

Research Methods for Political Science

Beginning the Research Process

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- Groups: TA will randomly assign you to a group this week
- Ideally: Consult with TA before embarking on a particular project. Avoid disasters
- Contributions to be specified in the paper, per academic standards.
 - E.g., “Thomas designed the study, performed the analysis, contributed to writing section 1, 3 and 5. John performed the analysis, contributed to sections 2 and 5, etc.”
- Due: week 13 on Blackboard

What we care about

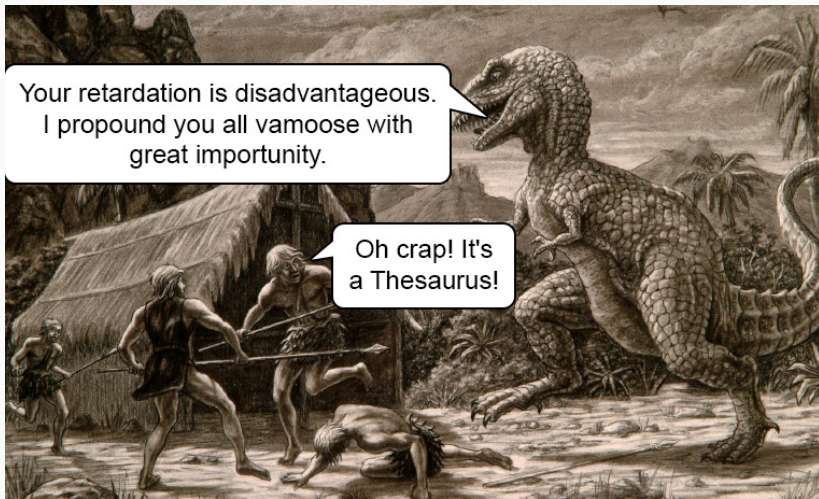
- Presentation
 - Tables and graphs
 - Writing / style
- Quality of the research question
 - Originality
 - Feasibility
- **Quality of research design** *rightarrow* Research design portion of the class
- Quality of analysis *rightarrow* Statistics portion of the class

How do I know that you are right?

Presentation

- Paragraphs

Write clearly



Presentation is
not just
about fonts

Cite, cite, cite (including yourself)!

<https://libguides.tcd.ie/plagiarism/>

Good (and bad) research questions

Finding your research question

- The most IMPORTANT task of the project
- The most DIFFICULT task of the project

Often, questions start with a Why

- Why is voter turnout for local elections higher in some cities than in others?
- Why does the amount spent per pupil by school districts vary (within a state or among states)?
- Do small nations sign more multilateral treaties than large nations?
- Why did some members of Congress vote for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 whereas others opposed it?
- Why do some nations have cap-and-trade programs for carbon dioxide emissions while others do not?

Common mistakes: single issues

Choosing a discrete, factual issue. E.g., the following are not recommended:

- Why did Russia annex Crimea in 2014?
- Why was this minister chosen after the 2012 election?
- What caused World War I?

What is the problem with these? They don't **vary**!

Common mistakes: single issues

Both x and y need to **vary**!

Better questions

- ~~Why did Russia annex Crimea in 2014?~~
Why are some satellite countries invaded but not others?
- ~~Why was this minister chosen after the 2012 election?~~
Why do some cabinets choose younger ministers than others?
- ~~What caused World War I?~~
When do rises in power lead to war?

Common mistakes: Overly Descriptive

- How many trade disputes have been referred to the World Trade Organization (WTO) for resolution in the past five years?
- How many political parties are led by a woman?
- How much money was spent on national defense in each African country?

Factual observations are good starting points, however.

Better questions

- ~~How many trade disputes have been referred to the World Trade Organization (WTO) for resolution in the past five years?~~

Why do some countries refer issues to the WTO more than others?

- ~~How many political parties are led by a woman?~~

Why do some parties have more women in leadership than others?

- ~~How much money was spent on national defense in each African country?~~

Why do some African countries spend more on national defense than others?

Normative questions

Avoid:

- Should: ~~Should Switzerland be part of the EU~~
- Good/bad etc: ~~Prime ministers that are part of the LDP party in Japan are good PMs~~

But normative questions can lead to good research questions

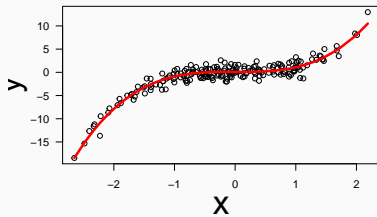
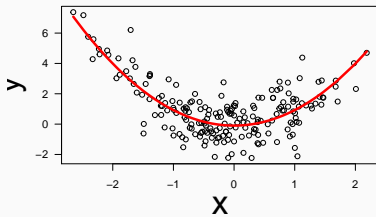
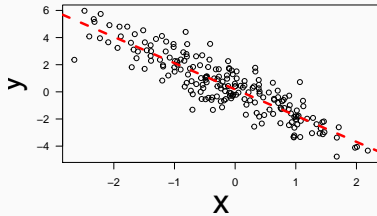
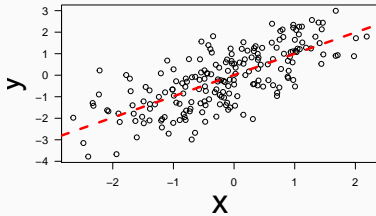
- ~~Should Switzerland be part of the EU~~
Does membership in the EU increase GDP (PS: very difficult question!)
- ~~Prime ministers that are part of the LDP party in Japan are good PMs~~
What affects unemployment rates in Japan?

What we want to see

$$x \rightarrow y$$

What we want to see

$x \rightarrow y$



How to find a question?

First step: find a topic

Find a subject that interests you.

We are flexible, but it cannot be on quantum physics (unless it relates to a political issue — e.g., “The impact of the CERN of voting patterns—a transnational study”!)

Second step: the puzzle

That's hard. Political phenomenon that is not obvious.

Where to look?

1. Read the news (hard)
2. Start from existing work, and extend/modify (easier) Literature review

Good places to start

- Browse journals
 - American Political Science Review
 - American Journal of Political Science
 - International Organization
 - Journal of Peace Research
 - Comparative Political Studies
 - British Journal of Political Science
- Annual reviews of political Science
- Google Scholar

Finding the relevant literature

Why a “lit review”?

- Sharpen your topic
 - What has/has not been done
 - What is missing?
- Identify data sources
- Learn the methods used

How to use Google Scholar

1. The easy part: go to scholar.google.com



How to use Google Scholar

2. Try a question of interest, or keywords of interest. E.g., we want to know what has been written on the causes of electoral violence in Africa. You'll get results, typically ordered by relevance.

The screenshot shows the Google Scholar interface. At the top, the search bar contains the text "the causes of electoral violence in Africa". Below the search bar, the results are listed. On the left side, there are filters for "Any time", "Since 2020", "Since 2019", "Custom range...", "Sort by relevance", "Sort by date", "include patents", "include citations", and "Create alert". The search results are displayed in a list format, each with a title, author, year, and a brief abstract. The results are ordered by relevance. The first result is "Electoral violence in Africa" by EV Adolfo, M Söderberg Kovacs, D Nyström, and M Låssa, published in 2012. The second result is "Explaining electoral violence in Africa's 'new' democracies" by S. Osofsky, published in 2010. The third result is "Insights into electoral violence in Africa" by L. Laatikko, published in 2007. The fourth result is "Electoral violence in conflict-ridden societies: Concepts, causes, and consequences" by K. Höglund, published in 2009. The fifth result is "Democratization and electoral violence in sub-saharan africa, 1990-2007" by S. Stauss, published in 2009. The sixth result is "Electoral violence in Africa revisited" by A. Goldsmith, published in 2015.

Google Scholar

the causes of electoral violence in Africa

About 214,000 results (0.26 sec)

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Articles

Any time
Since 2020
Since 2019
Custom range...

Sort by relevance
Sort by date

☒ include patents
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☐ Create alert

Electoral violence in Africa
EV Adolfo, M Söderberg Kovacs, D Nyström, M Låssa - 2012 - diva-portal.org
... so in societies where historically, political or socio-economic inequalities have **caused violent** conflicts ... **violence** in countries marked by close political competition; • Address the underlying structural **causes of electoral** ... **Electoral** Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in **Africa** ...
☆ 95 Cited by 25 Related articles All 2 versions 30

Explaining electoral violence in Africa's 'new' democracies
S. Osofsky - African Journal on Conflict Resolution, 2010 - ajol.info
... analyses **electoral violence in Africa**, with emphasis on its manifestations, **causes**, implications and ... consensus building between the government and the opposition, and to **cause** a sort of ... that created fear in most aspiring gubernatorial candidates, and **caused** them to withdraw ...
☆ 95 Cited by 85 Related articles All 10 versions 30

Insights into electoral violence in Africa
L Laatikko - ... and violence: political parties and elections in ..., 2007 - pdfs.semanticscholar.org
... severe it may be, should not be seen as an explanans or sufficient **cause for violence** ... A variety of **reasons** have contributed to it, including the drastic experiments of structural ad ... **Violent electoral** history in Zanzibar The end of the British colonial rule in Zanzibar was marred by ...
☆ 95 Cited by 84 Related articles All 6 versions 30

Electoral violence in conflict-ridden societies: Concepts, causes, and consequences
K Höglund - Terrorism and political violence, 2009 - Taylor & Francis
... **Violence** and insecurity may **cause** a low voter turnout, it can interfere with ... Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) against the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) **caused** the OLF to ... Fabrice Lehoucq, "**Electoral** Fraud: **Causes**, Types, and Consequences," Annual Review of Political ...
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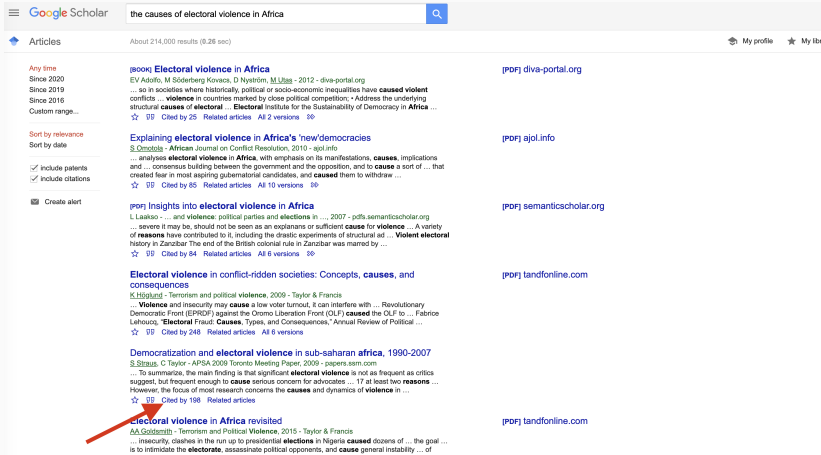
Democratization and electoral violence in sub-saharan africa, 1990-2007
S Stauss - C Taylor - APSA 2009 Toronto Meeting Paper, 2009 - papers.sam.com
... To summarize, the main finding is that significant **electoral violence** is not as frequent as critics suggest, but frequent enough to **cause** serious concern for advocates ... 17 at least two **reasons** ... However, the focus of most research concerns the **causes** and dynamics of **violence** in ...
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Electoral violence in Africa revisited
A Goldsmith - Terrorism and Political Violence, 2015 - Taylor & Francis
... Insecurity, clashes in the run up to presidential **elections** in Nigeria **caused** dozens of ... the goal ... is to intimidate the **electorate**, assassinate political opponents, and **cause** general instability ... of

diva-portal.org
ajol.info
semanticscholar.org
tandfonline.com
tandfonline.com

How to use Google Scholar? Going forward in time

3. Skim a few. Once you find an interesting one, you need to know what has been written on the subject *since* that article was published. So look for articles which *cite* this article of interest



The screenshot shows the Google Scholar interface with the search query "the causes of electoral violence in Africa". The results list several articles, with the first one, "Electoral violence in Africa" by EV Adolfo et al., highlighted by a red arrow. The interface includes filters on the left for time range, sorting, and citation inclusion, and links to the full text of each article on the right.

Google Scholar

the causes of electoral violence in Africa

Articles

About 214,000 results (0.26 sec)

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Any time
Since 2020
Since 2016
Custom range...

Sort by relevance
Sort by date

☒ include patents
☒ include citations

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Electoral violence in Africa
EV Adolfo, M Söderberg Kovacs, D Nyström, [M Utta](#) - 2012 - [diva-portal.org](#)
... so in societies where historically, political or socio-economic inequalities have **caused violent** conflicts ... **violence** in countries marked by close political competition; • Address the underlying structural **causes of electoral** ... **Electoral** Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in **Africa** ...
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Democratization and electoral violence in sub-saharan africa, 1990-2007
S.Straus - C Taylor - *APSA 2009 Toronto Meeting Paper*, 2009 - [papers.ssrn.com](#)
... To summarize, the main finding is that significant **electoral violence** is not as frequent as critics suggest, but frequent enough to **cause** serious concern for advocates ... 17 at least two **reasons** ... However, the focus of most research concerns the **causes** and dynamics of **violence** in ...
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How to use Google Scholar?

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Democratization and electoral violence in sub-saharan africa, 1990-2007

☐ Search within citing articles

[PDF] War and conflict in Africa **[PDF] semanticscholar.org**

PQ Williams - 2016 - books.google.com

After the Cold War, Africa earned the dubious distinction of being the world's most bloody continent. But how can we explain this proliferation of armed conflicts? What caused them and what were their main characteristics? And what did the world's governments do to stop ...
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When do governments resort to election violence?

EM Hafner-Burton, SD Hyde, RS Jablonksi - British Journal of Political ..., 2014 - JSTOR

When are governments most likely to use election violence, and what factors can mitigate government incentives to resort to violence? How do the dynamics of election violence differ in the pre-and postelection periods? The central argument of this article is that an ...
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Wars do end! Changing patterns of political violence in sub-Saharan Africa

S Strauss - African affairs, 2012 - academic.oup.com

Contrary to common assumption, major forms of large-scale organized political violence in sub-Saharan Africa are declining in frequency and intensity, and the region is not uniquely prone to the onset of warfare. African civil wars in the late 2000s were about half as common ...
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The cost of exposing cheating: International election monitoring, fraud, and post-election violence in Africa

LJ Dienerstein - Journal of Peace Research, 2012 - journals.sagepub.com

This article investigates the relationship between international election observation, election fraud, and post-election violence. While international electoral missions could in principle mitigate the potential for violence by deterring election fraud, the ability of international ...
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Electoral institutions and electoral violence in sub-Saharan Africa

H Fiedler, K Höglund - British Journal of Political Science, 2016 - cambridge.org

Political violence remains a pervasive feature of electoral dynamics in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, even where multiparty elections have become the dominant mode of regulating access to political power. With cross-national data on electoral violence in Sub ...
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Land grievances and the mobilization of electoral violence: Evidence from Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya

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How to use Google Scholar? Going backward in time

Now that you know the latest state of the literature, it's time to dig deeper and know what has been written before. It's usually better to start with the latest, else you can spend hours on the past, only to realize someone will have done what you intend to in the future.

To see the past, just look through the articles citations

most likely to occur – and how it can be mitigated – can inform the strategies of NGOs, international organizations and other interested actors, allowing them to better anticipate where measures aimed at preventing election violence are most likely to be useful.

REFERENCES

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Beaulieu, Emily. 2006. *Protesting the Contest: Election Boycotts Around the World, 1990–2002*. PhD Dissertation. University of California, San Diego.
Blaydes, Lisa. 2010. *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Brownlee, Jason. 2009. Portents of Pluralism: How Hybrid Regimes Affect Democratic Transitions. *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (3):515–32.

⁹⁸ Analysis of this question is presented in Hafner-Burton, Hyde, and Jablonski 2013.

⁹⁹ See, for example, Hoppen 1984; Kevssar 2009; Zeldin 1971.

Google Scholar also helps with citations

Google Scholar

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Land grievances and the mobilization of electoral violence: Evidence from Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya
K Klaus, M Mitchell - Journal of Peace Research, 2015 - journals.sagepub.com
Recent studies have indicated that land grievances are a major driver of electoral violence and ...

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PD Williams - 2016 - books.google.com
After the Cold War, Africa earned the dubious distinction of being the most violent continent. But how can we explain this proliferation of conflict and what were their main characteristics? And what does the future hold for Africa?
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When do governments resort to election violence?
EM Hafner-Burton, SD Hyde, RS Jablonski - British Journal of Political Science, 2014 - jstor.org
When are governments most likely to use election violence? What are the incentives to resort to violence? How do they vary in the pre- and post-election periods? The central argument is that governments are more likely to use election violence when they are facing a high level of political competition and when they are facing a high level of political risk.
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Wars do end! Changing patterns of political violence in sub-Saharan Africa
S Straus - African Affairs, 2012 - academic.oup.com
Contrary to common assumption, major forms of large-scale political violence in sub-Saharan Africa are declining in frequency and intensity. This article examines the reasons for this decline and the implications for the onset of warfare. African civil wars in the 1990s and 2000s were characterized by high levels of political violence, but this has changed.
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The cost of exposing cheating: International election violence in Africa
UE Dasgupta - Journal of Peace Research, 2012 - journals.sagepub.com
This article investigates the relationship between international election violence and the potential for violence by deterring election fraud. It argues that international election violence is a costly signal that deters election fraud.
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H Ejlskjold - British Journal of Political Science, 2016 - cambridge.org
Political violence remains a pervasive feature of electoral dynamics in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, even where multiparty elections have become the dominant mode of regulating access to political power. With cross-national data on electoral violence in sub-Saharan Africa, this article examines the relationship between electoral institutions and electoral violence.
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Land grievances and the mobilization of electoral violence: Evidence from Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya
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K Klaus, M Mitchell - Journal of Peace Research, 2015 - journals.sagepub.com
Recent studies have shown that land grievances can be a significant driver of electoral violence. This article examines the relationship between land grievances and electoral violence in Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya. It argues that land grievances are a significant driver of electoral violence in these two countries.
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Cite

MLA Hafner-Burton, Emilie M., Susan D. Hyde, and Ryan S. Jablonski. "When do governments resort to election violence?" *British Journal of Political Science* (2014): 149-179.

APA Hafner-Burton, E. M., Hyde, S. D., & Jablonski, R. S. (2014). When do governments resort to election violence? *British Journal of Political Science*, 149-179.

Chicago Hafner-Burton, Emilie M., Susan D. Hyde, and Ryan S. Jablonski. "When do governments resort to election violence?" *British Journal of Political Science* (2014): 149-179.

Harvard Hafner-Burton, E.M., Hyde, S.D. and Jablonski, R.S., 2014. When do governments resort to election violence? *British Journal of Political Science*, pp.149-179.

Vancouver Hafner-Burton EM, Hyde SD, Jablonski RS. When do governments resort to election violence? *British Journal of Political Science*. 2014 Jan 1;149-79.

BibTeX EndNote RefMan RefWorks

Check your sources

Not all sources are equal. Just because it's published does not mean it's good.

- Where is it published? Is it a good journal?
- Was the article cited?
- Is the author reputable/credible?

A winnowing process:

- Start with the title
- Then the abstract
- Then skim
- Read only if it's really relevant

This way, you can go through dozens of sources quickly.

Writing the literature review

Writing the literature review: Do not...

- Do not include all articles that are vaguely relevant. If you are working on ethnicity and civil war, do not mention all the work on ethnicity, and then all the work on civil war. Only discuss the ones on ethnicity AND civil war

Writing the literature review: Do not...

- Do not discuss each article one by one.
 - DO NOT: “Johnson studies ethnicity and conflict. He conducts an experiment on bla. He finds that blabla. Smith also studies ethnicity and conflict. He conducts a slightly different experiment. This is really boring to read (and write).”
- Instead, organize the discussion by topic.
 - DO: group the article by their focus. E.g.: “Research on ethnicity and civil war has focused in particular on the effect of ethnic fractionalization on political violence (Smith 2000, Johnson 2019). However, effects are limited (Kellogg 2017) and methodological issues abound (Peter 2018)...”

Writing the literature review: Do ...

Write a story. Walk the reader through the state of the art. And guide them toward your contribution: we know x and y . However, z remains unknown.

Writing the literature review: examples

E.g., from Peter Andreas *Drugs and War: What Is the Relationship?*
Annual Review of Political Science:

Some excellent accounts focus on the histories of particular drugs (Courtwright 2001, Herlihy 2002, Gootenberg 2008, Rasmussen 2008, Schrad 2016, Rappaport 2018), particular wars or types of war (McCoy 2003, Felbab-Brown 2009, Ahmad 2017), or geographic locations and time periods (Lintner 1999, Dikotter et al. 2004, Chin 2009, Kuzmarov 2009). Perhaps not surprisingly, political scientists have made the greatest contribution to the literature on the so-called war against drugs (which has taken on some of the characteristics of a real war), mostly focused on the United States and Latin America since the 1980s (Bertram et al. 1996, Kenney 2008, Felbab-Brown 2009, Bagley & Rosen 2015, Friesendorf 2015, Lessing 2018, Duran-Martinez 2018). These contributions, however important and insightful, have privileged illegal drugs such as cocaine in the contemporary era at the cost of glossing over the historical centrality of legal drugs such as alcohol and tobacco.

Writing the literature review: examples

Have a look at the Annual Review of Political Science
(<https://www.annualreviews.org/loi/polisci>)

These are often amazing lit reviews, on a *vast* number of topics
(and growing).