

PS 540: Introduction to Methods of Political Science Research

Fall 2005: Christopher K. Butler

Overview:

This is an introduction to Political Science as a discipline. We will learn what constitutes “good” and “bad” research and all the vagaries associated with making such distinctions. We will learn about the many facets and sub-disciplines of Political Science and how each community makes its own judgments of what constitutes “good” research. At bottom, however, each of these communities is interested in answering questions regarding politics. It is the question which then guides research.

The course is divided into three broad parts. In the first part, we will learn about the philosophy which surrounds how knowledge is produced scientifically. In the second part, we will learn about designing research around a question. In the third part, we will study broad areas of current research in Political Science, including the research done by the faculty here. The last two class sessions are reserved for student presentations.

This is NOT a traditional lecture class. Attendance and especially participation in class discussions is vital to your understanding of the class material. The class participation portion of your grade will reflect your attendance record and your average quality participation in class discussions.

Contact Information:

Class Meetings: Tuesdays from 4:00 to 6:30 in SSCI 2069

Instructor's Office: SSCI 2051

Office Phone: 277-3742

E-mail: ckbutler@unm.edu

Office Hours: Mondays and Thursdays from 3 to 5 PM and by appointment.

Books:

Chalmers, Alan F. *What Is This Thing Called Science?* Hackett Publishing Co. (Chalmers)

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry* Princeton University Press. (KKV)

Van Evera, Stephen. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* Cornell University Press. (Van Evera)

Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research : Design and Methods* Sage Publications. (Yin)

Article Readings: (most available through JSTOR)

Adcock, Robert, and David Collier. 2001. “Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research.” *American Political Science Review* 95(3): 529-46.

Berg-Schlosser, Dirk, and Gisele De Meur. 1994. “Conditions of Democracy in Interwar Europe: A Boolean Test of Major Hypotheses.” *Comparative Politics* 26(3): 253-79.

Bollen, Kenneth. 1993. “Liberal Democracy: Validity and Method Factors in Cross-National Measures.” *American Journal of Political Science* 37(4): 1207-30.

Coppedge, Michael. 1999. “Thickening Thin Concepts and Theories: Combining Large N and Small in Comparative Politics.” *Comparative Politics* 31(4): 465-76.

Elkins, Zachary. 2000. “Gradations of Democracy? Empirical Tests of Alternative Conceptualizations.” *American Journal of Political Science* 44(2): 293-300.

Giles, Michael W., David Patterson, and Francie Mizell. 1989. “Discretion in Editorial Decision-Making: The Case of the Journal of Politics.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 22(1): 58-62.

Harvey, Frank P. 1999. “Practicing Coercion: Revisiting Successes and Failures Using Boolean Logic and Comparative Methods.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43(6): 840-71.

- Herrnson, Paul S. 1995. "Replication, Verification, Secondary Analysis, and Data Collection in Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28(3): 452-55.
- Jones, Charles O. 1974. "Doing Before Knowing: Concept Development in Political Research." *American Journal of Political Science* 18(1): 215-28.
- Muir, Edward. 1999. "They Blinded Me with Political Science: On the Use of Nonpeer Reviewed Research in Education Policy." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 32(4): 762-4.
- Nie, Norman, with Christopher Ross. 1991. "Model vs. Data Driven Science: A Corrective Prescription for the Evolution of Social Sciences." *Distinguished Lectures in the Social Sciences*. [Photocopy in department lounge]
- Polsby, Nelson W. 1993. "Where Do You Get Your Ideas?" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 26(1): 83-7.

Another page lists "Selected Faculty Readings" from faculty here in the department.

Assignments and Responsibilities:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Homework (6) | 6% |
| Peer Reviews (2) | 5% |
| Attendance and Participation | 15% |
| RESEARCH DESIGN PROJECT | |
| Annotated Bibliography | 10% |
| Argument and Theoretical Hypothesis | 10% |
| Draft Paper | 14% |
| Strategic Planning | 1% |
| Presentation | 4% |
| Final Paper | 35% |

Research Design Project:

Because the course is largely about research design, the major assignment is a research design paper. This paper should be organized with the following sections:

- Topic and Question (What is the subject of my inquiry? What is my specific research question? Why is answering my question important to the broader community of scholars and to society at large?)
- Literature Review and Annotated Bibliography (What is known on my question? What are the key findings? What was the evolution of ideas on this topic?)
- Argument and Theoretical Hypothesis (What is my theoretical approach to my question? What assumptions am I making in my attempt to answer my question? What hypotheses follow from my theoretical approach? How can I diagram my theory?)
- Testable Hypothesis and Methods (How can I measure each of my theoretical concepts? What statistical methods are appropriate? What qualitative methods are appropriate? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approach? Given these advantages and disadvantages, which approach is better suited for my research question?)
- Strategic Planning (With whom shall I be working within the department on my question? How does my research interest fit with his or her research interests? What coursework would best prepare me to address my research question?)

This paper should not be left to the end of the semester. Each student should discuss each component of the paper with me throughout the semester. Certain components of the paper are due throughout the semester. Talking with other faculty members within the department who are appropriate to your research interests is also advised.

In addition to discussing your projects with me, mid-semester drafts of your papers are due to me on **Wednesday, November 2**. Three copies of your draft should be turned in me in an UNMARKED manila envelope. One copy should have a cover page identifying yourself and your title; the other two copies should have a cover page with a TITLE ONLY and no personally identifying references anywhere within the paper. These anonymous draft papers will be distributed to other class members for the review assignment. (See below.)

A presentation of your question and summarizing your research design is intended to get you familiar with communicating your ideas (and taking criticism) in a public forum. The final draft of your research design paper is due by 5 PM on **Friday, December 16**. You are to include a cover letter to me summarizing how you addressed my comments and the reviewers' comments on your draft.

Reviews of Research Design Draft Papers:

Peer review is an essential part of research in any scholarly community. Much of peer review in Political Science is done under a “double-blind” process in which the reviewers are not informed of the identity of the author and the author is not informed of the identity of the reviewers. While the process is not fool-proof, it is the dominate one in the discipline. In addition, getting feedback from your peers helps you improve your work. With this in mind, the draft papers will be reviewed by two of your classmates (with another copy receiving comments from me) and, you, in turn, will review draft papers from two of your classmates. You will receive explicit instructions regarding the reviews when the assignment is handed out. Two copies of each review are due on **Wednesday, November 16**. For each review, one ANONYMOUS copy will go to the author (through me) of the draft paper and one IDENTIFIED copy will go to me for a grade.

Grading

I will grade individual assignments on a 4-point scale, sometimes by letter and sometimes by number. Your final grade will depend on your weighted average. (Students enrolled for undergraduate or non-degree credit can receive grades in the D- to C- range.)

| Average | Final Grade |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| above 4.17 | A+ |
| between 3.84 and 4.17 | A |
| between 3.50 and 3.84 | A- |
| between 3.17 and 3.50 | B+ |
| between 2.84 and 3.17 | B |
| between 2.50 and 2.84 | B- |
| between 2.17 and 2.50 | C+ |
| between 1.84 and 2.17 | C |
| below 1.84 | F |

Late assignments:

Assignments that are turned in late—by any amount of time—will be docked one letter grade. Special circumstances may warrant individual extensions setting a new due date. Extensions must be requested before the first due date is reached. Only one extension per assignment will be given.

Americans with Disabilities Act:

Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contact me as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner. Handouts are available in alternative accessible formats upon request.

| Date | Reading | Topic | Lab | Homework Due |
|--------------|---|------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| August 23 | | | SocSci Index + JSTOR | |
| August 30 | Chalmers, chs. 1-9 | Philosophy of Science | | Topic and Question for Research Paper |
| September 6 | van Evera, Intro & ch. 1; KKV, 1-3 | Research Design (+ Diagram) | Arrow Diagrams | Homework 1 |
| September 13 | Chalmers, 10-11; Nie 1991; KKV, 4 | Measurement I | | Homework 2 |
| September 20 | Jones 1974; Elkins 2000; Bollen 1993 | Measurement II | | Annotated Bibliography for Research Paper |
| September 27 | | Research Design in Action | | Homework 3 |
| October 4 | KKV, 5&6; Coppedge 1999 | Qualitative vs. Quantitative | | |
| October 11 | Ragin, 1-6 | Boolean Method I | | Argument & Theoretical Hypothesis for Research Paper |
| October 18 | Ragin, 7-9; Ragin, Mayer, & Drass 1984; Weyland 1998; Berg-Schlosser & Demeur 1999; Harvey 1999 | Boolean Method II | | Homework 4 |
| October 25 | van Evera, remainder | Case Study I | | Homework 5 |
| November 1 | Yin, entire | Case Study II | | Rough Drafts of Research Paper (11/2) |
| November 8 | Giles, Patterson, & Mizell 1989; Polsby 1993; Muir 1999 | Peer Review Process | | Homework 6 |
| November 15 | Faculty Readings | Faculty Readings | Powerpoint | Reviews of Research Papers (11/16) |
| November 22 | Faculty Readings | Faculty Readings | | Strategic Planning Paper |
| November 29 | | Presentations | | Presentation for Research Paper |
| December 6 | | Presentations | | Presentation for Research Paper |
| Finals Week | | | | Final Research Paper (12/16) |