

POLS 211: Research Design I

SPRING 2020

Course meetings:

Mondays 2:00-4:50pm

Zoom channel: <https://ucsb.zoom.us/j/6432909939> (Meeting ID: 643 290 9939)

Instructor:

Paasha Mahdavi, paasha@ucsb.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays from 2:00pm-3:00pm via Zoom, and by appointment.

Course description

This is the first quarter of a two-quarter research seminar designed to give students experience in the production of a research paper, with a focus on designing theoretically-informed, empirically-tested projects. The seminar is taught in a workshop format focusing on the individual research projects of each student.

Course objectives

In the words of political scientist Barbara Geddes, “The purpose of research is to build theories that help us understand the world; Good research is both theoretically interesting and persuasive.” With this in mind, our course has two objectives: to help students develop theoretically interesting and researchable papers and to provide students with an overview of research strategies that will make their projects persuasive.

The readings for the course are reasonably short; these are intended to be discussed in the context of students’ research projects, particularly as the issues raised are (or are not) relevant to these projects. During the last three weeks, the readings will consist of example political science publications that we will review with an eye to their research designs. Many of the readings throughout the course will be familiar; these should be carefully re-read with particular attention to their structure and design.

Prerequisites

This course is intended for second-year doctoral students in political science, but exceptions can be made for graduate students from other departments at UCSB. While not a formal prerequisite, each student is expected to have at least the beginning of a research proposal idea before starting the course.

Grading and course requirements

1. Assignments: 40%
2. Participation: 20%
3. Final paper: 40%

Required Books

- Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba (hereafter KKV). 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Barbara Geddes (hereafter Geddes). 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Henry E. Brady and David Collier (hereafter BC). 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Second Edition). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Suggested Books

- W. Phillips Shively. *The Craft of Political Research* (any edition). CRC Press.
- Stephen Van Evera. 1997. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Course Webpage

All readings for the course can be downloaded from the course webpage on GauchoSpace.

Assignments & Final paper

Assignments will consist of **four** preliminary research design outlines that build on each other and will culminate in a final research product. This product can be a standalone paper, a pre-analysis plan, or a potential dissertation chapter (it cannot, however, be a dissertation prospectus). The first assignment will be due before the quarter begins and the remainder will be spread out evenly throughout the quarter.

As part of your final paper, you will also submit a plan for remaining work on the project over the summer and tentatively in the Fall Quarter in PS 212. This should include a list of objectives and tasks with expected completion dates, along with a statement that outlines your major concerns and/or biggest obstacles for the project.

Participation

Discussion forum

Students are expected to post to the Gauchospace discussion forum on a weekly basis with **two** substantive points and/or questions based on the upcoming week's readings, again with an eye to how the readings relate to their own projects. These should be posted every Sunday by 5:00 PM.

Peer reviews

Students will complete one peer review of another student's assignment throughout the quarter.

Workshop presentations

Every week, students will present updates on their projects during the second segment of class. Some weeks this will be evenly split, with about 15 minutes dedicated to each project; other weeks this will entail longer discussions of one to two individual projects. These presentations will be based on submitted assignments throughout the quarter.

Course Plan

Tentative; subject to change as the quarter develops.

Week 1: Choosing a Research Topic

- Geddes, pp. 27-37.
- KKV, pp. 3-23.

Recommended:

- * Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation." *Daedalus*. 87(1): 111-134.

Week 2: Mode(s) of Inquiry

- KKV, pp. 29-33, 46-50, and 99-114.
- BC, pp. 1-33.
- Thomas Ball. 1976. "From Paradigms to Research Programs: Toward a Post-Kuhnian Political Science." *American Journal of Political Science* 20(1): 151-177.

Week 3: Explaining Outcomes vs. Testing Arguments

- BC, pp. 89-98. [Rogowski's "How Inference in the Social (but not the Physical) Sciences Neglects Theoretical Anomaly"]
- Geddes, pp. 1-26 and 37-88.

Week 4: Observable Implications

- Richard Fenno. 1978. *Homestyle: House Members in Their Districts*. Little, Brown and Co., Appendix.
- Clifford Geertz. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture." In Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books, pp. 3-30.

Week 5: Case selection and context

- Geddes, pp. 89-117.
- KKV, pp. 128-48.

Recommended (AP, CP, IR):

- * John Gerring. 2004. "What Is A Case Study and What Is It Good For?" *American Political Science Review*. 98: 341-354.

- * Thomas B. Pepinsky. 2019. "The return of the single-country study." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 22: 187-203.
- * Christopher Achen and Duncan Snidal. 1989. "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies." *World Politics*. 41(2): 143-169.

Week 6: Rival Hypotheses and Crucial Tests

- Geddes, pp. 117-129.
- BC, pp. 161-199. [Collier, Brady, and Seawright's "Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference"]

Recommended:

- * John R. Platt. 1964. "Strong Inference." *Science* 146: 3642 (Oct 16).
- * T.C. Chamberlin. 1965. "The Method of Multiple Working Hypotheses." *Science* 148: 3671, 754-759 (May 7).

Week 7: Measuring concepts and "operationalization"

- Adam Przeworski & Henry Teune. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* New York: Wiley, pp. 91-112.
- BC, pp. 67-82. [Brady's "Doing Good and Doing Better: How Far Does the Quantitative Template Get us?"]
- Geddes, pp. 142-173.

Recommended (AP, Political Economy, CP):

- * Hakeem Jefferson. 2019. "The Curious Case of Black Conservatives: Construct Validity and the 7-point Liberal-Conservative Scale." Working Paper.
- * Stephen Levitt & Dubner, S. 2005. "What Makes a Perfect Parent." In Levitt (Ed.), *Freakonomics*. New York: William Morrow, pp. 147-178.
- * Clyde Wilcox. 1991. "The Causes and Consequences of Feminist Consciousness Among West European Women." *Comparative Political Studies*. 23: 519-545.

Week 8: Discussion of Sample Research (1)

- Elisabeth J. Wood. 2001. "The Emotional Benefits of Insurgency." In Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper and Francesca Polletta, eds., *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*. University of Chicago Press.
- Kateb, George. 1989. "Hobbes and the Irrationality of Politics." *Political Theory*. 17(3):355-391.

- Daniel N. Posner. 2004. "The political salience of cultural difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review*. 98(4): 529-545.

Week 9: No class: Memorial Day

Week 10: Discussion of Sample Research (2)

- Anna Grzymala-Busse. 2008. "Beyond Clientelism: Incumbent State Capture and State Formation." *Comparative Political Studies*. 41(4/5): 638-673.
- Pia Raffler. 2020. "Does Political Oversight of the Bureaucracy Increase Accountability? Field Experimental Evidence from an Electoral Autocracy." Working paper.

Readings on The Publication Process:

- * Gary King. 2006. "Publication, Publication." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 39(1): 119-125.
- * Matthew J. Lebo. 2016. "Managing Your Research Pipeline." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 49(2): 259-264.