

POLS Y205: Analyzing Politics

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Class Hours: MW 9:25-10:40 AM

Class Room: Online

Course Description

This course introduces students to the logic of political science research. We will walk through the frameworks that guide our thinking about politics and review descriptive, experimental, and observational approaches to research. Students will learn how to evaluate normative and empirical claims and practice constructing research questions and hypotheses.

Course Objectives

1. Develop an understanding of descriptive, experimental, and observational approaches to research.
2. Learn how to design and test an empirical argument.
3. Become a better consumer of information—both scientific and in the popular presses.

Associate Instructors

There are two associate instructors (AIs) for this course. They are here to help you with your questions pertaining to the course material. They are:

Required Books

There are no required books for this course. All required readings will be made available on the Canvas page for the course.

Course Policy

The details of the course are outlined below.

Grading Policy

- 40% of your grade will be determined by a midterm examination. This exam will cover all of the material that was covered prior to the date of the exam.

- 40% of your grade will be determined by a final examination. This exam will cover all of the material that was covered prior to the date of the exam but *not* the material covered before the midterm exam. In other words, this exam is not cumulative. Nevertheless, because many of the concepts in this course build on one another, knowledge of the material covered earlier in the semester will be essential for successfully completing this exam.
- 20% of your grade will be determined by a series of short quizzes administered via Canvas. Note that these quizzes *must* be taken by the assigned due date. Late quizzes will *not* be accepted.

Attendance Policy

Attending class is tremendously important. Learning takes place through engagement with the material and with your peers. Therefore, I expect you to attend every class session. If you know that you will not be able to attend class for some particular week, please email me a week in advance to let me know that you will not be in attendance. Excused absences include religious observances or other university-sanctioned absences. If you are sick or are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, *please do not worry about your attendance*. Focus instead on getting healthy.

A Word on Zoom

This class is being conducted synchronously on Zoom. Although this presents unique challenges for all of us, it is important that you take these meetings seriously. As part of this, please do your absolute best to ensure that your camera is turned **on** during class sessions. This will allow you to best engage with myself and your peers.

The Honor Code and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offense. If you are using someone's words without proper citation, you are guilty of plagiarism. See the IU [policy handbook](#) for a more thorough definition. Any work that is suspected of containing plagiarism will receive a zero and will be reported to the appropriate University committee. If you are in doubt, cite your sources!

Students with Disabilities

If any student requires assistance or accommodations for a disability, please get in touch with me at your earliest convenience. You can reach me via email or by attending office hours. You must have established your eligibility for disability support services through the Office of Disability Services for Students in Wells Library, W302, 812-855-7578.

Class Schedule

Students must read the following before the class meeting to which they are assigned. The readings will be available on the course Canvas website. Note that these readings are subject to change. Any adjustments will be communicated in advance.

Introduction & Historical Development

1/20: Course Overview

- Excerpt from Pirsig, Robert. 1974. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*. New York:

1/25: From Political Theory to Social Science

- Kuhn, Thomas. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 2 & 9.

Normative and Positive Political Thought

1/27: Evaluating Normative Claims

- Madison, James. 1787. *The Federalist*, #10.
- McDermott, Daniel. 2008. "Analytical Political Philosophy" in Leopold, David and Marc Stears (eds.) *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches*. New York: Oxford University Press.

2/1: Positivist Underpinnings

- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row. Chapter 3.

Empirical Research

2/3: Introduction to Empirical Research

- North, Douglass C., and Barry Weingast. 1989. "Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England." *Journal of Economic History* 49(4): 803-832.

2/8: Concepts and Questions

- Fukuyama, Francis. 2013. "What is Governance?" *Governance* 26 (3): 347-368.

Research Ideas

2/10: Literature Review

- Powner, Leanne C. 2014. *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide*. New York: CQ Press, Chapter 3.

2/15: Theories and Hypotheses

- Van Evera, Stephen. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Chapter 1 Excerpt.
- Suggested: Fearon, James. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49(3): 379-414.

Organizing Our Thinking

2/17: Measurement

- Shively, W. Phillips. 2017. *The Craft of Political Research*. 10th ed. New York: Routledge. Chapters 4-5.

2/22: Tabulation & Data Visualization

- Tufte, Edward R. 1997. *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative*. New York: Graphics Press. Chapter 2.
- "Mistakes, We've Drawn a Few." *The Economist*. 17 March 2019. Available at <https://medium.economist.com/mistakes-weve-drawn-a-few-8cdd8a42d368>

Being There

2/24: Ethnography and Interpretive Methods

- Geertz, Clifford. 1972. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus* 101 (1): 1-37.

3/1: Participant Observation

- Fu, Diana. 2017. "Disguised Collective Action in China." *Comparative Political Studies* 50 (4): 499-527.

What People Say

3/3: Text as Data

- Schwartz, H. Andrew, and Lyle H. Ungar. 2015. "Data-Driven Content Analysis of Social Media: A Systematic Overview of Automated Methods." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 659: 78-94.

3/8: Interviews

- Fenno, Richard F. 1977. "U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration." *American Political Science Review* 71(3): 883-917.

Midterm

3/10: Review for Midterm

- Come with questions prepared!

3/15: Midterm Exam

Surveys

3/17: Sampling

- Trochim, William, James P. Donnelly, and Kanika Arora. 2015. *The Research Methods Database (3rd ed.)* Mason, OH: Atomic Dog Publishing. Chapter 2.

Causal Inference

3/22: Threats to Inference

- Campbell, Donald T. and H. Laurence Ross. 1968. "The Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding: Time-series Data in Quasi-Experimental Analysis." *Law & Society Review* 3(1): 33-54.

3/24: Wellness Day (no class)

3/29: Causality: Explanation vs. Prediction

- Silver, Nate. 2012. *The Signal and the Noise*. New York: Penguin. Chapter 1.
- Suggested: Holland, Paul W. 1986. "Statistics and Causal Inference." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 81(396): 945-960.

Small N and Large N

3/31: Case Studies and Process Tracing

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

4/5: Introduction to Large N Observational Studies

- Barakso, Maryann, Daniel M. Sabet, and Brian Schaffner. 2014. *Understanding Political Science Research Methods*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 6.

Regression Analysis

4/7: Statistical Inference and Hypothesis Testing

- Kellstedt, Paul M., and Guy D. Whitten. 2018. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 8.

4/12: Regression

- Kellstedt, Paul M., and Guy D. Whitten. 2018. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 9.
- Suggested: Jacobsmeier, Matthew L., and Daniel C. Lewis. 2013. "Barking Up the Wrong Tree: Why Bo Didn't Fetch Many Votes for Barack Obama in 2012." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46(1): 49-59.
- Suggested: Kellstedt, Paul M., and Guy D. Whitten. 2018. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 10-11.

Treatment and Control

4/14: Experiments

- Trochim, William, James P. Donnelly, and Kanika Arora. 2015. *The Research Methods Database (3rd ed.)* Mason, OH: Atomic Dog Publishing. Chapter 7.
- Suggested: Trochim, William, James P. Donnelly, and Kanika Arora. 2015. *The Research Methods Database (3rd ed.)* Mason, OH: Atomic Dog Publishing. Chapter 6.

- Suggested: Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large Scale Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102(1): 33-48.

4/19: Quasi-Experiments

- Dunning, Thad. 2012. *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences: A Design-Based Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2.
- Diamond, Jared. 1999. *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. New York: Norton. p. 53-66.

Reflections

4/21: Ethics and Research Integrity

- "When the Revolution Came for Amy Cuddy." *The New York Times Magazine*, 18 October 2017. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/magazine/when-the-revolution-came-for-amy-cuddy.html>

4/26: Conclusions

- Weber, Max. 1917. "Science as a Vocation."
- Suggested: Owen, David, and Tracy Strong. 2004. "Introduction" in *The Vocation Lectures*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Typing Up Loose Ends

4/28: Review for Final Exam