leeper, T.J., 2019. Identities and intersectionality: a case for Purposive sampling in Survey-Experimental research. *Experimental Methods in Survey Research: Techniques that Combine Random Sampling with Random Assignment*, pp.419-433.

WEEK 14 – NOVEMBER 23 THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS

Project Preparation Week

WEEK 15 – NOVEMBER 30 (ZOOM)

Homework6 due.

Project Preparation Week: Individual Online Meetings

WEEK 16 – DECEMBER 7

Project Presentations

WEEK 17 – DECEMBER 14

Reviewed projects due by midnight