

PLSC 308: “Introduction to Political Research”

Research Design Paper Guide

Spring 2016

A requirement of this course is the completion of a course research design paper. As I noted on the syllabus, this paper is worth 25 percent of your grade in the course (250 points). Fifty of those points have already been assigned, through the short presentations conducted on April 19 and 21. The remaining 200 points comprise the written paper grade.

In the research design, you will be expected to make an argument (informed by theory and/or existing social scientific work), present one or more hypotheses derived from those arguments, describe the operationalization, data and methods you would employ in your analysis, and outline your expected findings. Note that you need not develop a design that you would actually be able to implement by yourself; in other words, you should not feel constrained in your design by resources.

In addition to the usual paper desiderata (spelling / punctuation / grammar / style / etc.), your research design will be graded according to:

1. The degree to which the hypotheses are motivated by the theory,
2. The closeness of the fit between the hypotheses set forth and those actually tested by the subsequent design,
3. The validity and reliability of the measures of key concepts / variables,
4. The appropriateness of the analytic techniques proposed, and
5. The extent to which the data and analyses allow for clear, convincing tests of the hypotheses set forth.

While I do not have any requirements regarding the general structure of the paper, the general structure of the [example presentation](#) would not be a terrible place to start.

The length of your paper should not exceed 2500 words of text (that’s about 8 double-spaced pages), but feel free to include as many references as you deem necessary in the bibliography (these do not count toward the page limit). **The paper should be submitted to me electronically via e-mail at zorn@psu.edu, in Adobe PDF format, and is due at or before 11:59 p.m. EST on Monday, May 2, 2016;** please plan accordingly. Finally, if you have questions about the project, feel free to talk to the instructor, either in person or via phone, e-mail, etc.