

PSCI 215: POLITICAL RESEARCH

WHEATON COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
FALL 2016

Professor: Dr. Timothy W. Taylor
Meeting: MSC 204, Thursdays, 1:15pm-3:05pm
Office Hours: M/W/F 9:00am-10:30am, R 8:00am-9:30am
and by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the principles of research in political science. How does one know if race or gender drives voting behavior? Does foreign trade promote peace between trading partners or does peace promote trade? These questions may seem straightforward, but explaining causation in political science is often a difficult task. This course is designed to introduce research designs to students using the context of political science. Different approaches will be discussed such as case studies, interviews, surveys, statistics and experimentation. At the introduction students will be exposed to the basic framework of theories, variables, and causation. This course is designed to be an introduction to research methods, so there are no prerequisites. Students are encouraged to approach problems with creativity and ask questions!

The first half of the course will focus upon the foundations of research. We will begin with theory building and the basics of research design in the social and behavioral sciences. The experimental method will be introduced here to highlight causation.

The second half of the course will turn toward research methodologies where we will look at different ways to test hypotheses and try to infer causation. We will compare qualitative and quantitative research methods with a focus upon good research practice. Selection biases will be discussed and basic problems of research design (and their solutions) will be introduced.

This class differs from a statistics course or other research methodology class in that it is designed for Political Science students! We will motivate the course objectives with political content and examples. These political contexts will range from American Politics to Comparative Politics to International Relations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The skills you will develop in this course will help you better understand social science research and will lay the foundation for further study of political science. The course has three primary objectives:

1. Understand how the research process works and the methods used in political science research.

We will devote significant time to learning about the process of research, including research ethics. We will focus on the discipline of political science and its methodologies. Students will be evaluated through their contributions to class discussion, class assignments, an exam, and a research design project.

2. Conduct independent research and create a research design. Students will apply their knowledge of the research process to independent qualitative projects. This objective requires students to use various research tools to communicate results effectively. Students' ability to conduct research will be evaluated through their contributions to class discussion, class assignments, and a research design project.

3. Demonstrate the ability to interpret and critique academic research. Students should be able to interpret and critique research published in peer-reviewed journals and books. This ability will be evaluated through contributions to class discussion, an exam, and a research design project.

The department expects all of our majors “to be able to employ the appropriate tools to undertake research in American politics, comparative politics or international relations” by the time they reach graduation. This course will provide you tools to help you achieve this important learning objective. Throughout the course, we will consider ways in which our Christian worldview affects our approach to the discipline and the various elements of the research process.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required:

1. Malici, Akan and Elizabeth Smith. 2012. *Political Science Research in Practice*. New York: Routledge. [abbreviated as **Malici and Smith** in course schedule]
2. Additional required readings
 - Additional weekly readings will be assigned with relevance for the topics under discussion. Most of these readings will be available through the library's electronic journals; others will be posted to the course site on *Schoology*.

ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING

The course grade will be broken down approximately as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Research Project (Dec. 9) | 40% |
| 2. Literature Review | 10% |
| 3. Assignments | 20% |
| 4. Final Exam (Dec. 13) | 20% |
| 5. Participation | 10% |

Research Project

- The research project will provide students with an opportunity to develop and test their own political theory. The project asks students to develop a theory about the political world, and translate that theory into testable hypotheses. Students will then create a **research design** aimed to test those hypotheses using one or more of the research methods presented in the course. At a minimum, papers must have preliminary results to support the research design. Students will submit a hard copy of the project to the instructor's office or department administrator by 4:30pm the day following the final class meeting (papers will not be accepted via email). Late projects will be penalized. More information and support resources will be provided.

Literature Review

- Students must integrate their research project into existing political science literature. The review has two parts with greater weight upon Part 1:
 - Review of the literature that focuses upon a consistent theme identifying a “gap” in the literature that the student's research project aims to fill [max: 750 words].
 - Annotated bibliography with a 2-3 sentence summary following each citation. Summaries must include the question, findings and contribution [min: 15 citations]. Citations must follow APSA formatting (look at *American Political Science Review* for examples).

Assignments

- Students will be asked to complete assignments that center around research generally and the research project specifically. Each assignment will be distributed one week before its due date.

Assignments must be submitted at the beginning of class on the respective due date; late submissions will be penalized.

Final Exam

- Students must bring a blue book to the exam: **Tuesday, December 13, 1:30-3:30pm.**
NOTE: If you have a scheduling conflict with the exam time, please drop the course. My policy for missed assignments and exams is simple: the only appropriate excuses are compelling, unanticipated, nonacademic reasons. Sleeping-in is nonacademic but not compelling (even if it is unanticipated). Personal conflicts such as late flights or sports commitments also do not qualify.

Participation

- Class meetings are fully participatory. Lectures will be combined with active discussions and small group interactions. Students are expected to engage in class lectures/discussions and be open participants in small group activities. Students cannot participate if they do not attend. There will be formal (e.g. mini presentations) and informal (e.g. discussion questions) interactions by which students are assessed.

Grading Scale

A	94 - 100%	C	74 - 76.99%
A-	90 - 93.99%	C-	70 - 73.99%
B+	87 - 89.99%	D+	67 - 69.99%
B	84 - 86.99%	D	63 - 66.99%
B-	80 - 83.99%	D-	60 - 62.99%
C+	77 - 79.99%	F	59.99% and below

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

Content Student Responsibility:

- All material presented in class meetings and in texts will be eligible for assessment. Students are responsible for all announcements made in class and email/Schoology.

Course Materials:

- All lectures, handouts, assignments, and exams may not be published on the internet or in any other manner without the instructor's permission.

Class Participation:

- Participate and attend class discussions. Please ask questions and make comments! Students are encouraged to challenge ideas discussed in class. In all discussions, everyone must provide his/her fellow students with full respect and courtesy.

Professionalism:

- Be professional. Unprofessional behavior will not be tolerated (e.g. arriving late and leaving early, talking/texting on cell phones, distracting internet browsing, side conversations).

Computers & Devices:

- Computers may be used for note-taking only. Web browsing is distracting to students around you and studies find computer use during class tends to decrease academic performance. Computer use may be revoked at the instructor's discretion. Mobile devices (e.g. cell phones) are strictly prohibited.

E-mail:

- Emails will be responded to on the same or following business day. Professional conduct is expected when emailing the instructor and peers. Emails must begin with a salutation, have a clear and polite

body, and appropriate closure that includes the student's name. Do not treat professional emails as a "text".

Academic Dishonesty:

- Cheating and plagiarism will be punished to the fullest extent.
- "Academic dishonesty occurs when a student or any member of an academic community fails to truthfully represent the sources of their work, whether on tests, in papers, presentations and projects, or in any academic assignment. Academic dishonesty involves both stealing and lying, in that we steal the ideas and expressions of another contrary to their intent and, in representing them as our own, we lie regarding their authorship. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, any misrepresentation or deception related to assigned or voluntary academic work, any deliberate attempt to gain unfair advantage in completing requirements, and colluding, aiding or abetting the academic dishonesty of another student. The College-wide policy on Academic Honesty is presented in the Student Handbook, and in accord with that policy, incidents of academic dishonesty in this course will be dealt with decisively. All academic work involves engagement with and presentation of the ideas of others, and so your professor would be very willing to assist students in learning how to properly use and give credit for the work of others."
- Educational Policies and Curriculum Committee, 2004
- In all papers for this course, **you must document** all thoughts and ideas that are not your own, even if you are not directly quoting a source. Violation of these policies, when discovered, will result in appropriate disciplinary measures

Inclusive Language:

- "For academic discourse, spoken and written, the faculty expects students to use gender inclusive language for human beings."

Late Assignments:

- All assignments are to be printed, stapled, and submitted at the beginning of class. All late submissions will be docked 5 percentage points and will be deducted an additional 5 percent for each business day they are late. Papers will not be accepted after one week from the due date. Late assignments must be submitted to the Department of Politics and International Relations.

Regrading:

- If you want to request a re-grade for a paper or exam, you must submit your request in writing within one week of receiving the graded assignment. All requests must include an explanation outlining why you think the answer/paper deserved a higher grade. If no such request is made within the allotted time, your grade will be considered final. Re-grading is done as a whole, thus readjustments may lead to a higher or lower grade.

Incompletes:

- The grade incomplete shall be assigned only when the student's work is of passing quality and the student has completed all work up to the time of the final exam. Moreover, an incomplete will only be given in cases of medical or family emergency.

Accommodations:

- Wheaton College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments is requested to contact the Academic and Disability Services Office as early in the semester as possible. Please call [630.752.5941](tel:630.752.5941) or send an e-mail to jennifer.nicodem@wheaton.edu for further information.

TOPICS AND COURSE SCHEDULE¹

I expect you to do the assigned reading *before* the meeting, and to come to class prepared to engage the material with questions, hunches, and confusion. I do not expect you to understand everything you read the first time you encounter it, but I do expect you to try. Re-reading previously assigned material after a relevant class is one of the best ways to master this material.

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION AND THE “SCIENCE” IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

- Malici and Smith, Chapter 1
- Stone, Walter. February 15, 2013. [“Walter Stone Responds to Eric Cantor’s Criticism of His Research.”](#)

SESSION 2: NO CLASS -- APSA

- [“How to Read \(and Understand\) a Social Science Journal Article”](#)
- **Assignment #1 Due: CITI certification**
 - Email confirmation by September 7, 11:59pm

SESSION 3: BUILDING BLOCKS: RESEARCH QUESTIONS, THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

- Malici and Smith, Chapter 2
- Barakso, Sabet and Schaffner 2014. *Understanding Political Science Research Methods: The Challenge of Inference*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 2-3.
- **Assignment #2 Due: Research question(s) & hypotheses**

SESSION 4: MARGARINE AND DIVORCE: THE CHALLENGE OF INFERENCE

- Barakso, Sabet and Schaffner 2014. *Understanding Political Science Research Methods: The Challenge of Inference*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 1.
- NPR: *Planet Money*. [“Episode 453: What Causes What?”](#) April 23, 2013.
- Willingham, Emily. [“Divorce Rates Linked to Margarine Consumption?”](#) *Forbes*. May 14, 2014.
- Fearon, James D. 1991. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science." *World Politics* 43(2): 169-195.
- Recommended:
 - Virgen, Tyler. [Spurious Correlations](#).

SESSION 5: MEASUREMENT AND CASE SELECTION

- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. **Chapters 4-5.**
- Ashworth, Scott, Joshua D. Clinton, Adam Meirowitz and Kristopher W. Ramsay. 2008. "Design, Inference, and the Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *American Political Science Review* 102(2): 269-273.
- Recommended:
 - Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2(1): 131-150.
 - Henrich, Joseph, Steven J. Heine and Ara Norenzayan. 2010. "The Weirdest People in the World?" *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33(2-3): 61-83.
 - Henrich, Joseph, et al. 2001. "In Search of Homo Economicus: Behavioral Experiments in 15 Smallscale Societies." *American Economic Review* 91(2): 73-78.

¹ Course topics, readings, and dates are subject to change.

SESSION 6: THE EXPERIMENTAL METHOD

- Malici and Smith, Chapter 10
- Butler, Daniel M. and David E. Broockman. 2011. "Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(3): 463-477.
- NPR: *Planet Money*. "[Episode 677: The Experiment Experiment](#)." January 15, 2016.
- Recommended:
 - Taylor, Timothy W. 2015. "The Electoral Salience of Trade Policy: Experimental Evidence on the Effects of Welfare and Complexity." *International Interactions* 41(1): 84-109.

SESSION 7: CASE STUDY AND THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

- Malici and Smith, Chapter 12
- Crasnow, Sharon. 2012. "The Role of Case Study Research in Political Science: Evidence for Causal Claims." *Philosophy of Science* 79(5): 655-666.
- Haggard, Stephan and Robert R. Kaufman. 2012. "Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule." *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 495-516.

SESSION 8: FIELD RESEARCH

- Malici and Smith, Chapter 4
- Willis, Derek. 2014. "[Professors' Research Project Stirs Political Outrage in Montana](#)." *The New York Times*. October 28, 2014.
- **Assignment #3 Due: Basic research design models**

SESSION 9: ETHICS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

- Malici and Smith, Chapter 12
- Shea, Christopher. 2000. "[Don't Talk to the Humans: The Crackdown on Social Science Research](#)." *Linguafranca* 10(6).
- Gass, Nick. 2015. "[Study on Gay Marriage Views Retracted After Allegations of Fake Data](#)." *Politico*, May 20, 2015.
- Recommended:
 - Humphreys, Macartan. 2011. "[Ethical Challenges of Embedded Experimentation](#)." *Comparative Democratization APSA Newsletter* 9(3): 23-29.
 - Broockman, Kalla and Aronow. 2015. "[Irregularities in LaCour \(2014\)](#)"

SESSION 10: INTERVIEWS

- Malici and Smith, Chapter 5
- Barbour, Rosaline. 2014. *Introducing Qualitative Research: A Student's Guide*, 2nd Edition. London: Sage: Chapter 5, 111-132.
- Martin, Cathie Jo. 2013. "Crafting Interviews to Capture Cause and Effect." In *Interview Research in Political Science*. Layna Mosley, ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 109-125.
- **Literature Review Due**

SESSION 11: SURVEYS

- Malici and Smith, Chapter 7
- "[Designing a Survey](#)." *Science Buddies*.
- "[Survey Fundamentals: A Guide to Developing and Implementing Surveys](#)." *Office of Quality Improvement, University of Wisconsin, Madison*.
- Recommended:

- Buttolph Johnson, Janet, Reynolds, H.T., and Jason D. Mycoff. 2016. *Political Science Research Methods*, 8th Edition. London: Sage: Chapter 10, 294-347.

SESSION 12: STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

- Malici and Smith, Chapter 8
- NPR: *Planet Money*. "[Episode 452: How Much Should We Trust Economics?](#)" April 19, 2013.
- Fowler, James H., Laura A. Baker, and Christopher T. Dawes. 2008. "Genetic Variation in Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 102(2): 233-248.
- Recommended:
 - Hurwitz, Leon. 1973. "Contemporary Approaches to Political Stability." *Comparative Politics* 5(3): 449-463.
- **Register for research design meetings**
- **Assignment #4 Due: Survey questionnaire and memo**

SESSION 13: NATURAL EXPERIMENTS AND INSTRUMENTAL VARIABLES

- Sekhon, Jasjeet S. and Rocio Titiunik. 2012. "When Natural Experiments Are Neither Natural nor Experiments." *American Political Science Review* 106(1): 35-57.
- Choose (at least) one of the following three articles to reading:
 1. Fisman, Raymond and Edward Miguel. 2007. "Corruption, Norms, and Legal Enforcement: Evidence from Diplomatic Parking Tickets." *Journal of Political economy* 115(6): 1020-1048.
 2. Posner, Daniel N. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 529-545.
 3. Lyall, Jason. 2009. "Does Indiscriminate Violence Incite Insurgent Attacks? Evidence from Chechnya." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53(3): 331-362.
- Brückner, Markus, and Antonio Ciccone. 2010. "International Commodity Prices, Growth and the Outbreak of Civil War in Sub-Saharan Africa." *The Economic Journal* 120(544): 519-534.

SESSION 14: CONTENT ANALYSIS AND FORMAL MODELING

- Malici and Smith, Chapter 9
- Malici and Smith, Chapter 11
- Clinton, Robert Lowry. 1994. "Game Theory, Legal History, and the Origins of Judicial Review: A Revisionist Analysis of Marbury v. Madison." *American Journal of Political Science* 38(2): 285-302.
- Recommended:
 - Cooper, Christopher A. and Marc Schwerdt. 2001. "Depictions of Public Service in Children's Literature: Revisiting an Understudied Aspect of Political Socialization." *Social Science Quarterly* 82(3): 616-632.

SESSION 15: BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

- Laitin, David. "Comparative Politics: The State of the Subdiscipline." Presented at APSA, Washington D.C., 2000.
- **Mini presentations of research projects**
 - Bring 8 copies of handouts (1-2 pages) to share with small group
- Final exam review (if time)
 - Email questions beforehand to be guaranteed coverage in class

**** Research Projects Due by 4:30pm, Friday December 9 ****

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, December 13, 1:30-3:30pm