

Experimental Methods in Social Sciences—INWS0059

University of Turku
INVEST
Turku, Finland

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Download last version [here](#).

General Overview

Instructor: Héctor Bahamonde, PhD.

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Office Hours: Schedule time with me [here](#).

Place: Pub-368.

Dates: 28.10, 04.11, 11.11, 18.11, 26.11, 03.12.

Time: Always from noon to 2pm.

Course website: [Moodle](#).

Program: Master program in 'Inequalities, Interventions and New Welfare State,' University of Turku.

Semester: Fall.

Objectives

This course is designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of experimental methods in the social sciences. By the end of this course, students will master the ability to conceptualize various types of experiments. They will develop strong analytical skills to interpret and analyze experimental data. Students will engage in critical discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of experimental approaches, and how these approaches contribute to broader scientific inquiries. Finally, students will enhance their communication skills, improving their ability to clearly articulate experimental findings through written reports, with a focus on discussing the implications of research results. This course aims to equip students with the tools needed to contribute to the growing field of experimental research in social sciences.

Academic Integrity

I expect nothing but the best out of my students.

- I expect students to do their reading *before* class.
- Practical exercises should be turned in *before* class begins.
- I do *not* answer emails during weekends.

🚫 Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Make sure you follow the University's rules and definitions of plagiarism. Also, make sure you know how to cite your work.

🚫 I won't accept late work.

Evaluations

1. **Two Reaction Papers:** You will submit two reaction papers in total during our class. You have to choose the week, i.e., the topic. Reaction papers are topical, i.e., they focus on themes rather than particular pieces. Also, reaction papers are critical assessments of the reading material, i.e., **they are not summaries**. Make sure you do *all* your readings *before* start writing. **Reaction papers are due before my lecture and submitted in the course's respective Moodle assignment section** (late papers and/or submissions via email will *not* be considered). Make sure the length of your paper is never below 1k words but never longer than 1.5k words (I'll stop reading beyond that limit). Also, be sure to support your claims citing what you think is relevant; bear in mind aspects of citation format, and please, be economical (quotes should not exceed two sentences).
 - ☞ The following questions are intended for guidance only, and are meant to inspire you in your critical assessment. Reaction papers usually focus on a grand question such as: *What are the possible advantages/disadvantages of this particular methodology? How/where else would you apply this methodology? Is this methodology feasible in your particular area of research? Do you think this methodology posits ethical issues if applied in your area of research?*
2. **One Programming Take-Home Exercise:** You can download the instructions [here](#). The assignment is due on **26.11 before class begins**.
3. **One "Guided Tour" to the PCRC Decision-Making Lab:** In the context of our Lab Experiments lecture on 11.11, we will visit the PCRC lab and participate in an ongoing study. Attendance *and* participation are mandatory. We will vote on the visit's date and time on the first day of class. Please cast your vote today [here](#).

Recommended Readings

- ◇ Rebecca Morton and Kenneth Williams. 2010a. *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality: From Nature to the Lab*. Cambridge University Press.
- ◇ [Journal of Experimental Political Science](#).

Schedule and Required Readings

1. **28.10: Causal Inference in Social Science.**
 - ◇ Overview:
 - James Druckman. 2022. "The Scientific Process and How to Think about Experiments." In *Experimental Thinking: A Primer on Social Science Experiments*, 15–50. Cambridge University Press.
 - David Freedman. 1991. "Statistical Models and Shoe Leather." *Sociological Methodology* 21:291–313.
 - David Freedman. 1999. "From Association to Causation: Some Remarks on the History of Statistics." *Statistical Science* 14 (3): 243–258.
 - Paul Holland. 1986. "Statistics and Causal Inference." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 81 (396): 945–960.
 - Rebecca Morton and Kenneth Williams. 2010b. "The Causal Inference Problem and the Rubin Causal Model." In *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality*, 75–100. 1990. Cambridge University Press.
 - ◇ Students cast their votes ([CLICK HERE](#)) and chose time/date for the "Guided Tour" to the PCRC Decision-Making Lab.

2. 04.11: Survey Experiments: Conjoint and List Designs.

◇ Overview:

- Brian Gaines, James Kuklinski, and Paul Quirk. 2007. "The Logic of the Survey Experiment Reexamined." *Political Analysis* 15 (1): 1–20.
- Kevin Mullinix et al. 2015. "The Generalizability of Survey Experiments." *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 2 (2): 109–138.

◇ Application #1—conjoint experiments:

- Jens Hainmueller, Daniel Hopkins, and Teppei Yamamoto. 2014. "Causal Inference in Conjoint Analysis: Understanding Multidimensional Choices via Stated Preference Experiments." *Political Analysis* 22 (1): 1–30.
- Thomas Leeper, Sara Hobolt, and James Tilley. 2020. "Measuring Subgroup Preferences in Conjoint Experiments." *Political Analysis* 28 (2): 207–221.

◇ Application #2—list experiments:

- Graeme Blair and Kosuke Imai. 2012. "Statistical Analysis of List Experiments." *Political Analysis* 20 (1): 47–77.
- Héctor Bahamonde. 2022. "Still for Sale: The Micro-Dynamics of Vote Selling in the United States, Evidence from a List Experiment." *Acta Politica* 57 (1): 73–95.

◇ Give programming take-home exercise: Statistical Analysis of Conjoint Data in R. Homework is due on 26.11 before class begins.

3. 11.11: Lab Experiments.

◇ Overview:

- Damien Bol. 2019. "Putting Politics in the Lab: A Review of Lab Experiments in Political Science." *Government and Opposition* 54 (1): 167–190.

◇ Applications:

- Vote buying: Hector Bahamonde and Andrea Canales. 2022. "Electoral Risk and Vote Buying, Introducing Prospect Theory to the Experimental Study of Clientelism." *Electoral Studies*.
- Political participation: John Duffy and Margit Tavits. 2008. "Beliefs and Voting Decisions: A Test of the Pivotal Voter Model." *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (3): 603–618.
- Clientelism [**Bonus!** "Lab-in-the-Field" Experiments]: Jessica Gottlieb. 2017. "Explaining Variation in Broker Strategies: A Lab-in-the-Field Experiment in Senegal." *Comparative Political Studies* 50 (11): 1556–1592.

4. 18.11: Natural Experiments.

◇ Overview:

- Rocío Titiunik. 2021. "Natural Experiments." In *Advances in Experimental Political Science*, 103–129. Cambridge University Press.

◇ Applications:

- Elections: Hector Bahamonde and Outi Sarpila. 2024. "Physical appearance and elections: An inequality perspective." *Political Psychology* 45 (3): 623–642.
- Income redistribution: Daniel Doherty, Alan Gerber, and Donald Green. 2006. "Personal Income and Attitudes Toward Redistribution: A Study of Lottery Winners." *Political Psychology* 27 (3): 441–458.

- Origin of banking systems: Stephen Haber. 2012. "Politics, Banking, and Economic Development:" in *Natural Experiments of History*, 88–119. Harvard University Press.

5. 26.11: Field Experiments.

◇ Overview:

- Alan Gerber and Donald Green. 2012. "Introduction." Chap. 1 in *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*, 1–19. W.W. Norton.

◇ Applications:

- Turnout: Alan Gerber and Donald Green. 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 94 (3): 653–663.
- Vote buying: Pedro Vicente. 2014. "Is Vote Buying Effective? Evidence from a Field Experiment in West Africa." *The Economic Journal* 124 (574): 356–387.
- Corruption: Alberto Chong et al. 2015. "Does Corruption Information Inspire the Fight or Quash the Hope? A Field Experiment in Mexico on Voter Turnout, Choice, and Party Identification." *The Journal of Politics* 77 (1): 55–71.

◇ Programming take-home exercise is due today *before* class begins.

6. 03.12: Ethics.

◇ Overview:

- Rebecca Morton and Kenneth Williams. 2012c. "History of Codes of Ethics and Human Subjects Research." Chap. 11 in *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality*, 403–454. Cambridge University Press.
- Rebecca Morton and Kenneth Williams. 2012b. "Ethical Decision Making and Political Science Experiments." Chap. 12 in *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality*, 455–499.
- Rebecca Morton and Kenneth Williams. 2012a. "Deception in Experiments." Chap. 13 in *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality*, 500–522. Cambridge University Press.

References

- Bahamonde, Héctor. 2022. "Still for Sale: The Micro-Dynamics of Vote Selling in the United States, Evidence from a List Experiment." *Acta Politica* 57 (1): 73–95.
- Bahamonde, Hector, and Andrea Canales. 2022. "Electoral Risk and Vote Buying, Introducing Prospect Theory to the Experimental Study of Clientelism." *Electoral Studies*.
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- Chong, Alberto, Ana De La O, Dean Karlan, and Leonard Wantchekon. 2015. "Does Corruption Information Inspire the Fight or Quash the Hope? A Field Experiment in Mexico on Voter Turnout, Choice, and Party Identification." *The Journal of Politics* 77 (1): 55–71.
- Doherty, Daniel, Alan Gerber, and Donald Green. 2006. "Personal Income and Attitudes Toward Redistribution: A Study of Lottery Winners." *Political Psychology* 27 (3): 441–458.
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- Haber, Stephen. 2012. "Politics, Banking, and Economic Development:" in *Natural Experiments of History*, 88–119. Harvard University Press.
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- . 2010b. “The Causal Inference Problem and the Rubin Causal Model.” In *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality*, 75–100. 1990. Cambridge University Press.
- . 2012a. “Deception in Experiments.” Chap. 13 in *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality*, 500–522. Cambridge University Press.
- . 2012b. “Ethical Decision Making and Political Science Experiments.” Chap. 12 in *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality*, 455–499.
- . 2012c. “History of Codes of Ethics and Human Subjects Research.” Chap. 11 in *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality*, 403–454. Cambridge University Press.
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- Titunik, Rocío. 2021. “Natural Experiments.” In *Advances in Experimental Political Science*, 103–129. Cambridge University Press.
- Vicente, Pedro. 2014. “Is Vote Buying Effective? Evidence from a Field Experiment in West Africa.” *The Economic Journal* 124 (574): 356–387.