Methods for Cross-National Research
Political Science 374 - Section 01 & 02
Fall 2010
Sec. 01: M, W, F: 9:00-9:50 (Ryland Hall 216, Jepson G24-A)
Sec. 02: M, W, F: 10:30-11:20 (Weinstein 204, Jepson G-24-A)

Professor: Jenny Pribble
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:30, Fridays 1:30-3:30; or by appointment
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Overview and Course Objectives:
This course will provide you with an introduction to several of the methods employed in Political Science research. Over the course of the semester, we will discuss how to formulate questions, design a research project, develop hypotheses, and gather and analyze empirical data. By the end of the semester, you will be able to design and execute a scholarly research project, as well as critically analyze the work of others. The knowledge and skills that you obtain from this course will prove useful in both the immediate future, as you write your senior theses and carry out summer research, and in the long-run, as you begin a professional career. Understanding how to analyze data, draw inferences, and formulate a compelling argument are essential skills in today’s competitive job market.

Course Organization:
The course will be divided into three units. During the early weeks of the semester we will study the core elements of social scientific research, including formulating a question, building concepts, and developing hypotheses. In the second unit, we will learn about quantitative methods (statistics) used to analyze data. Finally, during the last portion of the semester, we will focus on qualitative research methods, such as elite interviews and ethnography.

The course will meet three times a week and will mix interactive lecture with in-class data analysis. For class meetings that focus on data analysis, we will meet in Jepson G24-A.

Required Texts:

3.)  Other readings will be available through the Library’s electronic reserves and on the class blackboard site.

You should complete the assigned readings before each class session. Coming to class prepared is important so that you can participate in discussions and in-class activities. I reserve the right to give unannounced reading quizzes if I sense that students are not completing the assignments. Grades on such a quiz would count toward your participation.

**Evaluation and Course Requirements:**

1.)  **Class attendance and participation (5%)**

   It is essential that you come to class prepared. This means that you are expected to complete and reflect upon the required reading before each class session so that you can actively engage in activities and ask questions.

   Be on time and attend all classes. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class and if you are more than 10 minutes late, you will be counted as absent. After three absences, every additional missed class will result in a 5 point reduction to your participation grade.

2.)  **Homework Assignments (3 worth 5% each for a total of 15%)**

   In order to deepen your understanding of quantitative methods, you will complete three homework assignments that require you to analyze data and write-up your results. Each assignment is worth 5% of your total grade. The assignments are:
   - September 29: Working with Quantitative Data
   - October 13: Controlled Comparisons
   - October 27: Measures of Association

3.)  **A Methodological Article Review (10%)**

   One of the primary goals of this class is to provide you with the ability to critically analyze Political Science research. In particular, the course will provide you with the tools needed to critique a study’s methodological approach, research design, and concept development. To practice these skills, students will read exemplary texts that creatively employ many of the methods that we learn about during the course of the semester (regression analysis, a single-country case study, a multiple country case study, elite interviews, and participatory ethnography).

   You should pick one of these texts and write a methodological review. The review should describe and critique the methodological approach, focusing on
issues such as: what kind of study is this? What methods are employed? Are the methods appropriate for the research question and are the results convincing? What is the nature of the data? Is the data convincing? Do the measures effectively capture the underlying concept? What could have been done to improve the research design?

The review should be between 5 and 10 typed pages in length. You may choose which text you wish to review, but please email me with your choice by October 1, 2010. The following due dates are available for submission of your methodological review (please see the “class schedule and assignments” for details about the text):

- Review 1: November 1
- Review 2: November 12
- Review 3: November 15
- Review 4: November 19
- Review 5: November 24

4.) Research Proposal (15%)

This course will provide you with all of the needed tools to design and execute a scholarly research project. You will use this knowledge to develop a research proposal. The proposal should be written in academic language and must include information about your research question, a literature review, your hypotheses, an overview of the data that will be analyzed (and how you will obtain it), and a description of the methods you will use to analyze that data. The proposal should be around 10 typed pages in length.

5.) Presentation of Research Proposal (5%)

You will briefly present your research proposal to the class. The presentation should be in powerpoint and should provide the audience with a clear sense of your research question, hypotheses, the data that will be analyzed, and the methods that will be employed in the study. The presentation should be around 5 minutes in length.

6.) Exam 1 (15%)

7.) Exam 2 (20%)

8.) Exam 3 (15%)

Late Work: All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the specified date. Late assignments will result in a letter grade reduction per day late.

Make-up Work: There will be no make-ups for the exams unless there are documented extraordinary circumstances that prevented you from taking the exam. Additionally, there will be no extra credit assignments.
**Honor Code:** All work must adhere to the University’s Student Honor Code and pledge. For details of the code, see: [http://www.richmond.edu/about/honorcode.html](http://www.richmond.edu/about/honorcode.html). Please write and sign the pledge on all assignments and tests.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Plagiarism, very briefly, refers to stealing other peoples’ written work (from books, articles, newspapers, web sources, etc.) or verbal ideas. You must cite all material that is not your own. If you have doubts of what constitutes plagiarism, consult the student honor code, and/or talk to me. Finally, all in-class exams are to be taken without the assistance of books, notes, or other people.

**Classroom Etiquette:** I want to create a nice learning environment for you and your peers. To do this, I ask that you respect a few basic ground rules:

- I will start class on time and expect you to arrive to class on time. I make important announcements at the beginning of class as well as take attendance. In addition, people coming in late could disrupt the professor and their fellow students.

- Many students prefer to take notes with their laptops. This is fine; however, I expect you to refrain from activities unrelated to the class (eg. emailing, instant messaging, surfing the internet). I reserve the right to ask you not to use your computer if I suspect you are engaging in these activities.

- Please remember to turn off your cell phone.

**Getting Help:** If you are having difficulties with the class and reading materials, please come and see me during my office hours. I also encourage you to use the resources of the Writing Center (http://writing.richmond.edu/) and the Academic Skills Center (http://oncampus.richmond.edu/student/affairs/office/asc/).

**Class Schedule and Assignments:**

**Week 1: Thinking Scientifically and Empirically about Politics**

August 23: Introduction & Overview of the course

August 25: Approaches to Studying Social Phenomena

August 27: The Science of Politics

Week 2: Parts of Research - Concepts

August 30: Parts of Research: Questions, Concepts, Hypotheses, and Variables

Sept. 1: Concepts
  • EPA: Chapter 1 (pg. 1-25)

September 3: Applied Methods: the Myers Briggs Personality Test

NOTE: I will be out of town presenting a paper at a professional conference, but the Assistant Director of the Career Development Center, Joslyn DiRamio Bedell, will be giving a class about the Myers Briggs test.

  • Assignment: You must complete the online Myers Briggs test by September 1, 2010. Instructions to follow via email.

Week 3: The Goals of Cross-National Research: Asking Good Questions and Finding Plausible Answers

September 6: Concept Building and Coding: Dilemmas

  • In-Class Activity: quantifying concepts

September 8: Finding a Research Question
September 10: The Logic (or Logics) of Cross-National Research
  • **Online Reserves**: Della Porta Chapter 11 (198-222)

**Week 4: Quantitative Research**

September 13: **EXAM #1**

September 15: Measuring and Describing Variables
  • **EPA**: Chapter 2 (pgs. 26-43)

September 17: Getting Started with SPSS – MEET IN JEPSON CLASSROOM
  • **Companion**: Chapters 1 & 2 (pgs. 5-36)

**Week 5: Quantitative Tools & Cross-National Research**

September 20: Proposing Explanations, Framing Hypotheses, and Making Comparisons
  • **EPA**: Chapter 3 (Pgs. 44-67)

September 22: Getting started on your own research project
  • **Companion**: Chapter 11 (pgs. 223-237).

September 24: Transforming Variables – MEET IN JEPSON CLASSROOM
  • **Companion**: Chapter 3 (37-56)

**Week 6: Research Design & the Logic of Control**

September 27: Research Design: Experimental and Observational Study
  • **EPA**: Chapter 4 (72-81)

September 29: Research Design: The logic of Control
  • **EPA**: Chapter 4 (81-93)

**HOMEWORK 1 (WORKING WITH QUANTIATIVE DATA) DUE**

October 1: Making Comparisons – MEET IN JEPSON CLASSROOM
  • **Companion**: Chapter 4 (57-86)
Week 7: Making Controlled Comparisons

October 4: Making Controlled Comparisons
• EPA: Chapter 5 (94-112)

October 6: Making Controlled Comparisons Using SPSS – MEET IN ALTERNATIVE CLASSROOM (TBA)
• Companion: Chapter 5 (87-118)

October 8: NO CLASS (I will be in Toronto presenting a paper at a professional conference)

Week 8: Foundations of Statistical Inference

October 11: NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

October 13: Foundations of Statistical Inference
• EPA: Chapter 6 (pgs. 113-126)

HOMEWORK 2 (CONTROLLED COMPARISONS) DUE

October 15: Foundations of Statistical Inference
• EPA: Chapter 6 (pgs. 126-142)

Week 9: Measures of Association

October 18: Making Inferences about Sample Means – MEET IN ALTERNATIVE CLASSROOM (TBA)
• Companion: Chapter 6 (119-134)

October 20: Tests of Significance and Measures of Association
• EPA: Chapter 7 (145-154)

October 22: Tests of Significance and Measures of Association
• EPA: Chapter 7 (154-169)

Week 10: Basics of Regression

October 25: Chi-square and Measures of Association – MEET IN ALTERNATIVE CLASSROOM (TBA)
• Companion: Chapter 7 (135-154)
October 27: Correlation and Linear Regression
  • **EPA**: Chapter 8 (170-184)

**HOMEWORK 3 (MEASURES OF ASSOCIATION) DUE**

October 29: Correlation and Linear Regression
  • **EPA**: Chapter 8 (184-197)

**Week 11: Exam week**

November 1: Reading Political Science Regression Analyses

**METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW 1 DUE**

November 3: **EXAM #2**

November 5: Introduction to Qualitative Methods: What are they Useful For?

**Week 12: The Comparative Method: Case Studies and Multi-Case Comparisons**

November 8: Case Studies and Process Tracing
  • **Online Reserves**: Vennesson, Pascal. 2008. “Case studies and process tracing: theories and practices,” in *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences*. (Pages 223-239)

November 10: Conducting a Case Study
  • **Online Reserves**: Van Evera, Steven. 1997. “What are case studies? How should they be performed?” *Guide to Methods for Students of Political*
November 12: Case Study Research in Political Science
- **Blackboard**: Vreeland, James Raymond. 2003. “Why Do Governments and
  the IMF Enter into Agreements? Statistically Selected Cases,” *The Political

**METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW 2 DUE**

**Week 13: Examples of Case Study Research**

November 15: Multi-Case Research
- **Online Reserves**: Vachudova, Milada. 2009. “Democratization in
  Postcommunist Europe,” in *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the
  Postcommunist World*, Valerie Bunce, Michael McFaul, and Kathryn Stoner-
  Weiss (eds). New York: Cambridge University Press. (Pgs. 82-104).

**METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW 3 DUE**

November 17: Gathering Qualitative Data: Interviews
- **Online Reserves**: Berg, Bruce. 2006. *Qualitative Research Methods for the
  Social Sciences*. Allyn & Bacon, Chapter 4. (101-157).

November 19: An Example of Qualitative Interview-based Research
  Latin American Cases in Comparative Perspective.” *American Political

**METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW 4 DUE**

**Week 6: Qualitative Research – Gathering and Analyzing Data**

November 22: Participant Interviews & Culture
- **Online Reserves**: Bray, Zoe. 2008. “Ethnographic approaches,” in *Approaches
  and Methodologies in the Social Sciences*. (Pages 296-315).

November 24: An Example of Ethnographic Research
- **Online Reserves**: Auyero, Javier. 2003. *Contentious Lives Two Argentine
  Women, Two Protests and the Quest for Recognition*. Durham: Duke
  University Press. (Intro (1-13) & Chpts. 2 & 3 (48-88) Conclusions/Appendix
  (191-207)

**METHODOLOGICAL REVIEW 5 DUE**

November 26: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK
Week 7: Qualitative Research – Gathering and Analyzing Data

November 29: Presentation of Research Proposal

December 1: Presentation of Research Proposal

December 3: Wrapping up & Evaluations – MEET IN JEPSON G24-A

RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE

FINAL EXAM:
Section 1: Tuesday, Dec. 14 9am-12pm
Section 2: Tuesday, Dec. 14 7-10pm