

POP88051: Research Design MT 2023

Wednesday 12:00-14:00, 4050B Arts Block, Trinity College
During Teaching Weeks at Trinity College (excluding Reading Week)

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This course introduces students to the theoretical and practical issues they will need to conduct research on politics. To be successful, political science research must identify a variation to be explained, offer a new argument about reasons for actors' behaviours, and be integrated into existing research, falsifiable and tested. The requirement that research claims should explain variation, be falsifiable and tested against observable evidence of the implications of their claims, is demanding, and one that many students will initially find difficult. Nevertheless, it is the essential feature of successful political science research. The particular approach of this course emphasises leading with the 'dependent variable' and 'disaggregation' of the various aspects of research design, isolated in some degree from each other.

Requirements and Grading

Reading

All course participants are expected to come to class each week having completed all the assigned readings, having thought about them carefully, ready to contribute to discussion. To better encourage attention and participation in class discussion, all laptops and screens etc should be turned off throughout the seminar.

The readings assigned fall into two categories: (i) theoretical discussions of the issues covered in that week. These are chapters from methodology textbooks or reflection papers written by some of the best names in the field; (ii) empirical journal articles with applications of the theoretical concepts discussed.

Response papers (20%)

FOUR short response papers (each equal value).

- Response papers are not summaries, but demonstrate an understanding and provide a critique of, or reasoned assessment of, the week's readings. Assume the reader of your response paper knows the readings well, so keep the summary of the readings terse, and focus on developing an argument about or from them. Remember that for this particular module, we are focussing on issues of research design, rather than substance. Response papers can be written about the week's required readings. Response papers should be at least two but no more than four double-spaced pages long
- Before our second meeting I will create a schedule with the weeks in which each of you will write the response papers based on your declared preferences.

Class Participation (10%)

This is mostly a discussion class, not a lecture class. You will be expected to discuss – both talk and listen to each other – on the subject of some difficult material. 10 per cent of the total mark will be attributed to class participation.

Class participation requires contributing to class discussion, including listening to others, and having questions for discussion, demonstrating that contributions are based on a thorough understanding and detailed knowledge of all the required readings for the week, and on-time attendance. Where a student is falling behind in class participation, the lecturer may require additional response papers, or other written materials, to be submitted.

Each meeting we will have a discussion leader whose role is to energize the crowd and come up with at least three questions for discussion per each reading.

Written Research Proposal

This assignment asks course participants to submit a proposal for a research project. I will evaluate this proposal according to the standards for research design that we cover in class. For this class, you will particularly emphasise the issues of research puzzle, theory development and research design. The project will miss the empirical part present in a research paper. The class requires a project which is well-defined and specific, feasible, and methodologically sound. The project can be based on your dissertation topic.

You may wish to use this iterated development of a research design to develop the project that you may wish to pursue for your dissertation, or just a conference paper. However, there is no obligation to do so, and you are not at all required to write your dissertation on the topic you choose to pursue for this particular module.

[A Reminder: Nothing submitted for this module should contain material submitted to any other course, either at your current or previous universities].

The research design will happen in three stages:

1. Research question: Due on Friday at end of the Fourth Week, 29 September 2023, should outline a broad research question you are interested in. The question must be causal in nature. The paper, not to exceed two double-spaced pages, will include a research question i.e. a variation to be explained, an indication of the proposed causal explanation, and a brief explanation of why this is an important question. This assignment is required, but will not receive a grade. These papers will be made available to class colleagues so that everyone can see how others are approaching the problems of research design.
2. Project outline: Due on Friday at the end of Seventh Week (TCD Reading Week). This short paper will provide a brief sketch of the project will propose in fuller form at the end of the term. It will include:
 - a. a variation to be explained, in detail, and with clarity:
 1. the conceptual variation
 2. how that variation is measured/ scored
 - b. an outline of the proposed causal explanation
 - c. a discussion of observable implications of that causal explanation
 - d. and a justification for the project. This paper should be no more than five-double-spaced pages in length. **It counts for 20% of the final grade.** Again, papers will be made available to all students in the module. The projects will be further presented in front of the class on weeks 8 and 9.
3. Project presentation in class. Weeks 8 and 9 meetings

4. Full Research Design: Due on Monday 8th January 2024.
The full proposal will include
- a. a very brief 1-2 page introduction
 - b. a puzzle, the main question to be answered
 - c. an assessment of previous scholarship that might offer explanations of this puzzle
 1. previous scholarship attempting to explain exactly that puzzle
 2. and/or relevant previous scholarship on closely related topics
 3. making sure to distinguish your contribution from the most similar previous scholarship.
 - d. elaborate a new argument (or a development / application of an old argument) that provides an explanation for the puzzle
 - e. explain how the argument can be tested / potentially falsified
 - i. elaborate the observable implications of the argument
 - ii. address how data can be collected and analysed
 - iii. in effect, get as far as possible without actually conducting a full test (running the data on a statistical analysis, conducting interviews, going to an archive etc).

Please produce the paper with sections written in the order outlined above. This full research design should be double-spaced and no more than 6000 words of text (excluding bibliography, but including everything which is not the bibliography). You have time to produce a polished and thoughtful piece of writing, drawing on the materials of the course as a whole. You will want to look at the checklist at the end of this syllabus.

Summary of Grading:

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| 10% | Class Participation |
| 20% | Reaction Papers (four papers of equal value) |
| 20% | Project Outline |
| 50% | Full Research Design |

Reading List

There are two books that you should purchase:

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton university press, 1994. (KKV henceforth)

Gerring, John. *Social science methodology: A unified framework*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: A science of politics?

Przeworski, Adam. "Is the science of comparative politics possible?" *Oxford handbook of comparative politics* (2006): 147-171.

Lupia, Arthur. "What is the value of social science? Challenges for researchers and government funders." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47.1 (2014): 1-7.

Sigelman, Lee. "The coevolution of American political science and the American Political Science Review." *American Political Science Review* 100.4 (2006): 463-478.

Wuffle, A. 2015. "Uncle Wuffle's Reflections on Political Science Methodology." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 48(1): 176-182.

Isaac, Jeffrey C. "For a more public political science." *Perspectives on Politics* 13.2 (2015): 269-283.

Week 3: Variation to be explained, finding a puzzle

Gustafsson, Karl, and Linus Hagström. "What is the point? Teaching graduate students how to construct political science research puzzles." *European Political Science* 17.4 (2018): 634-648.

Gerring (2011) ch. 2

KKV: pp. 107-112

Teune, Henry, and Adam Przeworski. *The logic of comparative social inquiry*. New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1970. Pages on replacing proper names.

Two short interviews with Peter Higgs and Orson Welles:

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2013/dec/06/peter-higgs-boson-academic-system>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKra6_NAey8

Examples:

Poulsen, Lauge N. Skovgaard, and Emma Aisbett. "When the claim hits: Bilateral investment treaties and bounded rational learning." *World Politics* 65.2 (2013): 273-313.

Zabyelina, Yuliya. "Vigilante justice and informal policing in post-Euromaidan Ukraine." *Post-Soviet Affairs* (2019): 1-16.

Week 4: Developing a theory, generating and testing hypotheses

Popper, Karl. *The logic of scientific discovery*. Routledge, 2005, Chapter 1.

Gerring (2011) chapter 3

Goertz, Gary, and James Mahoney. *A tale of two cultures: Qualitative and quantitative research in the social sciences*. Princeton University Press, 2012. Chs. 14-16.

Lakatos, Imre. "Falsification and the methodology of scientific research programmes." *Can theories be refuted?*. Springer, Dordrecht, 1976. 205-259.

KKV pp. 100-105 on falsifiability.

Example (only the theoretical part):

Bawn, Kathleen, and Frances Rosenbluth. "Short versus long coalitions: electoral accountability and the size of the public sector." *American Journal of Political Science* 50.2 (2006): 251-265.

Week 5: Measurement and concepts

Gerring (2011) chs 5-7

KKV, ch 5.

Examples:

Paxton, Pamela. "Women's suffrage in the measurement of democracy: Problems of operationalization." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 35.3 (2000): 92-111.

Kreuzer, Marcus. "Historical knowledge and quantitative analysis: The case of the origins of proportional representation." *American Political Science Review* 104.2 (2010): 369-392.

Week 6: The Qualitative and Quantitative traditions

KKV, chs. 1 and 6

Brady, Henry E., and David Collier, eds. *Rethinking social inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010. Chs 7 and 10

Examples:

Tulia Faletti. 2005. "A sequential Theory of Decentralization: Latin America Cases in Comparative Perspective". **American Political Science Review**, 99,3, August 2005, pp. 1-20.

Tavits, Margit, and Natalia Letki. "When left is right: Party ideology and policy in post-communist Europe." *American Political Science Review* 103.4 (2009): 555-569.

Week 7: Reading Week

Week 8: Presentations I

Week 9: Presentations II

Week 10 (Oct 20): Causal Inference I: process tracing, granger causality, matching

Weller, Nicholas, and Jeb Barnes. *Finding pathways: Mixed-method research for studying causal mechanisms*. Cambridge University Press, 2014. PP 1-86.

Thurman, Walter N., and Mark E. Fisher. "Chickens, eggs, and causality, or which came first." *American journal of agricultural economics* 70.2 (1988): 237-238.

Examples:

Kam, Cindy D., and Carl L. Palmer. "Reconsidering the effects of education on political participation." *The Journal of Politics* 70.3 (2008): 612-631.

Singh, Prerna. "Subnationalism and social development: A comparative analysis of Indian states." *World Politics* 67.3 (2015): 506-562.

- Focus primarily on the qualitative part, from page 530 on

Week 11: Causal Inference II: Instrumental variables, Differences-in-Differences, Regression Discontinuity Design

Angrist, Joshua D., and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. *Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion*. Princeton university press, 2008. Chs 4-6.

- Focus on the concepts rather than the mathematics behind estimators

Examples:

Apfeld, Brendan, et al. "Education and Social Capital." *Journal of Experimental Political Science* (2021): 1-27.

Brancati, Dawn. "The origins and strengths of regional parties." *British Journal of Political Science* 38.1 (2008): 135-159.

Ponattu, Dominic. "Duverger's psychological effect: A natural experiment approach." *Electoral Studies* 54 (2018): 139-147.

Week 12: Transparency, reproducibility, pre-registration

Elman, Colin, Diana Kapiszewski, and Arthur Lupia. "Transparent social inquiry: implications for political science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (2018): 29-47.

Laitin, David D., and Rob Reich. "Trust, transparency, and replication in political science." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50.1 (2017): 172-175.

Monogan, James E. "Research preregistration in political science: The case, counterarguments, and a response to critiques." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 48.3 (2015): 425-429.

Examples:

Lieshout, Robert H., Mathieu LL Segers, and Anna M. van der Vleuten. "de Gaulle, Moravcsik, and the choice for Europe: soft sources, weak evidence." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6.4 (2004): 89-139.

Ahmed, Faisal Z. "The perils of unearned foreign income: Aid, remittances, and government survival." *American Political Science Review* 106.1 (2012): 146-165.

Abdih, Yasser, Ralph Chami, Jihad Dagher, and Peter Montiel. 2008. "Remittances and Institutions: Are Remittances a Curse?" IMF Working Paper 08/29 (<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2008/wp0829.pdf>).