

Political Science 400C  
Stanford University, Spring 2017  
Judy Goldstein, Karen Jusko and David Laitin, Instructors  
Tuesdays 10:30PM – 1:20PM; GSL

## **Seminar: Research Design in Political Science**

### **COURSE LEARNING GOALS**

1. This seminar introduces graduate students to current standards in research methods and design.
2. Students learn how to apply these methods to their own research and how to construct an appropriate research design for future work.
3. The class serves as an introduction in how to assess empirical analysis in all fields of political science.

### **REQUIREMENTS**

1. Students are required to submit a 15-page research prospectus, meeting the requirements of a “project description” for NSF grants, by Wednesday, June 14.
2. There will be a set of weekly assignments, with details listed below that will be incorporated into your prospectus
3. Memos, slides and other materials to be used in presentations should be posted on the Canvas website by 12PM on the Monday before each meeting.
4. Students are required to read and be prepared to give comments on the work presented by other class members.
5. The success of the seminar will depend on each student’s preparedness to discuss the assigned readings and to offer comments and feedback on each other’s work.
6. Students will be expected to complete the readings for Week 1 *before* our first meeting on April 4.
7. Students should be doing preliminary thinking about the assignment due in Week 3 which is the foundation for the entire course, as soon as possible, and surely before the

course begins.

## **EVALUATION**

The prospectus will be evaluated on the appropriateness of the research design, not on these substantive or statistical significance of its results. Before handing in your final assignment, students will have an opportunity to present their prospectus, and defend it, before a group of advanced graduate students.

## **RECOMMENDED FOR PURCHASE**

Geddes, Barbara (2003; hereafter "Geddes"). *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. ISBN-10: 0472068350, ISBN-13: 978-0472068357

For students who want to have useful texts in strategic thinking, the following two volumes should also be considered for purchase.

Shepsle, Kenneth (2010). *Analyzing Politics*. New York: Norton. ISBN 978-0-393-93507-3

Avinash K. Dixit, Susan Skeath, and David H. Reiley Jr., *Games of Strategy* (Fourth Edition) ISBN-13: 978-0393124446 ISBN-10: 0393124444 [This book is a very useful reference for future work in game theory; it is also very expensive]

## **STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES**

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, 723-1067 TTY).

## Part I: Research Question

### Week 1 (April 4): Question Selection and Research Design

The purpose of the readings for this week will be to develop criteria for good research questions and research designs.

#### A. *In pursuit of a Research Question*

Kuhn, Thomas (1996). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters IV, VI, and IX.

Achen, Chris and Larry Bartels (2016). "A Chicken in Every Pot: Ideology and Retrospection in the Great Depression." In *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Geddes. Chapter 1 and pp. 27–35.

#### B. *Statistics and Shoe Leather*

Farr, William (1855). "The Thames, the Water Supply, and the Cholera Epidemic" in Noel Humphreys (ed.), *Vital Statistics: A Memorial Volume of Selections from the Reports and Writings of William Farr*. London: Offices of the Sanitary Institute.

Snow, John (1856). "Cholera and the Water Supply in the South Districts of London in 1854." *Journal of Public Health and Sanitary Review* 2: 239–57.

#### C. *Identification, Unanswerable Questions, and Theory*

Freedman, David (2009). *Statistical Models*. Cambridge UP. Chapter 1.

Angrist, Joshua and Jorn-Steffen Pischke (2009). *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*. Princeton UP. Chapter 1.

*D. A Route towards developing an Answer*

Laitin, David (2002). "Comparative Politics: The State of the Subdiscipline," In Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner (eds.) *State of the Discipline*. New York: Norton.

Fearon, James (1996). "Counterfactuals and Causation in Social Science: Exploring an Analogy between Cellular Automata and Historical Processes". In Philip Tetlock and Aaron Belkin, eds., *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996)

Tversky, Amos and Daniel Kahneman (1982). "Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases". In Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic, and Amos Tversky, *Judgment under uncertainty*. Cambridge UP.

**Week 2 (April 11): Tutorial with Instructors to Discuss Your Research Questions**

There will be no formal class meeting in Week 2. Instead, you will sign up for half-hour consultations in which all three instructors will be present to help you develop your research questions. To make time for everyone, we will hold individual meetings on Tuesday, April 11 (9am–12pm and 1-5pm). Come to your scheduled meeting with one or more proposed research questions that you think could satisfy Assignment 1 (see below).

In preparation for meeting with the three instructors, students should consult the following readings:

Przeworski, Adam and Frank Salomon (1988, 1995). "The Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Suggestions for Applicants to Social Science Research Council Competitions." Memo published by the Social Science Research Council.

Hainmueller, Jens and David Laitin (2016). "Immigrant Integration in Europe." NSF proposal submitted January 2016.

Esberg, Jane (2014). "The Logic of Repression: Killings and Disappearances in Pinochet's Chile." Research proposal prepared for Political Science 440C.

Bansak, Kirk (2014). "Strategic Importation: Explaining Diversification in States' Arms Import Portfolios." Research proposal prepared for Political Science 440C.

### **Week 3 (April 18): Presentation of Research Questions**

*Assignment 1:* Based on discussions from the week 2 tutorial, circulate a memo that

- A. States your research question clearly and concisely;
- B. Discusses why existing theories are inadequate to answer your question;
- C. Provides an intuition about how you could advance the literature;
- D. Suggests a theoretical logic linking the factors you see as consequential to the outcome of interest; and
- E. Cites some preliminary evidence to suggest why your hunch might be correct. This evidence may be derived from a case that you know well, or may be a “stylized fact”

Circulate your memo in advance, and present it to other members of the seminar at our meeting on April 18.

## **Part II: Theory**

### **Week 4 (April 25): Microfoundations and Mechanisms**

This week we will focus on causal mechanisms. This can be demonstrated in a game theoretic model, as a psychological syndrome, or in any other flow chart linking treatments to outcomes. The motives of individuals and/or groups should be fully fleshed out, and implications of these motivations, interactions, and decisions should be identified and evaluated theoretically.

Arguments should be built up from “primitives.” As guidance for this, the readings for this week offer examples of theories that link primitives to political outcomes.

#### *A. Games and Strategic Action*

Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin (1996). “Explaining Interethnic Cooperation.” *American Political Science Review* 90(4): 715–35.

Weingast, Barry (1997). “The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law.” *American Political Science Review* 91(2):245–63.

Geddes, pp. 40–69.

*Recommended reading for those without a background in game theory:*

Shepsle, Kenneth (2010). *Analyzing Politics*. New York: Norton. Pages 90–148 (spatial analysis; median voter theorem).

Avinash K. Dixit, Susan Skeath, and David H. Reiley Jr. (2014). *Games of Strategy* (Fourth Edition), pp. 17–41 (How to think about strategic games); 47–62 (extensive form games with backwards induction); and 91–108 (normal form games with Nash concept).

#### B. *Motivated Reasoning*

Zaller, John and Stanley Feldman (1992). “A Simple Theory of Survey Response.” *American Journal of Political Science* 36(3):579–616.

Lodge, Milton and Charles Taber (2013). *The Rationalizing Voter*. Cambridge UP. (Selected pages TBA).

#### C. *Historical, Normative and Ideological Accounts*

Garrett, Geoffrey and Barry R. Weingast (1993). “Structure and Ideology: Change in Parliament in Early Stuart England.” In Goldstein & Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework*. Cornell UP.

Ferejohn, John (1993). “The Institutionalization of Ideas: Westphalia and All That.” In Goldstein & Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework*. Cornell UP.

Johnston, A. Iain (1996). “Cultural Realism and Strategy in Maoist China.” In Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

## **Week 5 (May 2): Student Presentations of their Theory and Mechanisms**

*Assignment 2:* Develop a clear theoretical statement about a political process, from which we can derive more or less general expectations about what will happen, both within the context that inspired your research question, but also other contexts as well.

All statements should:

- A. Identify scope conditions---to whom the statement applies, when, and why.
- B. Be explicit about any assumptions that are necessary to sustain expectations.
- C. Clarify the nature of a relationship between strategic or cooperative actors, if appropriate (i.e., what is the nub of the strategic problem they face). Be clear as to who are the actors; what are their preferences; what information they possess; and what are their choices?

There are many forms your statements can take:

- A series of axioms (e.g., Zaller & Feldman) about how people behave politically
- A flow diagram in which a mechanism can be identified for each "link" (e.g., Lodge and Taber's Figure 1.4),
- A game or set of games that identify the parameters yielding different equilibrium outcomes (e.g., Geddes)
- A decision-theoretic model (e.g., Riker & Ordeshook)
- A spatial model which identifies a winning coalition (Shepsle, or Weingast in Bates et al)

Prepare one slide (two max.) to support your presentation in class.

## **Part III: Quantitative Evidence**

### **Week 6 (May 9): Measurement**

Geddes, pp. 69–86 and Appendix A (pp. 225–32).

Lazarsfeld, Paul F. and Allen H. Barton (1951). "Qualitative Measurement in the Social Sciences: Classification, Typologies, and Indices," in Daniel Lerner and Harold D. Lasswell (eds.), *The Policy Sciences: Recent Developments in Scope and Method*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Pp. 155–92.

*Assignment 3:* Develop a measurement strategy for a key variable in your analysis (using the Lazarsfeld & Barton framework, to the extent it is helpful to you). How might you operationalize your measure? How would your strategy compare to existing measures of similar concepts? In which ways, for example, might the existing measure be misleading? How does your measurement strategy improve on the existing measure?

## Week 7 (May 16): Experiments and Observational Studies

The seminar will be divided into four groups. Each group will be responsible for reading all the materials in one of the subsequent sections, and preparing a briefing to the entire seminar. The presentation should clearly identify the objective of the empirical work in terms of descriptive or causal inference and then discuss challenges and opportunities for making valid descriptive or causal inferences for each type of research design.

### A. *Field Experiments and Program Evaluations*

Bond, Robert M. et al. (2012). "A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization." *Nature* 489:295–98.

Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel Posner & Jeremy Weinstein (2007). "Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?" *American Political Science Review* 101(4):709–25.

Olken, Benjamin (2007). "Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia." *Journal of Political Economy* 115(2): 200–49.

Gottlieb, Jessica. 2016. "Greater Expectations? A Field Experiment to Improve Accountability in Mali." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(1): 143-157

Angrist and Pischke (2009). *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*, Chapter 2.

### B. *Survey Experiments*

Sniderman, Paul, and Thomas Piazza (2002). *Black Pride and Black Prejudice*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, chap. 4.

Hainmueller, Jens, and Michael J. Hiscox (2010). "Attitudes toward Highly Skilled and Low-Skilled Immigration: Evidence from a Survey Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 104(1): 61–84.

Lyall, Jason, Graeme Blair, and Kosuke Imai (2013). "Explaining Support for Combatants during Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan." *American Political Science Review* 107(4): 679–705.

Tomz, Michael R., and Jessica L. P. Weeks (2013). "Public Opinion and the Democratic Peace." *American Political Science Review* 107(4): 849–65.

### C. *Natural Experiments*

Miguel, Edward (2004). "Tribe or Nation? Nation Building and Public Goods in Kenya versus Tanzania" *World Politics* 56:327-62.

Erikson, Robert, and Laura Stoker. 2011. "Caught in the Draft: The Effects of Vietnam Draft Lottery Status on Political Attitudes." *American Political Science Review* 105(2):221-237.

Ferraz, Claudio, and Frederico Finan (2008). "Exposing Corrupt Politicians: The Effects of Brazil's Publicly Released Audits on Electoral Outcomes", *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123: 703-45.

Eggers, Andrew, and Jens Hainmueller. 2009. "MPs for Sale? Returns to Office in Postwar British Politics." *American Political Science Review* Vol. 103, No. 4:1-21.

Sekhon, Jasjeet and Rocio Titiunik (2012) "When Natural Experiments Are Neither Natural Nor Experiments" *American Political Science Review*, 106 (1): 35-57.

Lyall, Jason. 2009. "Does Indiscriminate Violence Incite Insurgent Attacks? Evidence from Chechnya." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53 (3): 331-362.

#### D. *Observational designs*

Scheve, Kenneth and David Stasavage (2010). "The Conscription of Wealth: Mass Warfare and the Demand for Progressive Taxation." *International Organization* 64: 529-61.

Cox, Gary W, and Eric Magar. 1999. "How Much is Majority Status in the U.S. Congress Worth?" *American Political Science Review* 93(June):299-310.

Acharya, Avidit, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen (2013). "The Political Legacy of American Slavery." Working paper.

Abadie, Alberto and Javier Gardeazabal (2003) "The Economic Costs of Conflict: A Case Study of the Basque Country." *American Economic Review* 93 (1):113-32.

### **Week 8 (May 23): Presentation of your plan for quantitative analysis**

*Assignment 4:* Prepare a 15-minute presentation describing your plan for quantitative analysis.

The presentation should include:

- A. scope conditions (i.e. cases for which your theory is relevant);
- B. measurement strategy (translating concepts into variables);
- C. data sources (whether downloaded from publicly available datasets; use of proxies; reliance on surveys or experiments, etc.);
- D. identification, i.e. whether the set-up of your project permits making a causal inference; and

- if not, what future project might permit it; and  
E. descriptive statistics of some of the key variables you will use to test your theory

## Part IV: Qualitative Evidence

### Week 9 (May 30): Case Studies, Analytic Narratives, and Qualitative Evidence

This seminar will focus on the important role of qualitative evidence in providing empirical support for your argument, and in particular, on how the development of an analytic narrative can provide a way to evaluate the micro-foundations of a theoretical account.

#### A. *Applying Mixed Methods Designs*

Fearon, James and David Laitin (2009) "Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods." *Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, pp. 1166–86.

Freedman, David A. (2008). "On Types of Scientific Enquiry: the Role of Qualitative Reasoning." In Box-Steffensmeier, Brady, and Collier, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.

Lustick, Ian S. (1996) "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias." *APSR* 90(3):605-18.

Nunn, Nathan (2012). "Culture and the Historical Process." *Economic History of Developing Regions* 27(Supplement 1):108-26.

#### B. *Incorporating Historical Evidence in Rational Models*

Bates, Robert, Avner Greif, Margaret Levi, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, and Barry Weingast (1998). *Analytic Narratives*. Princeton University Press. "Introduction" (pp. 3–22), and Weingast's "Political Stability and Civil War: Institutions, Commitment, and American Democracy" (pp.148–93).

Greif, A. (1994) "Cultural Beliefs and the Organization of Society" *Journal of Political Economy*

#### C. *Incorporating Statistical Models for Qualitative Data*

Glynn, Adam M. and Nahomi Ichino (2014) "Using Qualitative Information to Improve Causal Inference" *American Journal of Political Science* 59(4): 1055–71.

Humphreys, Macartan and Alan M. Jacobs (2015) "Mixing Methods: A Bayesian Approach." *American Political Science Review* 109(4): 653–73.

**Week 10 (June 6): Situating Your Project in the Political Science Literature**

[Tentative: IRB Presentation]

*Assignment 5:* Write a brief (5 page) memo situating your project in the broader political science literature. If your intuition about the political phenomenon you are studying is correct, what will that mean for our cumulative understanding of the world? Which “established truths” would need to be revisited? How does your project speak to the big, unanswered questions of contemporary political science?

**Exam Week: Final Presentations to Outside Panel**

Each student should prepare a 20-minute presentation of his/her research question, preliminary findings, and research strategy for the future in a presentation to a panel of advanced graduate students qua “outside evaluators” (as if a talk at a professional meeting). Students should then be prepared to answer questions for 25 minutes. Outside evaluators will provide written feedback on the presentations to accompany instructors’ comments on the final research prospectus, due June 14.

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