

**Political Science 208Q
Research Methods Design
Oxford College of Emory University
Spring 2016**

Course Prerequisites: POLS 101Q and QTM 100

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Drop in Hours: TU & TH 3:30-5:00
and by appointment

Course Overview:

- POLS 208 is *mandatory* for majors in Political Science or International Studies at Emory College. The department strongly encourages all students to take this course during their first two years to prepare themselves for upper-level coursework.
- We have designed this course to foster your experience as a social scientist as you acquire the set of skills that are essential for both understanding the research you will encounter in later political science classes, and being able to produce original research of your own.
- This course provides an introduction to the theory and method of contemporary political analysis. You will learn how to conduct research in political science as a social scientist by practicing the ways of inquiry used by most political scientists. This practice includes: how to formulate research questions and subsequent hypotheses; how to design a research plan; employ strategies and techniques for collecting data; determine what methodologies are appropriate to execute that plan; and apply a greater focus of your research to a single or few cases.
- This course will not focus directly on the statistical analysis of quantitative data since that is covered in QTM 100, which is required of all majors, and a prerequisite to this course. However, we will review many of the applicable statistical techniques and the logic of statistical inference during our “math camp” later in the semester.

WAYS OF INQUIRY (INQ) COURSE:

Political science methods is designated as an **INQ** course. I designed the course to introduce and engage you in one of the primary ways knowledge is pursued by political scientists: the scientific method and the use of quantitative methods.

Specifically, you will employ the scientific method to raise a viable research topic/question in order to research, collect, and review timely, scholarly literature that relates directly to your question.

Using your knowledge of data and methods, you will organize and specify how you will collect data to test hypotheses and what methods you will use to test these hypotheses.

THE ENTIRE COURSE IS DESIGNED TO HAVE YOU PROPOSE A RESEARCH DESIGN THAT MODELS A SHORT ARTICLE OR RESEARCH NOTE IN A PUBLISHED JOURNAL.

To accomplish this goal, I work with you from the beginning to the end of the semester to complete each section of your research design.

Your design will need to contain the following elements (ALL WILL BE UPLOADED TO OUR BB CONFERENCE AND ARE INDICATED IN THE SYLLBUS WHEN THEY ARE DUE):

- (1) An introduction in which you explain the relevance of the topic.
- (2) A literature review in which you discuss at least fifteen items of previous literature on the topic (the majority of which must have appeared in academic journals).
- (3) A description of a theoretical framework (this does not need to be an original argument; you can “borrow” one from your literature review).
- (4) Construction of hypotheses
- (5) A design for testing the hypothesis in which you discuss:
 - (i) The conceptualization and measurement of your variables
 - (ii) A detailed strategy for collecting the data (e.g., conduct an experiment, administer a survey, code archival data, etc.).
- (6) A detailed description of the methods you will employ (statistics) to test your hypotheses.
- (7) A case study in which you qualitatively examine what can be generalized across cases.
- (7) A conclusion
- (8) Presentation of Design in “Pols 208 Conference” during Final Exam Period (5/1/15)

Readings:

Required Text for Purchase: Dahlia K. Remler and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. 2014. "Research Methods in Practice: Strategies for Description and Causation" Sage Publications. Second Edition.

All other assigned readings (articles, chapters, and handouts) available in Library Reserves and in our Blackboard [BB] conference under "Assigned Class Reading" tab

Evaluation:

Your grades will be determined in the following manner:

- 25% - Exam 1 (Tuesday, February 24)
- 25% - Exam 2 (Tuesday, April 25)
- 50% - Research Design Paper. ***This includes portions of the report due throughout the semester. HW is usually due on Fridays by 5pm and uploaded to Blackboard [BB]***

HW Due Dates posted to last page of syllabus and on BB

- *Final Research Design Paper is presented during final exam period (Monday, May 2nd, from 2-5pm).*

Course Policies

Preparation. This class is designed primarily as a lecture but questions during the lectures are encouraged. **It is incumbent upon students to attend all class meetings and required discussion sections and to complete the readings in advance in order to promote a successful class experience.** In addition, in-lecture questions will be used to assess your comprehension of the materials assigned for each class. Be sure to prepare for lecture by completing the assigned materials before class

Punctuality. Please be on time to class. The noise and distraction of late arrivals is inconsiderate to classmates. Please refrain from leaving class early or for breaks unless it's an emergency.

Late assignment/absences. You will be penalized for late assignments or missed exams, unless the absence/delay is due to documented serious illness or is otherwise excused by the instructor **in advance** (such as for certain official Emory-sponsored activities). The penalty for unexcused late papers is one "minus" each day late, e.g., A to A-, etc.

Class conduct. Laptop computers and cell phones are **prohibited** in class, without special permission from the instructor (which will be given only in case of documented disability). Please silence and put away all electronic devices prior to the start of class.

Disabilities. It is the policy of Emory University to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. All students with special requests or need for accommodations should consult as soon as possible with the ADSR.

Honor code. You are required to know and uphold the [Oxford College Honor Code](#). Violations of the Honor Code will be punished and you should consult the code. Please ask me if you are unsure of citations and the use of the work of others.

Blackboard and course communication. There is a Blackboard site for this course. This syllabus, links to readings (indicated as [BB]) and all other handouts, will be posted on that site. I will normally post course announcements on that site as well, but you are responsible for any and all announcements made *during* the class periods in addition. It is a good idea to check with classmates if you have missed class. Otherwise, contact me via email if you have questions or concerns. The SINGLE best way to reach me is via email: kvigila@emory.edu.

Office hours. Most students only attend office hours immediately before papers or exams are due or after grades are returned. These are the times when the longest lines form, and consequently, my availability will be limited. I am very happy to answer questions about exams or papers up until the due dates, where availability permits, but I strongly urge you to use office hours throughout the *rest* of the semester or make an appointment to discuss the course and your progress. Again, if these times do not work for you, please make an appointment for a mutually agreed upon time.

Bottom Line: Your learning is your responsibility and that means asking for individual attention when you need it. I may be a Vigilante but I am not a mind reader ☺

Class Preparation: Assigned Readings & Discussion Questions

January 13: Introduction to the Course

Readings: *No readings - discussion of course content, expectations and the syllabus*

January 20: Research - The Science of Inquiry

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does research in the social sciences look like and why do we do it?
2. What are the key elements of the scientific method?
3. How does this method apply to the discipline of political science?
4. What are some of the potential advantages and drawbacks of adopting a scientific approach?

Readings:

Remler and Van Ryzin. Chapter 1

Andrew Ehrenberg, *Even the Social Sciences Have Laws*, *Nature* 365 (September 30, 1993): 385.

Weber, Max. *Science as a Vocation* (excerpts)

January 25: Empirical Political Science (note class will begin at 3:15)

Questions for Discussion:

1. How has the discipline of Political Science evolved over time?
2. How do scholars use previous research?
3. How do scholars use the literature to motivate and inform their research?
4. What makes published research good or interesting?
5. What role does a literature review play in the research process?

Readings:

1. [BB] Janet B. Johnson. Chapter 2&3: The Empirical Approach to Political Science. In Political Science Research Methods.

January 27 & February 1: Theorizing about Theory

Questions for Discussion:

1. How do you go about finding the answer to the research question you posed?
2. How do you develop a causal explanation?
3. What are theories?
4. What makes a good theory vs. a bad theory?
5. How much emphasis is placed on theory for motivating research?
6. Should political research be *inductive* or *deductive*? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
7. What is “causation?”
8. What demands does the definition of causality place on how we conduct research?

9. How do we move from theory to hypothesis?

Readings:

1. Remler and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. Chapter 2.
2. [BB] James E. Campbell. "Candidates: A Causal Analysis." American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 27, No. 2, May 1983, p.284-293.
3. [BB] Terence P. Thornberry, R. L. Christenson. "Unemployment and Criminal Involvement: An Investigation of Reciprocal Causal Structures." American Sociological Review, Vol. 49, No. 3, June 1984, p.398-411.

February 3 & 8: The Nature of Evidence

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is evidence?
2. What are the different types of evidence used in political science?
3. How do you choose which units to study?
4. What is the distinction between quantitative and qualitative data?

Readings:

1. Remler and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. Chapter 3, 6 & 7.
2. [Gary King. The Changing Evidence Base of Social Science Research](#)
3. *Optional:*
4. [Reiss, Julian \(2011\) Empirical evidence: its nature and sources. In: Jarvie , Ian and Zamora Bonilla, Jesus, \(eds.\) Handbook of the Philosophy of Social Sciences. SAGE Publications, California, U.S.A, pp. 551-576. ISBN 9781847874009](#)

February 10 & 15: Concept Formation and Measurement

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is a “concept?” What is conceptualization?
2. How do you develop concepts?
3. What role do empirical considerations play in the formation of concepts?
4. What role do concepts play in the theory development process?
5. How does conceptualization guide measurement from the real world?
6. Why is it challenging to develop good measures of concepts?
7. What are the goals of measurement?
8. What role does human judgment play in coding phenomena?
9. What can happen if subjects are both aware of being observed and potentially responsive to measurement?
10. What are reliability and validity?
11. Is there a tradeoff between reliability and validity?
12. How might these ideas of reliability and validity apply to interpretive or qualitative research?
13. Strategies for measuring & coding - Indexes and Scales
14. What are units and levels of analysis?
15. Using other people's data - The pitfalls and practical advantages of 3rd party data

Readings:

1. Remler and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. Chapter 4.
2. Joel Best, *Damned Lies and Statistics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), Pages 30-61.
3. Jeffrey A. Segal and Albert D. Cover. "Ideological Values and the Votes of U.S. Supreme Court Justices," *American Political Science Review* 83 (June 1989), 557-565.

February 17 & 22: Causality and Research Design

Topics/Questions for Discussion:

1. Causation and research design
2. Direct and indirect causation
3. What is a research design?
4. What are its goals?
5. What are the main elements of a research design?
6. What is the goal of a research design?
7. Why are there many different ways to conduct research on the same question?
8. Big Picture: experimental vs. non-experimental (observational) vs. quasi-experimental?

Readings:

1. Remler and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. Chapter 11.
2. William Trochim. 2006. The Research Methods Knowledge Base, Section on Design
Optional:
3. King, Keohane and Verba. 1994. Designing Social Inquiry. Princeton University Press, chapter 3

February 24: MIDTERM EXAM

March 2: Logic of Inference, Sampling

Topics/Questions for Discussion:

1. Sampling and inference.
2. Why is randomization important for inference?
3. What is causal inference?
4. What are the challenges inferring from a sample to the population?

Readings:

1. Remler and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. Chapter 5.

March 7 & 11: OFF-SPRING RECESS

March 14 & 16: Logic of Inference, Sampling & Case Selection

Topics/Questions for Discussion:

1. How to assess scope conditions and generalizability?
2. What to do with null results?
3. How do scholars decide *which* observations they should include in their analysis?
4. What are the different types of comparative designs?
5. What do they suggest about what kinds of cases to select for observation?
6. Why is a random selection method inappropriate in small N research?
7. What is “matching?”

Readings:

2. Remler and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. Chapter 5 and 8 (skim 8 only).

3. Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," *Political Analysis* 2 (1991): 131-150.

March 21: Basics of Observational Designs

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is an observation?
2. How to gather observational data or information from the real world?
3. What approaches are utilized for gathering observational data? (i.e., survey responses, documents, observation of behavior, people's perceptions, and so on).
4. How many observations do you need to make?
5. What is the difference between an observation and a case?
6. What kinds of problems do researchers run into when they try to make observations in the real world?
7. What are the challenges when basing research on observation of political behavior and outcomes?

Readings:

1. Remler and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. Chapter 12.
2. Ashutosh Varshney, "Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond," *World Politics* 53 (April 2001): 362-398, esp. 370-374.
3. James Fowler, "The Colbert Bump in Campaign Donations: More Truthful than Truth," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 41 (July 2008): 533-539.
4. Richard Fenno, "U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration," *American Political Science Review*, September 1977, p.883-917.

March 23 & 28: Basics of Experimental Designs

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is an experiment (key characteristics)
2. Why are experiments especially good for assessing causality?
3. What types of experiments are there?
4. What is internal validity? External validity?
5. What are the potential drawbacks for employing pure experimental designs in political science?
6. What lessons can political scientists draw from experimental research?
7. What are the different threats to the validity of a research design?

Readings:

1. Robert M Bond et. al. 2012. A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization." Nature 489 (September): 295-298.
2. Druckman et al, 2006. "The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science."
3. Robert M Bond et. al. 2012. A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization." Nature 489 (September): 295-298.

March 30: Natural and Quasi Experimental Research Designs

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are the advantages of these forms of research design?
2. Why are such designs very difficult in political science?
3. How might a traditional study be transformed into an experiment

Readings:

1. Remler and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. Chapter 12.
2. Jason Lyall "Does Indiscriminate Violence Incite Insurgent Attacks? Evidence from Chechnya." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 53:3 (June 2009), 331-362.
3. Alan S. Gerber and Donald P. Green, Do Phone Calls Increase Voter Turnout? A Field Experiment," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 65 (Spring 2001): 75-85.
4. Jeffrey J. Mondak, Newspapers and Political Awareness," *American Journal of Political Science* 39 (May 1995): 513-527.

April 4: Data gathering: Designing and Administering Surveys and Conducting Interviews

Questions for Discussion:

1. Perception data very hard data?
2. What problems arise in creating and administering surveys?

Readings:

1. Martin R. Frankel, Lester R. Frankel. "Fifty Years of Survey Sampling in the United States." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 51, part 2: Supplement: 50th Anniversary Issue. (1987), p.S127-S138.
2. Jim Hanson. "On How to Live with Survey Research (in Counterpoint)" *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 8, No. 5, September 1979, p.677-679.

April 6: Class Canceled – PROFESSOR OUT

April 11: Data gathering: Designing and Administering Surveys and Conducting Interviews

Questions for Discussion:

1. Perception data very hard data?
2. What problems arise in creating and administering surveys?
3. Human subjects and ethical precautions---what are your plans?

Readings:

1. Martin R. Frankel, Lester R. Frankel. "Fifty Years of Survey Sampling in the United States." Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 51, part 2: Supplement: 50th Anniversary Issue. (1987), p.S127-S138.
2. Jim Hanson. "On How to Live with Survey Research (in Counterpoint)" Contemporary Sociology, Vol. 8, No. 5, September 1979, p.677-679.

April 13: Data Gathering: Using the Written Record

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is coding?
2. How to ensure reliability in coding?

Readings:

David M. Barrett "Doing "Tuesday Lunch" at Lyndon Johnson's White House: New Archival Evidence on Vietnam Decision making." PS: Political Science and Politics, Vol. 24, No. 4. 1991, p.676-679.

April 18 & 20: Math Camp (Statistics Review) & Data Visualization and Presenting Results

Questions for Discussion:

1. How to write up research results
2. How to draw effective tables & charts

Readings:

1. Remler and Gregg G. Van Ryzin. Chapter 17.
2. Edward R. Tufte, Improving Data Analysis in Political Science," World Politics 21 (July 1969): 641-654.

April 25: EXAM 2

**May 2: FINAL RESEARCH DESIGN DUE AND PRESENTED
(Monday, May 2nd, 2-5PM)**

HOMEWORK

- *Unless indicated, HW is usually due on Fridays by 5pm and must be uploaded to the “Research Design Forum” tab in Blackboard [BB].*
- *HW Instructions (if necessary) are posted where assignments are to be uploaded in BB.*

DUE DATES:

January 29:	Area of Interest in Political Science
February 5:	Draft of no more than 3 VIABLE Research Questions
February 12:	Final Research Question, Unit of Analysis, and Dependent Variable and Precision (Level of Measurement) Specified
February 29 [Monday]:	Annotated Bibliography of 8-10 Articles (Must be Timely Articles from Peer Reviewed, Professional Journals in Political Science or other Social Science)
March 14 [Monday]:	Draft of Literature Review Due (10-12 Articles)
March 18:	Case Study Identified and Justified by 3 Scholarly Articles
April 1:	Case Study Analysis
April 8:	Hypotheses and Justification
April 15:	Literature Review and Case Study Analysis
April 22:	Draft Data and Methods
May 2 [Monday]:	Final Design Due and Presented in Class 2-5pm (30%)