

**POLI 7961 Approaches to Studying Social Science
Fall 2014**

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Office Hours: Monday and Tuesday 9:30-11:00 pm, and by appointment (preferred)

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Course Description: To undertake a career in the social sciences, whether as an academic or as an applied practitioner, one must be socialized into the norms, standards and evaluative methods of the relevant discipline. This course is designed to train students to think like social science researchers. Regardless of your particular substantive field, when you finish this course you will be able to formulate, implement and evaluate a research project as a social *scientist*.

To accomplish these aims, we will first examine the ultimate questions of epistemology and the nature of the scientific method. This introduction is followed by a consideration of the nature of social science theory and explanation, and issues which relate to the use of empirical observations to test theories: concept formation, hypothesis construction, indicator development, and measurement. In the final half of the semester, we will examine alternative research designs, including experimental designs, quasi-experimental designs, and non-experimental research.

Evaluation: Your course grade will be determined by the following formula:

Midterm Examination:	25%
Final Examination:	15%
Research Design Paper:	40%
Participation:	20%

Requirements:

A. Attendance and Participation: Attendance is mandatory, and active participation on the part of students injects a necessary vitality into class sessions. You will be evaluated on both the quality and quantity of your contributions to class discussion; lack of preparation will adversely affect this portion of your grade. You may miss one class with a University-approved excuse. Any unexcused absence will adversely affect your participation grade. More than one excused absence will adversely affect your participation grade.

B. Readings: Students are expected to come to class having completed the assigned readings. Note that exams cover all of the material assigned in the readings, regardless of whether or not a given topic or piece of information is explicitly covered in class discussion.

- ❖ Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava and David Nachmias. 2008. *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. 7th ed. New York: Worth.

In addition, there are many other required readings taken from academic journals and other various texts; an “(M)” following the citation denotes the reading’s availability on the Moodle site maintained for this class; an “(LSUL)” following a citation denotes its availability

through the LSU Library system. During the first class we will talk about how to access articles through the LSU and Moodle systems.

The reading for this class is cumulative so you are urged to be diligent in reading assignments on time. Furthermore, for most of you, one reading of assigned material will not be sufficient. Two or more readings, along with careful studying will be necessary. Moreover, as distasteful as it may sound, some *memorization* will be required. Perhaps with some topics, rote memorization of material is an indication of a lack of understanding. But when learning about research design, memorization of definitions is typically a necessary first step toward understanding.

One final note of caution is in order. You need to be very attentive throughout the course to the *proper language* for discussing social science research. It is not enough to read the material, say to yourself "this makes sense," and turn attention to something else. You need to know the material well enough to be able to discuss it and write about it using standard language for communication. So, when reading, be very careful to note the phrasing and sentence structure used by the authors. ***You should also bring each week's readings to class to facilitate discussion of the materials.

C. Examinations: Two exams will be given. The midterm test will cover all material from the first half of the course, and the final examination will be cumulative, but with material from the second-half of the course assigned greater weight. Exams will be closed-book, closed-notes and will be comprised of short answer and essay questions. Failure to take an exam on time will result in a zero, except when dire circumstances prevail (documentation required). Make-up exams will be given at the professor's convenience and only in the following instances:

- (1) An accident or crime precluded attendance (police report indicating date, time, and details required);
- (2) There was a serious illness or death in the immediate family;
- (3) A serious physical illness or medical emergency prevented attendance (physician's *letter* – not a receipt – must state that physical condition warranted nonattendance).

D. Research Design Paper: The major assignment for this class will be a research design paper. The requirements for this project are outlined in detail later in this course packet.

Syllabus and Reading List

WEEK #1 (August 27): Introductions and Course Preview

- ❖ No Readings

WEEK #2 (September 3): Logic and the Scientific Method; Epistemology and the Conduct of Scientific Research

- ❖ Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Chapter 1.

- ❖ Goldberg, Arthur S. 1963. "Political Science as Science." In Nelson W. Polsby, Robert A. Dentler and Paul A. Smith (eds.), *Politics and Social Life: An Introduction to Political Behavior*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. pp. 26-36. (M)
- ❖ McGaw, Dickinson and George Watson. 1976. *Political and Social Inquiry*. New York: Wiley. (Chapters 1-3) (M)
- ❖ Heck, Ryan. "What the heck is research?" (M)
<http://hardsci.wordpress.com/2011/12/20/what-the-heck-is-research-anyway-a-guest-post-by-brent-roberts/>

WEEK #3 (September 10): Logic and the Scientific Method; Epistemology and the Conduct of Scientific Research

- ❖ Kuhn, Thomas S. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. pp. 1-173.
- ❖ Popper, Karl. 1970. "Normal Science and its Dangers." In Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 51-58. (M)
- ❖ Lakatos, Imre. 1970. "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes." In Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 91-138. (M)

WEEK #4 (September 17): Problem Formulation and Theory Development

- ❖ Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Chapter 2.
- ❖ McGaw, Dickinson and George Watson, Chapters 8-9. (M)
- ❖ Blalock, Hubert M. 1969. *Theory Construction: From Verbal to Mathematical Formulations*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. Chapters 1-3. (M)
- ❖ Bohrnstedt, George and David Knoke. 1988. *Statistics for Social Data Analysis*. 2nd ed. Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock. Chapter 12. (M)

WEEK #5 (September 24): Constructing and Testing Hypotheses: Inference and Causality

- ❖ Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Chapters 3 & 19.
- ❖ Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*, Chapters 6-7. (M)
- ❖ Berry, Frances Stokes and William D. Berry. 1990. "State Lottery Adoptions as Policy

Innovation: An Event History Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 84:395-415. (M)

WEEK #6 (October 1): Conceptualization and Measurement

- ❖ Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Chapters 7, 14 & 18.
- ❖ Mondak, Jeffrey. 2001. "Developing Valid Knowledge Scales." *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 224-38. (LSUL)
- ❖ Adcock and Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95:529-46. (LSUL)

WEEK #7 (October 8): Measurement: Examples from the Literature

- ❖ Tedin, Kent. 1986. "Change and Stability in Presidential Popularity at the Individual Level." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50:555-562. (LSUL)
- ❖ Davis, Belinda Creel and Valentina Bali. 2008. "Examining the Role of Race, NIMBY, and Local Politics in FEMA Trailer Park Placement." *Social Science Quarterly* 89 (5): 1175-1194. (LSUL)
- ❖ Abramson, Paul R. and Charles W. Ostrom, Jr. 1991. "Macropartisanship: An Empirical Reassessment." *American Political Science Review* 85:181-192. (LSUL)
- ❖ Laver, Michael and John Garry. 2000. "Estimating Policy Positions from Political Texts." *American Journal of Political Science* 44:619-634. (LSUL)
- ❖ Green, Donald P., Dara Z. Strolovitch, Janelle S. Wong, and Robert W. Bailey. 2001. "Measuring Gay Populations and Antigay Hate Crime." *Social Science Quarterly* 82:281-296. (LSUL)

WEEK #8 (October 15): MIDTERM EXAMINATION!!!

WEEK #9 (October 22): Introduction to Research Design: True Experiments

- ❖ Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Chapters 4-5.
- ❖ Iyengar, Shanto, and Donald R. Kinder. 1987. *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press. (Chapters 1-3) (M)
- ❖ Sherman, Lawrence W. and Richard A. Berk. 1984. "The Specific Deterrent Effects of Arrest for Domestic Assault." *American Sociological Review* 49:261-272. (LSUL)

- ❖ Solomon, Phyllis and Jeffrey Draine. 1995. "One-Year Outcomes of a Randomized Trial of Case Management with Seriously Mentally Ill Clients Leaving Jail." *Evaluation Review* 19:256-273. (LSUL)
- ❖ Rosenberg, Shawn W. and Patrick McCafferty. 1987. "The Image and the Vote: Manipulating Voters' Preferences." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51:31-47. (LSUL)
- ❖ Gilliam, Franklin D. and Shanto Iyengar. 2000. "Prime Suspects: The Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public." *American Journal of Political Science* 44:560-573. (LSUL)
- ❖ Nicholas A. Valentino, Vincent L. Hutchings and Ismail K. White. 2002. "Cues that Matter." *American Political Science Review* 96(1):75-90. (LSUL)

WEEK #10 (October 29): Cross-Sectional, Time-Series, and Quasi-Experimental Designs

- ❖ Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Chapter 6.
- ❖ Leff, Donna, David Protes, and Steven Brooks. 1986. "Crusading Journalism: Changing Public Attitudes and Policy Making Agenda." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50:300-315. (LSUL)
- ❖ Braun, Kathryn L. and Charles L. Rose. 1986. "The Hawaii Geriatric Foster Care Experiment: Impact Evaluation and Cost Analysis." *The Gerontologist* 26:516-524. (LSUL)
- ❖ Lewis-Beck, Michael S. and John R. Alford. 1980. "Can Government Regulate Safety? The Coal Mine Example." *American Political Science Review* 74:745-756. (LSUL)

WEEK #11 (November 5): Data Collection I: Sampling, Selection Bias, Observational Methods, and Secondary Data Analysis

- ❖ Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Chapters 8, 9, & 13.
- ❖ Arthur Conan Doyle. 1930. "Silver Blaze." Pages 335-349 in *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, Volume 1. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company. (M)
- ❖ Barbara Geddes. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2:131-150. (LSUL)
- ❖ Ian S. Lustick. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias." *American Political Science Review* 90(3):605-618. (LSUL)

- ❖ Stemler, Steve (2001). An overview of content analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 7(17). Retrieved August 22, 2010 from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7&n=17>. (M)
- ❖ Sobek, David. 2003. "Regime Type, Preferences, and War: An Empirical Analysis of Renaissance Italy." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47(2): 202-235.

WEEK #12 (November 12): Data Collection II: Survey Research

- ❖ Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Chapters 10-11.
- ❖ Bradburn, Norman and Seymour Sudbman. 1988. *Polls and Surveys*. San Francisco: Josey-Bass. Chapter 9. (M)
- ❖ Mann, Christopher and Casey Klofstad. 2013. "The Role of Call Quality in Voter Mobilization: Implications for Electoral Outcomes and Experimental Design." *Political Behavior* (LSUL)
- ❖ Ansolabehere, Stephen, and Brian Schaffer. 2014. "Does Survey Mode Still Matter? Findings from a 2010 Multi-Mode Comparison." *Political Analysis* 22:285-303.

WEEK #13 (November 19): Qualitative Research, Case Studies, and Triangulating Inferential Power

- ❖ Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Chapters 9 & 12.
- ❖ King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 & 2.
- ❖ Fenno, Richard F., Jr. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Boston: Little, Brown. pp. 249-295. (M)
- ❖ Monroe, Pamela and Vicky Tiller. "Commitment to Work among Welfare Reliant Women." 2001. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 63: 816-828..

Recommended for this topic:

Henry Brady and David Collier, eds. 2004. *Rethinking Social Inquiry*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, Publishers.

James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds. 2003. *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

WEEK #14 (November 26): No Class (reserved for makeup class if necessary)

WEEK #15 (December 3): Extensions of Good Design: Replication and Meta-Analysis

- ❖ Sherman, Lawrence W., Douglas A. Smith, Janell D. Schmidt, and Dennis P. Rogan. 1992. "Crime, Punishment, and Stake in Conformity: Legal and Informal Controls of Domestic Violence." *American Sociological Review* 57:680-690. (LSUL)
- ❖ Pate, Anthony M. and Edwin E. Hamilton. 1992. "Formal and Informal Deterrents to Domestic Violence: The Dade County Spouse Assault Experiment." *American Sociological Review* 57:691-697. (LSUL)
- ❖ Paternoster, Raymond, Robert Brame, Ronet Bachman, and Lawrence W. Sherman. 1997. "Do Fair Procedures Matter? The Effect of Procedural Justice on Spouse Assault." *Law and Society Review* 31: 163-204. (LSUL)
- ❖ Lau, Richard R., Lee Sigelman, Caroline Heldman, and Paul Babbitt. 1999. "The Effects of Negative Political Advertisements: A Meta-Analytic Assessment." *American Political Science Review* 93: 851-875. (LSUL)
- ❖ Brooks, Deborah Jordan. 2006. "The Resilient Voter: Moving Toward Closure in the Debate over Negative Campaigning and Turnout." *The Journal of Politics*. 68(3). (LSUL)

WEEK #16 (TBA): Final Exam

Research Design Paper

You are required to write a paper presenting a research project of your own choice. This paper is due Monday, December 8 by 4pm. A letter grade penalty per weekday will be imposed on all late papers. Thus, a paper worth an A- that was turned in one day late would become a B-, etc. Extensions will only be given when DIRE circumstances prevail, and any such instance must be approved by the graduate advisor and dean. If you would like comments on a rough draft of your research design (this is highly encouraged), you should have a completed draft of your paper to me by Monday, November 24th. Comments will be returned to you by Monday, December 1st so that you have a full week to make changes.

Formatting

- 11-12 point font and 1 inch margins,
- Use a standard font (such as New Times Roman)
- LASER printed on one side only of 8.5" X 11" white paper
 - Organized using section headings
 - Employ gender-neutral/inclusive language
- Follow the APSA style of internal citations (copy of manual provided to you)
 - Double spaced (except for abstract, hypotheses, references, and footnotes)
 - Contain page numbers throughout.

Organization

Your paper should (roughly) follow the outline that appears below:

- i. Title Page (no set style)
- ii. Abstract (150-500 words, single spaced)
- I. Introduction
 - a. Research Question
 - b. Literature Review
- II. Theory and Hypotheses
 - a. Analytical Framework/Theory
 - b. Hypotheses
- III. Data and Methods
 - a. Measurement Operations
 - b. Testing
- IV. Conclusion
- V. Works Cited (APSA Citation Style)

Substantive Components

1. Research Question: You must first formulate an *original* question of interest. Covering time-worn ground is not acceptable. Pay particular attention to why others ought to

be interested in your research, and what new and innovative questions you are going to address that others have failed to analyze or have done so poorly. In other words, sell the importance and uniqueness of your proposal/question to the reader. Ask yourself the following:

1. Has this already been done?
2. Is this an important question?
3. What would we better understand if we knew the answer to the question?
4. Would answering this question contribute to the cumulative body of scientific knowledge?
5. Will your proposed analysis actually answer the question you are posing?

2. Literature Review: Present a brief, analytical summary of the major schools of thought or approaches to the problem. Be certain to locate specific authors in the spectrum of thought. The purpose here is not to present an encyclopedic or exhaustive survey. The literature should instead be reviewed in a way that sets up what you want to do. Prepare this section with an eye toward identifying unaddressed questions, unresolved controversies, and problems with previous research that may have led to biased, invalid, or inconclusive findings. Thus, this should once again lead you toward justifying why your research proposal is of such importance and what you will do to address the deficiencies found in the extant literature.

3. Theory/Analytical Framework: Some research framework (a model, theory, or logically interconnected set of hypotheses) should be developed and presented. This need not be a full-scale exposition of judicial behavior or systemic causes of war, for example, but you must highlight the major tenets of the theory from which you will derive your hypotheses. This might be an original theory based on the work of others, one that has sufficient precedent in the literature, or one that has already been largely developed and tested and accepted, but which you are going to test in a new and useful manner. If you are going to be testing someone else's theory, you must be able to demonstrate why your tests are going to reveal something that had not been considered before, or how it will shed new light on an old subject. Note that if you are using a formal approach, you must explicitly state your assumptions and specify the deductions.

4. Hypotheses: From your theory, you must derive several hypotheses, or predictions, that will allow you to test some version of your theory. Each hypothesis should be indented in the text, single spaced, and formally starred and numbered, as in the following example:

H1: The faster the rate of change in the modernization process within any given society (X_1), the higher the level of political instability within that society (Y).

5. Measurement Operations: In this section you should explain how you will go about operationalizing or measuring the concepts contained in your hypotheses. Your discussion should address the following questions:

How will you convert the hypotheses into concrete and readily testable terms and relationships?

What sorts of information will you use to measure the constructs in your hypotheses/
When and how will you acquire this information?

You may find it useful to prepare a table that specifies the measurement rules and data sources. (Any such table or figure should be inserted directly into the text of the paper.) Consider the following example.

Table 1: Operational Definitions, Descriptive Statistics, and Data Sources

Variable	Operational Definition	Data Source	Descriptive Statistics
<i>Focus of News Story (Y)</i>	1=Strategy 2=Issues 3=Candidate Traits 4=Adwatch 5=Horserace	Content analysis of each newspaper story; Kappa=.88	Range 1,5 Mean 2 Std Dev 2
<i>Income (X₁)</i>	Median income in market area divided by 1000.	<i>2004 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook</i> 2000 U.S. Census	Range 20,63.9 Mean 41.3 Std Dev 6.1
<i>% Young Audiences in Market (X₂)</i>	Percent of market ages 20-44.	<i>2004 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook</i> 2000 U.S. Census	Range 28.7,51.5 Mean 43.1 Std Dev 4.2
<i>% Female in Market (X₃)</i>	% of Females in market.	<i>2004 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook</i> 2000 U.S. Census	Range 42.1,52.9 Mean 50 Std Dev .985
<i>Circulation (X₄)</i>	Circulation numbers	<i>2004 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook</i>	Range 7.87, 13.32 Mean 11.62 Std Dev 1.4
<i>State (X₅)</i>	Colorado=1 Washington=0	News Content	Range 0,1 Mean .469 Std Dev .499
<i>Election Week (X₆)</i>	Number of weeks into the Election	News Content	Range 1,9 Mean 6.64 Std Dev 2.65

6. **Testing:** You need to explain how you will go about conducting your analysis and testing your hypotheses. Note that it is understood that you are relatively unfamiliar with econometric specifications and other advance quantitative techniques. What is expected is that you mention the technique that you believe is appropriate (e.g. cross-sectional, linear regression, time-series, logit or probit, etc.), identify the unit(s) of

analysis, justify case selection, and specify the time-range of the study. Consultation with the professor is highly recommended before writing this section.

7. Conclusion: In the conclusion you need to sell the importance of your anticipated findings. Some questions to ponder:

What do you expect to find?

What will your potential findings mean for political science and the real world?

Will you contribute toward theory building?

Will you discover some knowledge that is previously unknown and/or that may conceivably be put to use by policy makers or political practitioners?

Why are we better off for having learned what you expect to find?

8. Works Cited: This listing should appear at the very end of your paper. Note that all sources cited in the text of your paper must appear in this section. Do not include any source that is not explicitly cited in your paper. Each entry should be single-spaced and indented after the first line, with one space between entries. Be sure to follow the *APSA Style Guide*.

Citation and Academic Honesty

LSU's policy on plagiarism is the following: "Plagiarism is defined to include any use of another's work and submitting that work as one's own. This means not only copying passages of writing or direct quotations but also paraphrasing or using structure or ideas without citation." Most of the work you will do for this class will require you to deal closely with books and articles assigned for this class; some projects may require you to do additional research. In either case, the rule of thumb is this: If you use material from a source (either one assigned from this class or something you've retrieved through outside research), you must cite it. Please review the University's excellent guidelines on plagiarism and academic integrity at <http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/> and <http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/Plagiarism.htm>.

Please note: If I even suspect plagiarism I am required by university policy to turn in the assignment to the dean of the graduate school. This means it is beyond my control what happens from that point forward. So – PLEASE ask any questions if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism (it often happens unintentionally). Please make EVERY effort to avoid putting me in the terrible position of turning your work in to the dean.

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, cognitive, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact me at the beginning of the quarter to discuss any such accommodations for this course. In order to have any accommodations met, you must be registered with the LSU Office of Disabilities Services. More information on registering and accommodation is available on the ODS website: <http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ods.nsf/index>