UCLA
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

POLITICAL SCIENCE 292B: RESEARCH DESIGN

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Spring 2022
Weds, 2-4:50pm
Royce 166
Student Hours: Thurs, 2:30-4:30

The goal of the course is to introduce key issues and debates in the design, implementation, and presentation of political science research. The topics addressed in the course are by no means exhaustive, but they touch on critical questions that graduate students should be exposed to and will benefit from having thought about deeply. These issues include the ethical questions associated with conducting field research, how to maximize the power of one's research designs, the challenge of measuring the underlying theoretical concepts we study, the many sources of bias that may shape one's research, the strengths and weaknesses of experimental approaches, the ways in which insights about human behavior have altered our understandings of political outcomes, and the costs and benefits of pre-registration, among other topics.

REQUIREMENTS

The course is taught in a single meeting each week on Wednesdays from 2-4:50pm in 166 Royce Hall. Students are required not just to attend the weekly seminar meetings but to have read and thought about the assigned materials for the week, and to participate actively in class discussions.

In addition to participation in seminar discussions, all students are required to prepare seven assignments, as specified in the syllabus. The assignments will be due at 5pm each Tuesday (the day before the seminar), with copies posted to the discussion board on the class's BruinLearn page. All students are expected have read the assignments of their colleagues (as well as the assigned readings) prior to the seminar.

The weight accorded these elements of the course will be as follows: participation in seminar discussions (30%), assignments (10% each).

READINGS

In most graduate courses, reading assignments consist mainly of research articles. While we will read a handful of research articles in this seminar, most of the readings are commentaries, arguments, or descriptions of experiences. Often, they are shorter pieces

whose value lies in the arguments they advance or the questions they raise rather than in the research finding they present. I have selected them because they can serve as the starting points for illuminating discussions and debates.

The readings skew toward Comparative Politics and, within Comparative Politics, toward the study of Africa and the Middle East. But the broader lessons the readings convey should be applicable to—and useful for—researchers across the discipline.

Copies of all seminar readings have been posted to the course website with the exception of Mintz, Valentino and Wayne, *Beyond Rationality*, which we read in its entirety. This book is readily available from Amazon.com and other online booksellers in both hardcopy and as an eText.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

March 30: Introduction to the Course; Field Research I

Kanchan Chandra, "Redefining the Relationship with the Field: Why Graduate Students Should Avoid the Two to Four Week Model of Fieldwork" and Barbara Geddes, "Training for Both Skills and Substance," *Comparative Politics Newsletter*, Fall 2015.

Chapters from Krause and Szekely, *Stories from the Field: A Guide to Navigating Fieldwork in Political Science*, Columbia University Press (2020).
- Richard Nielsen, "Recite! Interpretive Fieldwork for Positivists."
- Krista Wiegand, "Hezbollah Will Take Your Data: How to Plan for Research Among Insurgents."
- Fotini Christia, "Navigating Data Collection in War Zones."
- Nadya Hajj, "Let Go and Let Ali."
- Daniel Posner, "Be Prepared (To Go Off Script)."
- Paul Staniland, "Fieldwork on Foot."
- David Laitin, "The Onion Principle."

Francesca Jensenius, "The Fieldwork of Quantitative Data Collection," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, April 2014.

Thomas Zeitzoff, "More Than Just Hurdles: How Fieldwork Difficulties Provide Insights into Conflict," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, July 2019.

Faten Ghosn and Sarah Parkinson, "'Finding' Sectarianism and Strife in Lebanon," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, July 2019.

April 6: Field Research II: Ethics and Positionality

Diana Kapiszewski, Lauren Maclean, and Benjamin Read, "Ethical Challenges: Managing Power, Positionality, and Expectations" in *Field Research in Political Science: Practice and Principles*, Cambridge University Press (2015).

Lee Ann Fujii, "Research Ethics 101: Dilemmas and Responsibilities," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, October 2012.

Macartan Humphreys, "Reflections on the Ethics of Social Experimentation," *Journal of Globalization and Development* 6:1 (2015).

Kate Cronin-Furman and Milli Lake, "Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, July 2018.

Sheila Carapico, "No Easy Answers: The Ethics of Field Research in the Arab World," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, July 2006.

Chapters from Krause and Szekely, *Stories from the Field: A Guide to Navigating Fieldwork in Political Science*, Columbia University Press (2020).
- Erica Chenoweth, "On Research that 'Matters.'"
- Marc Lynch, "Things Change: Protecting Yourself and Your Sources in Uncertain Times."
- Ora Szekely, "On Being Seen."
- Peter Krause, "Navigating Born and Chosen Identities in Fieldwork."

Jennifer Hamilton, Muthoni Ng'ang'a, and Daniel Posner, "The Ethics of Field Experimentation Using Remote Monitoring Technologies," Working Paper, 2020.

Assignment: compose a 1-2 page memo about whether you believe the Hamilton, Ng'ang'a and Posner study is ethical. Come to seminar ready to articulate and defend that position.

April 13: Research Design I

John Gerring, "Finding a Research Question," in *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*, Cambridge University Press (2012).

Henry Brady, "Causation and Explanation in Social Science," in *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology* (2008).

David Freedman, "Statistical Models and Shoe Leather," *Sociological Methodology* 21 (1991).

Ronald Rogowski, "The Role of Theory and Anomaly in Social-Scientific Inference," *American Political Science Review* 89:2 (1995).

James Fearon and David Laitin, "Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods," in *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology* (2008).

April 20: Research Design II: Studying Important but Hard-To-Measure Concepts

Anne Meng, "Measuring Leader Strength," in *Constraining Dictatorship*, Cambridge University Press (2020).

Seva Gunitsky, "How Do You Measure 'Democracy'?" *The Monkey Cage*, 23 June 2015.

Pavithra Suryanarayan, "State Capacity: A Useful Concept or Meaningless Pablum?" *Broadstreet Blog*, 12 April 2021.

Susan Woodward, "Can We Measure Legitimacy?" *Südoesteuropa* 60 (2012).

Henry Richardson and Erik Schokkaert, "How Do We Measure Well-Being?" *The Conversation*, 8 January 2018.

Adria Lawrence, *Imperial Rule and the Politics of Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press (2013), preface.

https://dignityproject.net/

Assignment: Select two case studies from the [Innovations for Successful Societies](#) web site and compose a 1-2 page research design memo for each, laying out how you would test the key hypothesis that is suggested by the case study. Each case study should be from a different focus area.

April 27: NO CLASS

May 4: Behavioral Political Science

Alex Mintz, Nicholas A. Valentino, and Carly Wayne, *Beyond Rationality: Behavioral Political Science in the 21st Century*, Cambridge University Press (2022).

Assignment: identify an influential paper built around rational choice assumptions about human behavior and compose a research design memo that lays out a plan to revisit the paper's arguments from a behavioral political science perspective.

May 11: Measurement and Bias

W. Phillips Shivley, "Problems of Measurement: Accuracy" in *The Craft of Political Research*, Pearson (2013).

Robert Adcock and David Collier, "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research," *American Political Science* Review 95:3 (2001).

Ian Lustick, "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias," *American Political Science Review* 90:3 (1996).

Eric Kramon and Daniel Posner, "Who Benefits from Distributive Politics? How the Outcome One Studies Affects the Answer One Gets," *Perspectives on Politics* 11:2 (2013).

James Fearon, "Selection Effects and Deterrence," *International Interactions* 28 (2002).

Sophia Dawkins, "The Problem of the Missing Dead," *Journal of Peace Research* 58:5 (2021).

Assignment: for each of the sources of bias that will be identified on the Catalogue of Bias web site, identify a political science example of that type of bias. Then a) describe its source, b) explain its impact on the inferences one might draw if the bias is not corrected, c) discuss how researchers can avoid the bias, and d) discuss how researchers can correct the bias if it is discovered after the fact.

May 18: RCTs and their Critics

Angus Deaton, "Introduction: Randomization in the Tropics Revisited," in *Randomized Control Trials in the Field of Development: A Critical Perspective*, Oxford University Press (2020).

Susan Stokes, "A Defense of Observational Research," in *Field Experiments and Their Critics*, Yale University Press (2014).

Jishnu Das, Shantayanan Devarajan, and Jeffrey Hammer, "Lost in Translation," *Boston Review*, 26 June 2012.

Mary Anne Bates and Rachel Glennerster, "The Generalizability Puzzle," *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Summer 2017.

Jeffrey Hammer, "Randomized Control Trials for Development? Three Problems," *Brookings Review*, 11 May 2017.

Justine Davis, "Manipulating Africa? Perspectives on the Experimental Method in the Study of African Politics," *African Affairs* 119 (2020).

Kim Yi Dionne, Augustine Harawa and Hastings Honde, "The Ethics of Exclusion When Experimenting in Impoverished Settings," in *Ethics and Experiments: Problems and Solutions for Social Scientists and Policy Professionals*, Routledge (2016).

Assignment: Compose a 1-2 page memo laying out the three greatest strengths and three greatest weaknesses of RCTs. Come to seminar prepared to discuss and defend your memo.

May 25: PAPs and Pre-Registration I: The Problem

Garret Christensen, Jeremy Freese, and Edward Miguel, *Transparent and Reproducible Social Science Research*, University of California Press (2019), chs 3-4.

Norbert Kerr, "HARKing: Hypothesizing After the Results are Known," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 2:3 (1998).

Andrew Gelman, "Story Time," blog post, 15 October 2010.

Andrew Gelman, "Descriptive Statistics, Causal Inference, and Story Time," blog post, 7 July 2011.

Assignment I: Drawing on your knowledge of social science theories, provide an explanation for the regression results that will be provided to you. Write no more than two pages.

Assignment II: Using the data set provided, generate a different set of results supporting each of the hypotheses that will be provided.

June 1: PAPs and Pre-Registration II: Proposed Solutions

Macartan Humphreys, Raul Sanchez de la Sierra, and Peter van der Windt, "Fishing, Commitment, and Communication: A Proposal for Comprehensive Nonbinding Research Registration," *Political Analysis* 21 (2013).

Esther Duflo et al, "In Praise of Moderation: Suggestions for the Scope and Use of Pre-Analysis Plans for RCTs in Economics," *NBER Working Paper* 26993 (2020).

George Ofosu and Daniel Posner, "Pre-Analysis Plans: An Early Stocktaking," *Perspectives on Politics* (2022).

Itai Yanai and Martin Lercher, "A Hypothesis is a Liability," *Genome Biology* 21 (2020).

Symposium on the DART Initiative, *Comparative Politics Newsletter*, Spring 2016.

David Laitin et al, "Reporting All Results Efficiently: A RARE Proposal to Open Up the File Drawer," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 52 (2021).

Stefano DellaVigna, Devin Pope and Eva Vivalt, "Predict Science to Improve Science," *Science* 333:6464 (2019).