

# POLS 240: Research Methods in Political Science

Dr. Benjamin Denison

Fall Semester, 2019

E-mail: [Benjamin.Denison@Dartmouth.edu](mailto:Benjamin.Denison@Dartmouth.edu)

Office Hours: TTH 10:00-12:00

Office: 345 Haldeman Center

Web: [BenjaminDenison.com/teaching](http://BenjaminDenison.com/teaching)

Class Hours: MW 9:30-10:45

Class Room: 145 DeBartolo Hall

---

## Course Description

This course teaches students to think rigorously and systematically about the study of politics, and generally think like a political scientist. To support this goal, we will consider various research methods including quantitative analysis, comparative case studies, experimental methods, survey research, interviews, multi-method research, and more. The central objective of this course is for students to understand how each of these research methods can help evaluate causal relationships of various puzzles in the political world. We will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each of these research methods and explore how to apply them to political phenomena of interest. Specifically, we will use the vast literature on democracy and democratization in political science as a means to explore how different research methods can answer different aspects of various research puzzles in political science. We will also spend time exploring the basic components of quantitative analysis to allow students to understand and evaluate political science research that relies on such analysis, as well as serving a primer for future statistical analysis courses.

## Course Objectives

Students will leave this course able to:

1. Identify the major approaches to political science research.
2. Understand the research questions that the various methods are best suited for answering.
3. Create a viable research design for answering social scientific questions.
4. Understand and read quantitative political science research.

## Required Readings

There are two required textbooks for this course. They are both available for purchase at the college bookstore and online [here](#) and [here](#). Having access to the textbooks is mandatory.

- Howard, Christopher. 2017. *Thinking Like a Political Scientist: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Coppedge, Michael. 2012). *Democratization and Research Methods*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

The rest of the readings will be posted online to the course's Sakai site under the 'Course Readings' tab. I reserve the right to change these readings as necessary.

## Grading

The grade you earn in this course will be the cumulative grade of the following assignments:

- |                                       |            |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| • Research Question Assignment        | <u>10%</u> |
| • Literature Review Assignment        | <u>10%</u> |
| • Hypotheses and Variables Assignment | <u>10%</u> |
| • Take Home Midterm                   | <u>20%</u> |
| • Case Selection Assignment           | <u>10%</u> |
| • Final Research Design Project       | <u>30%</u> |
| • Class Participation                 | <u>10%</u> |

Please note that late assignments **will not** be accepted. In the case of excused absence in accordance with university policy, please speak with the professor to find an acceptable alternative.

## Assignments

- **Final Research Design:**

The main assignment for the course is a cumulative and original 15-page final research design that builds on the assignments throughout the course. It combines components from the previous assignments in the course to allow for the student to create a compelling research design to answer a political science research question of their choosing. More information about the final research design project will be handed out during the course of the class. **Final research designs are due Friday, December 14th at 5pm.**

More information about the cumulative parts of final research design project will be discussed by the end of Class 4. The due dates for each assignment are identified in the class schedule below. The cumulative assignments include:

1. Research Question Assignment
2. Literature Review Assignment
3. Hypotheses and Variables Assignment
4. Case Selection Assignment

- **Take Home Midterm:**

After Class 15, there will be a short take home exam on the concepts, ideas, and methods we have discussed so far in class. The exam will consist of short exercises testing their ability to understand basic descriptive and inferential statistics, read regression tables, and answer short answer questions on the other concepts discussed in class. Students will be expected to turn in their exams on the following Friday at 5pm.

- **Class Participation:**

Participating in class discussion is key to a successful learning environment. As such, part of your grade will depend upon reading and discussing the material in class. Students should expect to be called upon and be ready to answer questions about the weeks' reading material. I recognize that speaking in large groups can be troublesome for some, so if there is an issue, please do not hesitate to meet with me outside of class to discuss how we can make our classroom a successful learning environment.

## **Attendance and Tardiness**

Students are expected to attend all classes, save in the case of illness, family emergency, or university-excused absence. Late/missed assignments without a valid excuse will not be accepted. Students are expected to arrive in time for class as late arrivals are disruptive. More than 3 unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by a full letter grade.

## **Academic Integrity**

All students must abide by the Notre Dame Honor Code: "As a member of the Notre Dame community, I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty." Details are available at <http://www.nd.edu/hnr/code/docs/index.htm>. Please note that academic dishonesty (including plagiarism and unauthorized multiple submissions of work for assignments) will not be tolerated and will be punished in accordance with university policy.

## **Accommodations**

I am strongly committed to working with students who require any reasonable accommodations that they are able to fully participate in class activities. If you require a reasonable accommodation, please follow the process through <http://sarabeadisabilityservices.nd.edu/> and I will work with you to find a suitable solution.

## **Class Schedule and Reading List:**

### **Class 1 (M): Introduction**

- Howard, Introduction

### **Class 2 (W): What is Political Science Research and Theory?**

- Coppedge, Selections from Chapter 3: Criteria for Evaluating Causal Theories
- Janet Buttolph Johnson, and H. T. Reynolds. 2012. Political Science Research Methods. 8th ed.. Los Angeles: CQ Press. Selections from Chapter 1

### **Class 3 (M): Research Questions**

- Howard, Chapter 1: Who Cares?
- Jillian Schwedler, "Puzzle." Qualitative & Multi-Method Research Newsletter (Fall 2013), 27-30.

### **Class 4 (W): Literature Reviews**

- Jeffrey Knopf, "Doing a Literature Review." PS: Political Science & Politics 39:1 (January 2006): 127-135.
- Jack S. Levy. "The Causes of War and the Conditions of Peace." Annual Review of Political Science 1:1 (1998): 139-165.

### **Class 5 (M): Variables**

- Howard, Chapter 2: What Happened?
- Introduction to V-Dem online tools: <https://www.v-dem.net/en/analysis/analysis/>

### **Class 6 (W): Measurement**

- Coppedge, Chapter 2: Defining and Measuring Democracy
- Gary Goertz. 2006. Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Selections from Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.
- **Research Question Assignment Due Today by 5pm**

### **Class 7 (M): Causation and Causal Inference I**

- Howard Chapter 3: Why?
- Rosato, Sebastian. "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory." The American Political Science Review 97:4 (2003): 585-602.

### **Class 8 (W): Causation and Causal Inference II**

- Paul M. Kellstedt, and Guy D. Whitten. 2013. The Fundamentals of Political Science Research. Second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3. Pgs. 51-66.

- Henry E. Brady. "Data-Set Observations versus Causal-Process Observations: The 2000 Presidential Election." In Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, eds. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. 2nd ed. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

### **Class 9 (M): Research Design**

- Howard, Chapter 4: Choosing a Research Design
- Geoffrey C. Dixon, Royce A. Singleton, Jr., & Bruce C. Straits. 2016. *The Process of Social Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 4.

### **Class 10 (W): Descriptive Statistics**

- Howard, Chapter 7: Using Numbers as Evidence
- Charles Wheelan. 2013. *Naked Statistics: Stripping the Dread from the Data*. WW Norton & Company. Chapter 2.
- **Literature Review Assignment Due Today by 5pm**

### **Class 11 (M): Inferential Statistics**

- Neil J. Salkind. 2016. *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*. New York: Sage Publications. Selections from Chapter 10-13

### **Class 12 (W): Hypothesis Testing**

- Coppedge, Chapter 7: Rigor in Extensive and Intensive Testing
- Steven van Evera. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Chapter 1.
- **Hypotheses and Variables Assignment Due Today by 5pm**

### **Class 13 (M): Correlation and Linear Regression**

- Neil J. Salkind. 2016. *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*. New York: Sage Publications. Selections from Chapter 15 and Chapter 16.
- Steven V. Miller. "Reading a Regression Table: A Guide for Students." Available at: <http://svmiller.com/blog/2014/08/reading-a-regression-table-a-guide-for-students>
- EGAP. "10 Things to Know about Reading a Regression Table." Available at: <http://egap.org/methodsguides/10-things-know-about-reading-regression-table>

### **Class 14 (W): Multivariate Regression**

- Paul D. Allison. 1999. *Multiple Regression: A Primer*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press. Excerpts from Chapters 1 & 2.

- Haakon Gjerlow and Carl Henrik Knutsen. "Autocrats and Skyscrapers: Modern White Elephants in Dictatorships." V-Dem Working Paper Series 2017:44 (2017). Available at: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2951762>.

### **Class 15 (M): Putting it all together: Quantitative Methods Review**

- Coppedge, Chapter 9.
- Philip A. Schrodt. "Seven Deadly Sins of Contemporary Quantitative Political Analysis." *Journal of Peace Research* 51:2 (2014): 287-300.

### **Class 16 (W): Experiments**

- Geoffrey C. Dixon, Royce A. Singleton, Jr., & Bruce C. Straits. 2016. *The Process of Social Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 7.
- Jaimie Bleck and Kristin Michelitch. "Capturing the Airwaves, Capturing the Nation? A Field Experiment on State-Run Media Effects in the Wake of a Coup." *The Journal of Politics* 79:3 (2017): 873-889.
- David W. Nickerson. "Is Voting Contagious? Evidence from Two Field Experiments." *The American Political Science Review* 102:1 (2008): 49-57.
- **Take Home Midterm Due Friday by 5pm**

### **Class 17 (M): The Qualitative Method and Case Studies**

- Coppedge, Chapter 5: Case Studies and Comparative History
- Richard Snyder, "Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36:1 (Spring 2001): 93-100.

### **Class 18 (W): Case Selection**

- Howard, Chapter 5: Choosing Cases
- Jason Seawright and John Gerring. "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly* 61:2 (2008): 294-308.

### **Class 19 (M): Process Tracing**

- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. 1893(2009). "Silver Blaze" in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-22.
- David Collier. "Understanding Process Tracing." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44:4 (2011): 823-830.
- Sherry Zaks. "Relationships Among Rivals (RAR): A Framework for Analyzing Contending Hypotheses in Process Tracing." *Political Analysis* 25:3 (2017): 344-362.

### **Class 20 (W): Archival Research**

- Howard, Chapter 6: Using Documents as Evidence

- Austin Carson. "Facing Off and Saving Face: Covert Intervention and Escalation Management in the Korean War." *International Organization* 70:1 (2016): 103-131.
- **Case Selection Assignment Due Today by 5pm**

### **Class 21 (M): Interview Research**

- Layna Mosley, ed. 2013. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Selections from Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 5.
- Elisabeth Jean Wood. 2003. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2.

### **Class 22 (W): Survey Research**

- Coppedge, Chapter 8
- Daryl G. Press, Scott D. Sagan, and Benjamin A. Valentino. "Atomic Aversion: Experimental Evidence on Taboos, Traditions, and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons." *American Political Science Review* 107:1 (2013): 188-206.

### **Class 24 (M): Natural Experiments**

- Jeremy Ferwerda and Nicholas L. Miller. "Political Devolution and Resistance to Foreign Rule: A Natural Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 108:3 (2014): 642-660.
- Matthew A. Kocher and Nuno P. Monteiro. "Lines of Demarcation: Causation, Design-Based Inference, and Historical Research." *Perspectives on Politics* 14:4 (2016): 952-975.
- John F. McCauley and Daniel N. Posner. "African Borders as Sources of Natural Experiments Promise and Pitfalls." *Political Science Research and Methods* 3:2 (2015): 409-418.

### **Class 24 (W): Mixed-Method Research I**

- Evan S. Lieberman. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99:3 (2005): 435-52.
- Gary Goertz. "Multimethod Research." *Security Studies* 25:1 (2016): 3-24.
- Jason Seawright. "Better Multimethod Design: The Promise of Integrative Multimethod Research." *Security Studies* 25: 1 (2016): 42-49.
- Michael Coppedge. 2005. "Explaining Democratic Deterioration in Venezuela through Nested Inference." In *The Third Wave of Democratization in Latin America: Advances and Setbacks*, eds. Frances Hagopian and Scott Mainwaring. New York: Cambridge University Press, 289-316.

### **Class 25 (M): Mixed-Method Research II: The New Normal?**

- Harris Mylonas. 2013. *The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-nationals, Refugees, and Minorities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Selections from Chapters 2, 4, and 7.

- Seva Gunitsky. "From Shocks to Waves: Hegemonic Transitions and Democratization in the Twentieth Century." *International Organization* 68:3 (2014): 561-597.

**Class 26 (W): Ethics and Research**

- Geoffrey C. Dixon, Royce A. Singleton, Jr., & Bruce C. Straits. 2016. *The Process of Social Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 3.
- Kate Cronin-Furman and Milli Lake. "Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51:3 (2018): 607-614.
- Tom Bartlett. "Dartmouth and Stanford Apologize After a Political-Science Experiment Gone Wrong." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 29th 2014.  
Available at: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/DartmouthStanford/149687>

**Class 27 (M): Thinking about Research Design Going Forward**

- Coppedge, Chapter 10: An Agenda for Future Research
- **Final Research Design Projects Due by 5pm Friday**