

# Graduate Research Design (POIR 610)

Fall - 2023, Mondays: 2:00pm - 4:50 PM

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**Instructor:** Varun Karekurve-Ramachandra (DMC 341)

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**Classroom Location:** DMC 329

**Sign up for office hours** [here](#)

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## Course Description

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This class is designed to prioritize structured discussions over lectures. Through discussions, we hope to understand the logic of research design - that is, the research question, theory, data, and methods used to analyze that data. The end goal is to think about how these ideas can be usefully applied to your own research. Finally, this is a graduate class, and the requirements/expectations will be intense, so it is essential to organize your time well.

*Please note that this is a tentative outline of the syllabus, and things might change as we progress through the semester.*

## Evaluation

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There are 4 components for evaluation in this course

1. 10% “Ideas List”
2. 10% Class Participation
3. 30% Replication
4. 50% Proposal Papers (short proposals, final proposal, and peer-review)

**Ideas List** This list should include 2-4 line description of research ideas that you might think about throughout the semester. These ideas can be extensions of the material we will cover in class, new ideas inspired by readings from other classes etc. Ideas can

be overly ambitious, ridiculously stupid (in hindsight), or truly excellent. The aim is to cultivate the habit of thinking about interesting new research questions while completing your readings for the class. You must aim to have *at least* 10 line items in the list by the end of the semester, and each idea should have a clear description of the dependent variable, independent variable and design strategy.

**Class Participation:** There will be presentations every week. During reading weeks, students will team up (no more than 2 in a team) and do 15 minute presentations (APSA conference style!). We will have 4 presentations (at most) per week, followed by discussions. The presentation should begin by clearly specifying the research question in the paper, along with the dependent variable, independent variable, design strategy, mechanisms explored etc. Subsequently, others will start (be prepared to be cold-called) to discuss weaknesses, potential extensions, and other relevant aspects. Finally, each student will don the hat of a reviewer and tell us if they'd accept/reject/request revisions.

**Replication:** Every student should present (for 10 minutes) a replication study of an existing published political science article. This includes downloading the relevant data, reproducing all the main tables, and conducting additional analysis to test the robustness of the results, possibly based on an alternative theory.

### **Proposal Presentations:**

*Short proposal:* After the readings, students should produce a proposal of about 500 words using the research design strategy discussed in the previous class. The proposal should clearly outline the question to be studied, the state of the existing literature, a working hypothesis, data to be used and justify whether the project satisfies any assumptions inherent in the design. Our class is on Monday, and I loathe to give you a Sunday deadline. Therefore, the proposal is due by end of day on Friday the week before the class. *Students will also prepare a 7+3 minute presentation of their idea for the next class.*

*Final Proposal:* Every student should write a 5-page research proposal and deliver a 15-minute presentation in class. The proposal should center around a new research idea, preferably from your 'ideas list' or an expansion of one of your short proposals. You do not have to provide a detailed introduction, since writing an introduction is a skill that we will discuss in the last week of classes. Instead, concentrate on detailed discussion on data availability, identification issues and the novelty of the research question (including literature review).

*Peer Review:* Finally, each student will write a peer-review of one of your colleague's proposal. We will figure out the logistics for this as we proceed in the semester.

## Books and Other Resources

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We will be reading papers throughout the semester. However, relevant chapters from the following books can help you understand the fundamental concepts better. (you are not expected to read these books cover to cover, unless explicitly mentioned in the weekly readings!)

- “CHEPS” James N Druckman, Donald P Greene, and James H Kuklinski. *Cambridge handbook of experimental political science*. Cambridge University Press, 2011
- “EPS” Rebecca B Morton and Kenneth C Williams. *Experimental political science and the study of causality: From nature to the lab*. Cambridge University Press, 2010
- “FEDAI” Alan Gerber and Donald Green. *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012
- “Mixtape” <https://mixtape.scunning.com/>
- [A guide to interpreting regression tables by Semra Sevi](#)
- “Thinking Clearly” Ethan Bueno de Mesquita and Anthony Fowler. *Thinking clearly with data: A guide to quantitative reasoning and analysis*. Princeton University Press, 2021
- “Effect” Nick Huntington-Klein. *The effect: An introduction to research design and causality*. CRC Press, 2021
- “KKV” Gary King, Robert O Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton university press, 2021
- “Philosophy” Samir Okasha. *Philosophy of science: A very short introduction*. Vol. 67. Oxford Paperbacks, 2002

Class discussions will focus on the Numbered items in the weekly schedule. The bulleted items are for your reference and will help you understand the material better. Almost all of the papers assigned are available electronically, usually at JSTOR or through the USC library. If you do not find an article online, please reach out to me (Before Friday!)

## Week 1

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**08/21/2023    Class Logistics, Introductions**

- Introductions, followed by creation of teams

## Week 2

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08/28/2023    Do We Need Description?

- “How to read” by Macartan Humphreys <https://tinyurl.com/phdreading>
  - [A guide to interpreting regression tables by Semra Sevi](#)
1. John Gerring. “Mere description”. In: *British Journal of Political Science* 42.4 (2012), pp. 721–746
  2. Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E Roberts. “How censorship in China allows government criticism but silences collective expression”. In: *American political science Review* 107.2 (2013), pp. 326–343
  3. Raj Chetty et al. “Where is the land of opportunity? The geography of intergenerational mobility in the United States”. In: *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129.4 (2014), pp. 1553–1623
  4. Jessica Gottlieb, Guy Grossman, and Amanda Lea Robinson. “Do men and women have different policy preferences in Africa? Determinants and implications of gender gaps in policy prioritization”. In: *British Journal of Political Science* 48.3 (2018), pp. 611–636

## Week 3: Labor Day

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09/04/2023    No class!

## Week 4: Experiments

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09/11/2023

- EPS. Chapter 2: 33-58 (skip 2.4.3)
  - CHEPS Chapter 9: 115-138
  - KKV, Designing Social Inquiry, Chapters 1 & 2
  - [A guide to interpreting regression tables by Semra Sevi](#)
1. This will not be presented in class, but it is required reading. “The Effect” Chapters 1-5 Nick Huntington-Klein. *The effect: An introduction to research design and causality*. CRC Press, 2021
  2. James Habyarimana et al. “Why does ethnic diversity undermine public goods provision?” In: *American political science review* 101.4 (2007), pp. 709–725

3. Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan. “Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination”. In: *American economic review* 94.4 (2004), pp. 991–1013
4. Tara Slough. “Squeaky wheels and inequality in bureaucratic service provision”. In: *Work. Pap., New York Univ* (2021)
5. Reshmaan Hussam et al. “The psychosocial value of employment: Evidence from a refugee camp”. In: *American Economic Review* 112.11 (2022), pp. 3694–3724

### *Optional Readings*

1. Jens Hainmueller, Daniel J Hopkins, and Teppei Yamamoto. “Causal inference in conjoint analysis: Understanding multidimensional choices via stated preference experiments”. In: *Political analysis* 22.1 (2014), pp. 1–30
2. Daniel J Hopkins and Jonathan Mummolo. “Assessing the breadth of framing effects”. In: *Available at SSRN 2863930* (2016)
3. Alexander Coppock. “Did shy Trump supporters bias the 2016 polls? Evidence from a nationally-representative list experiment”. In: *Statistics, Politics and Policy* 8.1 (2017), pp. 29–40
4. Michael Tomz. “Domestic audience costs in international relations: An experimental approach”. In: *International Organization* 61.4 (2007), pp. 821–840

## Week 5

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### **09/18/2023    *Student Presentation on experiments***

- Presentations
- Andrew Gelman. “Experimental reasoning in social science”. In: *Field experiments and their critics: Essays on the uses and abuses of experimentation in the social sciences* (2014), pp. 185–95
- Trisha Phillips. “Ethics of field experiments”. In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 24 (2021), pp. 277–300
- Discussion on Ethics

## Week 6

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### **09/25/2023    Natural Experiments**

- FEDAI 1.6: 15-17

- Jasjeet S Sekhon and Rocio Titunik. “When natural experiments are neither natural nor experiments”. In: *American Political Science Review* 106.1 (2012), pp. 35–57
- 1. Monica Martinez-Bravo, Priya Mukherjee, and Andreas Stegmann. “The non-democratic roots of elite capture: Evidence from Soeharto mayors in Indonesia”. In: *Econometrica* 85.6 (2017), pp. 1991–2010
- 2. Ryan D Enos. “What the demolition of public housing teaches us about the impact of racial threat on political behavior”. In: *American Journal of Political Science* 60.1 (2016), pp. 123–142
- 3. Rikhil R Bhavnani. “Do electoral quotas work after they are withdrawn? Evidence from a natural experiment in India”. In: *American Political Science Review* 103.1 (2009), pp. 23–35
- 4. Guo Xu. “The costs of patronage: Evidence from the british empire”. In: *American Economic Review* 108.11 (2018), pp. 3170–3198

## Week 7:

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### 10/02/2023    *Student Presentation on Natural Experiments*

- Paul R Rosenbaum. “Observational study”. In: *Encyclopedia of statistics in behavioral science* (2005)
- Collecting, and Handling Data. KKV, Designing Social Inquiry, Chapter 6.

## Week 8

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### 10/09/2023    **Measurement and Instrumental Variables**

- Mixtape Chapter 7
- Chapter 13 from “The Effect”
- 1. Robert Adcock and David Collier. “Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research”. In: *American political science review* 95.3 (2001), pp. 529–546 (No presentation, but we will have a class discussion)
- 2. Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A Robinson. “The colonial origins of comparative development: An empirical investigation”. In: *American economic review* 91.5 (2001), pp. 1369–1401

3. Edward Miguel, Shanker Satyanath, and Ernest Sergenti. “Economic shocks and civil conflict: An instrumental variables approach”. In: *Journal of political Economy* 112.4 (2004), pp. 725–753
4. Oeindrila Dube and SP Harish. “Queens”. In: *Journal of Political Economy* 128.7 (2020), pp. 2579–2652
5. Elizabeth Oltmans Ananat. “The wrong side (s) of the tracks: The causal effects of racial segregation on urban poverty and inequality”. In: *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 3.2 (2011), pp. 34–66

## Week 9

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### 10/16/2023    Regression Discontinuity

*Submit revised proposals based on feedback*

- Mixtape Chapter 6
  - Latest Trends\* (You **must** read this if you ever plan to do a regression discontinuity design in your own research) Matias D Cattaneo, Nicolas Idrobo, and Rocio Titiunik. *A practical introduction to regression discontinuity designs: Foundations*. Cambridge University Press, 2019
1. J. DiNardo. “Natural Experiments and Quasi-Natural Experiments”. In: *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016, pp. 1–12 (*No presentation, but class discussion*)
  2. Raymond Fisman, Florian Schulz, and Vikrant Vig. “The private returns to public office”. In: *Journal of Political Economy* 122.4 (2014), pp. 806–862
  3. Anthony Fowler and Andrew B Hall. “Long-term consequences of election results”. In: *British Journal of Political Science* 47.2 (2017), pp. 351–372
  4. Alexander Lee and Kenneth A Schultz. “Comparing British and French colonial legacies: A discontinuity analysis of Cameroon”. In: *Apsa 2011 annual meeting paper*. 2011

## Week 10

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### 10/23/2023    *Student Presentation on Regression Discontinuity Designs*

- Michael G Findley, Kyosuke Kikuta, and Michael Denly. “External validity”. In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 24 (2021), pp. 365–393

- Paul R Rosenbaum. “Choice as an alternative to control in observational studies”. In: *Statistical Science* 14.3 (1999), pp. 259–304
- Presentations

## Week 11:

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### 10/30/2023    Difference-in-Difference

- Mixtape Chapter 9
  - Latest Trends\* (You **must** read this if you ever plan to do a dif-in-diff design in your own research) Jonathan Roth et al. “What’s trending in difference-in-differences? A synthesis of the recent econometrics literature”. In: *Journal of Econometrics* (2023)
  - Thinking Clearly with Data, Chapter 13 Ethan Bueno de Mesquita and Anthony Fowler. *Thinking clearly with data: A guide to quantitative reasoning and analysis*. Princeton University Press, 2021
1. Grant Miller. “Women’s suffrage, political responsiveness, and child survival in American history”. In: *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123.3 (2008), pp. 1287–1327
  2. Jason Lyall. “Does indiscriminate violence incite insurgent attacks? Evidence from Chechnya”. In: *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53.3 (2009), pp. 331–362
  3. Guo Xu. “Bureaucratic Representation and State Responsiveness during Times of Crisis: The 1918 Pandemic in India”. In: *Review of Economics and Statistics* (2021), pp. 1–29
  4. Enrico Cantoni and Vincent Pons. “Strict ID laws don’t stop voters: Evidence from a US nationwide panel, 2008–2018”. In: *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 136.4 (2021), pp. 2615–2660

## Week 12

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### 11/06/2023    Writing, Reviewing and Guest Lecture on Qualitative Methods etc.

1. Andrew T Little. “Three Templates for Introductions to Political Science”. In: (2016)
2. Jack Paine’s writing advice <https://tinyurl.com/painewriting>
3. Kosuke Imai’s advice <https://tinyurl.com/imaipaper>
4. Discussion on Peer Review



## Week 13

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**11/13/2023**    **Miscellaneous Topics and Replication Presentations**

Miscellaneous Topics T.B.D (Mechanisms? Formal Theory? Breather? )

1. **Synthetic Control** Alberto Abadie, Alexis Diamond, and Jens Hainmueller.  
“Comparative politics and the synthetic control method”. In: *American Journal of Political Science* 59.2 (2015), pp. 495–510

2. **Mechanisms**

## Week 14

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**11/20/2023**    **Replication Presentations, Ideas List due!**

## Week 15

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**11/27/2023**    **Final Proposal Presentations**

## Week 16

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**12/04/2023**    **Final proposals due!**

# Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

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## **Academic Conduct:**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

## **Students and Disability Accommodations:**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](http://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

## **Support Systems:**

*Counseling and Mental Health* - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline* - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)* - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX)* - (213) 740-5086

[eeotix.usc.edu](http://eeotix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment* - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS)* - (213) 740-0776

[osas.usc.edu](https://osas.usc.edu)

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

*USC Campus Support and Intervention* - (213) 821-4710

[campussupport.usc.edu](https://campussupport.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity, Equity and Inclusion* - (213) 740-2101

[diversity.usc.edu](https://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency* - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety* - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Office of the Ombuds* - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

[ombuds.usc.edu](https://ombuds.usc.edu)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

*Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice* - (323) 442-3340 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)  
[chan.usc.edu/otfp](http://chan.usc.edu/otfp)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.