

Government 1005

The Practice of Research in Political Science

Harvard University • Spring 2004 • MW 11-12

<http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~gov1005/>

Contact Information

Professor: Barry C. Burden

Email: burden@fas.harvard.edu

Phone: 617.495.4249

Office: 322 Littauer (North Yard)

Office Hours: W 2-3

The Course

Political science is the scientific study of politics. The skills required to conduct and evaluate such study are absolutely crucial within the discipline, but they are also of real use in other social sciences, policy research, and analysis in a variety of fields. This is a first course in the methods of research as practiced across a range of the social sciences. It is meant to enable students to be critical in their evaluations of claims about politics, society, and the economy, whether the claims are others' or their own. Students will learn first, how to identify and evaluate factual claims for accuracy and relevance, and second, how to construct and test causal claims. The course will consider examples across a range of topics in political science and related fields.

The course is intended primarily for Government and Social Studies concentrators, though it is open to any Harvard undergraduate. It should be especially useful for juniors who are considering writing senior theses and students heading to law school or graduate school. The course should also benefit anyone who wishes to be a critical consumer of arguments and evidence. Because it emphasizes research design, data collection, and interpretation, it would be a natural precursor to Government 1001: Introduction to Quantitative Methods in Political Science.

Requirements

Students are expected to all of the reading, complete assignments on time, and participate in class and section discussions. The reading load is relatively light because the material often requires more consideration than you would give reading in more substantive courses. Reading consists of Campbell and Stanley's *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*, Gerring's *Social Science Methodology*, and a reading packet. There will be several assignments distributed during the semester. Final grades will be based on several small assignments (20%), a longer paper assignment (20%), a final examination (40%), and section participation and class effort (20%).

Studying Politics (2/4)

Induction and Deduction, Making Inferences, and Positivism (2/9 & 2/11)

Friedman, Milton. 1953. "The Methodology of Positive Economics." In *Essays in Positive Economics*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books. [chapter 1]
Gerring. [Chapters 1, 5, & 6]

Methods of Research: Interviews, Content Analysis, Participant Observation (2/18) **[2/16 is Presidents Day holiday]**

Fenno, Richard F., Jr. 1986. "Observation, Context, and Sequence in the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review* 80: 3-15.

Gerring. [chapter 9]

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, Richard A. Joslyn, and H.T. Reynolds. 2001. *Political Science Research Methods*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. [chapter 8]

Theories and Hypotheses (2/23 & 2/25)

Durkheim, Emile. 1997 [1893]. *Suicide*. New York, NY: Free Press. [book 1: chapter 2 & book 2: chapter 5]

Kitcher, Philip. 1998. "Believing Where We Cannot Prove." In *Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science*, ed. 3rd ed. E.D. Klemke, Robert Hollinger, and David Wýss Rudge. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Lave, Charles A., and James G. March 1975. *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*. New York, NY: Harper and Row. [chapter 3]

Popper, Sir Karl. 1998. "Science: Conjectures and Refutations." In *Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science*, ed. 3rd ed. E.D. Klemke, Robert Hollinger, and David Wýss Rudge. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

★ Assignment I: Alternative Hypotheses in Durkheim's *Suicide*

Measurement I: Operationalization of Concepts (3/1 & 3/3)

Statistical Interlude I: Levels of Measurement, Central Tendency, and Variation

Gerring. [chapters 3 & 4]

Huff, Darrell. 1993. *How to Lie with Statistics*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton. [chapter 2]

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [pages 34-63]

★ Assignment II: Interpreting Tables and Graphs

Measurement II: Reliability and Validity (3/8 & 3/10)

Political Interlude I: Partisan Uses of Data

Statistical Interlude II: Survey Question Wording

Adcock, Robert, and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95:529-46.

Segal, Jeffrey A., and Albert D. Cover. 1989. "Ideological Values and the Votes of U.S. Supreme Court Judges." *American Political Science Review* 83:557-65.

★ Assignment III: Measuring the Quality of Undergraduate Education

Relationships (3/15 & 3/17)

Statistical Interlude III: Bivariate Measures of Association

Licklider, Roy. 1995. "The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945-1993." *American Political Science Review* 89:681-90.

Caiazza, Amy. 2002. "Does Women's Representation in Elected Office Lead to Women-Friendly Policy?" Institute for Women's Policy Research Publication I910.

Collecting Data (3/22 & 3/24)

Statistical Interlude IV: Sample Sizes and Significance

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [chapter 6]

McDonald, Michael P., and Samuel Popkin. 2001. "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter." *American Political Science Review* 95:963-74.

Robinson, W.S. 1950. "Ecological Correlations and the Behavior of Individuals." *American Sociological Review* 15:351-7. [just skim pages 354-6]

★ Assignment IV: Finding Answers

Spring Break (3/29 & 3/31)

Causation, Necessity, and Sufficiency (4/5 & 4/7)

Gerring. [chapter 7]

Goertz, Gary, and Harvey Starr. 2003. "Introduction: Necessary Condition Logics, Research Design, and Theory." In *Necessary Conditions*, ed. Gary Goertz and Harvey Starr. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Talbo, Margaret. "The Placebo Prescription." *The New York Times Magazine*. January 9, 2003.

Hill, Sir Austin Bradford. 1987. "The Environment and Disease: Association or Causation?" <www.edwardtufte.com>.

Experiments and Spuriousness (4/12, 4/14, & 4/19)

Statistical Interlude V: Regression to the Mean

Campbell and Stanley. [entire book]

Friedman, Milton. 1992. "Do Old Fallacies Ever Die?" *Journal of Economic Literature* 30:2129-32.

Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. 2001. "Do Phone Calls Increase Voter Turnout? A Field Experiment." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 65:75-85.

Mondak, Jeffrey J. 1995. "Newspapers and Political Awareness." *American Journal of Political Science* 39:513-27.

★ Assignment V: Guns and Crime

Case Selection and Generalization (4/21 & 4/26)

Statistical Interlude VI: Physical and Statistical Controls

Political Interlude II: Adolescent Shooters and Poor Terrorists

Campbell, Donald T., and H. Laurence Ross. 1968. "The Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding: Time Series Data in Quasi-Experimental Analysis." *Law & Society Review* 3:33-53.

Geddes, Barbara. 1991. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2:131-50.

Gerring. [chapter 8]

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [pages 128-49]

★ Paper Assignment: Testing Conventional Wisdom

Sampling and Statistical Significance (4/28 & 5/3)

Statistical Interlude VII: The Law of Large Numbers

Political Interlude III: Sampling and the 2000 Census

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, Richard A. Joslyn, and H.T. Reynolds. 2001. *Political Science Research Methods*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. [chapter 7]

Squire, Peverill. 1988. "Why the 1936 *Literary Digest* Poll Failed." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 52:125-33.

Conclusions (5/5)

Final Exam (5/28)