

POL S 504: Designing Multi-Method Field Research, Winter 2015

Professor Contact Information:

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Gowen 146

Office Hours: Monday 11:30-1:30pm (and by appointment, see below)

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Course Description:

The course is designed as a workshop to introduce advanced graduate students to combining field methods from across the social sciences and to allow students to make significant progress on their own research strategies.

Required Readings:

William Trochim and James Donnelly, *The Research Methods Knowledge Base* 3rd Edition, Atomic Dog, 2006. ** Available at the UW Bookstore or Online at Amazon, make sure you buy the right edition **

All other readings will be provided by Professor Long and available on Canvas.

Course Objectives:

The overall goal of the course is to help students make progress on their research strategies using a combination of various social science methods and forms of data collection from the field. Narrowly, the class has relevance for students in American politics, international relations, comparative politics, public policy, economics, area studies, and empirically-oriented political theory. More broadly, the methods we cover will come from a range of social science disciplines, including anthropology, economics, political science, and sociology. While most of your research strategies will fall within the realm of “political science” because either your independent or dependent variables will include something “political,” our approach to field methods will remain agnostic as to particular questions or variables. Rather, we will think holistically about the range of methods used in the social sciences and how we can combine them to answer our research questions.

I have designed this course as a “workshop” to include three main goals for each session. The first goal is to introduce students to the main research strategies for scholars in the social sciences who gather data from the field. The second goal is to read and discuss what I consider to be examples of the “state of the art” for each method. The third goal is to allow students to continue to work on and receive feedback regarding their own research strategies as the course develops.

Course Requirements:

Readings:

Students are expected to complete all readings and be prepared to discuss them in workshop. There will be no formal presentations of the readings.

Weekly Assignments:

Each week, students will see instructions on what parts of their research strategy they should come prepared to discuss. I will not ask students to turn anything into me formally, but I would recommend that they keep a running document that includes each week's component, as this will help form the draft of the final research strategy. In each class, I will call on students individually to present and they will receive feedback from fellow students, but not all student will be called on each week (depending on enrollment). Students may also work in small groups. Nonetheless, each student should keep up with these assignments to ensure that they are making progress on their research strategies throughout the quarter.

NB: Students will naturally begin the class thinking that a certain weeks' method is more interesting or germane to their work than another weeks'. While this will be the case for many students and their final research strategies will reflect this, one goal of the course is to push students to always think about the range of methods they could use to answer research questions – even if they never actually utilize that method.

Final Research Strategy:

By the end of the quarter, students should use the weekly assignments and feedback to produce a significant writing assignment that brings together a multi-method research plan. This could be a research proposal for the NSF dissertation grant, an MA thesis, a draft prospectus, draft chapters from a dissertation, an SSRC application, or any other writing product that clearly states a question, theory, hypotheses, and strategy for collecting data through various methods in the field. Students should plan the format of the research strategy strategically to meet the goals of where they are in the program. Please Note: I do not expect students to have actually conducted the research that they plan for the research strategy. Therefore, it is just that: a plan for doing research, not a completed research project. I will discuss this more in class.

Course Evaluation:

Weekly Participation: 30%

Final Research Strategy: 70%

Week 1: Performing Multi-Method Counterfactual Analysis in the Field (January 7)

Wherein we review the fundamentals of research design, think seriously about counterfactuals and what they look like in the real world, stop worrying and learn to love the experiment, talk seriously about “research strategies,” and ponder how hard field research seems from Gowen Hall

Trochim, Chapters 1 and 7, “Foundations” & “Design” in *The Research Methods Knowledge Base* 3rd Edition, Atomic Dog, 2006.

Stephen L. Morgan and Christopher Winship, Chapter 1 “Introduction,” in *Counterfactuals and Causal Inference*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007.

Joshua Angrist and Jorn-Steffen Pischke, Chapters 1 and 2, “Questions about *Questions*” and “The Experimental Ideal,” *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*, Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2009.

“Symposium: Field Research,” *Qualitative Methods*, Spring 2004: 2-14.
<http://www18.georgetown.edu/data/people/mmh/publication-42433.pdf>

Assignment for Class: Question

Choose a research question that will guide the construction of your research strategy throughout the quarter. Your question should be researchable and imply a counterfactual. It should be answerable using various data collection methods from the field.

Week 2: Choosing Phenomenon, Questions, and Places to Study (January 14)

Wherein we learn to formulate researchable questions, justify visiting places with great weather and good food (or not), and think seriously about how to match theory with case selection and process tracing

John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Chapter 5.

Charles Tilly, “Mechanisms in Political Processes,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, 2001.

Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman, “Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule,” *American Political Science Review* 106, 3, 2012: 495-516.

Barbara Geddes, “How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics,” *Political Analysis* 2, 1990.

Jasjeet Sekhon, "Quality Meets Quantity: Case Studies, Conditional Probability, and Counterfactuals," *Perspectives on Politics* 2004 (June), 281-293.

Assignment for Class: Prior Approaches and Theory

Group a few of the most prominent "prior approaches" to answering your question from the literature (without an extended literature review). This should only be a few sentences along the lines of "some people say x, others say y, and most recently have argued z." Then, include a short discussion of your theory and hypotheses (or observable implications of the theory). Your theory and hypotheses should relate to prior approaches insofar as extant scholarship has failed to answer a question or puzzle that remains within a broader topic area, lacks the data to do so, has used the wrong method, or has otherwise ignored an important theoretical, methodological, empirical, or policy-element to your area of inquiry.

Week 3: Ethnography and Archival Research (January 21)

Wherein we learn to tell interesting stories with "thick description" and visit libraries to find stories that we can turn into numbers to analyze

Robert Aunger, "On Ethnography: Storytelling or Science?" *Current Anthropology* 36, No. 1, 1995

Robert Bates, Chapter 1, "The Preservation of Order in Stateless Societies: a Reinterpretation of Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer*," in *Essays on the Political Economy of Rural Africa*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus* Fall 2005

Daron Acemoglu, Tristan Reed, and James Robinson, "Chiefs: Economic Development and Elite Control of Civil Society in Sierra Leone," *Journal of Political Economy*, 122, 2, 2014, pp. 319-368.

Additional Readings:

Robert Emerson et. al. *Writing Ethnographic Field Notes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), Chapters 1, 2, 6.

Assignment for Class: Case Selection

Identify the range of cases that you could use to test the observable implications of your theory. Think about the total population of cases that you could use (don't forget variation across space *and* time), along with the likely sample given limited time and budget.

Week 4: Observational Data and Trying to Discover Naturally Occurring Sources of Variation in the Field (January 28)

Wherein we furiously collect any data we can in places we visit always carrying a thumb drive in our pocket, try to “as-if” randomize something, and begin to think constantly about sources of variation in the world and what data we can collect to reflect it

Thad Dunning, Chapters 1 & 2, “Introduction” and “Standard Natural Experiments” in *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012.

Trochim, Chapter 10.

Richard Snyder, “Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36, No. 1, Spring 2001.

Susan Hyde, “The Observer Effect in International Politics: Evidence from a Natural Experiment,” *World Politics* 60, 1, 2007: 37-63.

Edward Miguel, Sebastian Saiegh, and Shanker Satyanath, “Civil War Exposure and Violence,” *Economics & Politics* 23, 1, 2011: 59-73.

Assignment for Class: Ethnography, Archives, and Observational Data

Prepare a list of ethnographic, archival, and observational data sources that you would gather in the field to test your hypotheses. Think about the “naturally occurring” variation that exists in the field and how your data collection will make use of this variation to test your hypotheses.

Week 5: Survey Methods I: Asking Questions (February 4)

***Wherein we learn that it’s very hard to ask good questions ***

Stanley Payne, *The Art of Asking Questions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), pp. 3-54, 228-237.

William Foot Whyte, “Interviewing in Field Research,” in Robert G. Burgess, *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982). pp. 111-22.

Trochim, Chapter 4.

Public Health piece.

Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy Weinstein, “Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 100, No. 3, 429-447.

Assignment for Class: Asking Questions

Begin to think about the types of respondents that you may ask questions to: elites, stakeholders, experts, the general public, etc. Are these one-on-one elite interviews, focus

groups, or public opinion surveys? Would they be face-to-face, household, refugee camp, online, over ICT, etc.?

Week 6: Survey II: Sampling, Survey Design, and Implementation (February 11)

Wherein we learn not to sweat sampling but rather focus on questionnaire design and agree never to ask a survey that lasts longer than 20 minutes

Trochim, Chapters 2 and 5

Fowler, 2008: Chapters 1-2, 6-8, 11

Karen Ferree, Chapter 2, “Voters” *Framing the Race in South Africa*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011

Karen Ferree, Clark Gibson, and James D. Long, “Voting Behavior and Electoral Irregularities in Kenya’s 2013 Election,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8, 1 2014: 153-172.

Assignment for Class: Questionnaire

Once you have identified your survey population, start to develop a list of questions that you would ask. Make sure they are clear, concise, and easily understandable.

Week 7: Experimental Methods I: Thinking About Randomization, Causality, Treatments, and Outcomes (February 18)

*** Wherein we originally say that experiments solve all of the world’s problem, but slowly realize that we aren’t sure what we’re testing or how we’re measuring it***

Trochim, Chapters 3 and 9, “The Theory of Measurement” and “Experimental Design”

Green and Gerber.

Duflo, Esther Rachel Glennerster and Michael Kremer. 2008. “Using Randomization in Development Economics Research: A Toolkit.” Chapter 61 in *Handbook of Development Economics*, Vol. 4.

Olken, Ben. 2007. “Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia.” *Journal of Political Economy*. 115(2): 200-250.

King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts. 2013. “How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression.” *American Political Science Review* 107(2): 1-18.

Additional Reading:

Robert Adcock and David Collier, "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research," *American Political Science Review* 95, No. 3, 2001.

Assignment for Class: Start Thinking about Treatments and Outcomes

Start thinking about how you could use experimental methods to test the observable implications of your theory. What sort of treatments and outcomes would you look at? What's your experimental counterfactual?

Week 8: Experimental Methods II: Lab-in-the-Field and Survey Experiments (February 25)

*** Wherein we start to test the assumptions of rational choice theory and become ambitious by setting up labs in poor countries; and wherein we start getting cute with our questionnaire design when we think labs sound expensive and logistically difficult ***

Colin Camerer, *Behavioral Game Theory: Experiments in Strategic Interaction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). Introduction.

Dean Karlan, "Using Experimental Economics to Measure Social Capital and Predict Financial Decisions," *American Economic Review* 95, No. 5, 1688-1699.

Steven Levitt and John List, "What Do Laboratory Experiments Tell Us About the Real World," Manuscript, 2006.

Avdeenko, Alexandra; Gilligan, Michael J.. 2014. *International interventions to build social capital : evidence from a field experiment in Sudan*. Impact Evaluation series ; no. IE 115; Policy Research working paper ; no. WPS 6772. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

Thomas B. Pepinsky, R. William Liddle, and Saiful Mujani. 2012. "Testing Islam's Political Advantage: Evidence from Indonesia." *American Journal of Political Science* 56, 3.

Assignment for Class: What's the Lab or Survey Experiment?

What is the lab and/or survey experiment that could be used to test your hypotheses? Think about your sample, treatments, and outcome measures.

Week 9: Experimental Methods III: Field Experiments and Randomized Control Trials (March 4)

*** Wherein we're told to randomize treatments but we suddenly don't treat half of the villages we care about ***

Gertler, Paul et al. 2011. *Impact Evaluation in Practice*. Chapter 4. Washington, DC: World Bank.

G.W. Harrison and J.A. List, "Field Experiments," *Journal of Economic Literature* 42, 1009-1055.

Banerjee, Abhijit V. & Esther Duflo, 2009. "The Experimental Approach to Development Economics," *Annual Review of Economics*, Annual Reviews, Vol. 1(1): 151-178.

James D. Long, Michael Callen, Danielle Jung, and Clark Gibson, "Improving Electoral Integrity with Information and Communications Technology," Working Paper.

Michael Callen, Saad Gulzar, Ali Hasanain, and Yasir Khan, "The Political Economy of Public Employee Absence: Experimental Evidence from Pakistan," Working Paper.

Additional Reading

Ravallion, Martin. 2001. "The Mystery of the Vanishing Benefits: Ms Speedy Analyst's Introduction to Evaluation." Washington, DC: World Bank.

Assignment for Class: What's the Field Experiment or RCT?

What is the field experiment/RCT that could be used to test your hypotheses? Think about your sample, treatments, and outcome measures.

Week 10: Combining Research Strategies, Human Subjects (IRB), and Ethics in Field Research (March 11)

*** Wherein we realize that "what one (wo)man can do, another (wo)man can do" and that employing multiple simultaneous research strategies is not only possible but encouraged; and wherein we think about who we are treating, what we are treating them with, and whether that's a good or bad idea ***

Michael Callen and James D. Long: "Institutional Corruption and Election Fraud: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan," *American Economic Review*, 2015.

Banerjee, Abhijit and Esther Duflo, "Under the Thumb of History? Political Institutions and the Scope for Action," NBER Working Paper

Gweneth McClendon, "Ethics of Using Public Officials as Field Experiment Subjects," APSA Newsletter, 2012.

Final Research Strategies Due: Sunday March 15th at 5pm