Political Science 817
Empirical Methods of Political Inquiry

UW-Madison • Fall 2017 • Wednesdays 3:30-5:25pm • 422 North Hall

Contact Information

Professor: Barry C. Burden
Email: bcburden@wisc.edu
Phone: 608-263-6351
Office: 101 A/B North Hall
Office Hours: Mondays 2-4pm and by appointment

The Course

Political science, like all mature academic fields, advances by scholarly research. This course introduces graduate students to the issues that commonly arise in qualitative and quantitative empirical political science research designs and their execution. Because no single approach to a research question is ideal, we will learn about the trade-offs involved in selecting one design over another. As a researcher and a consumer of others’ research, you must be self-conscious about the strengths and weakness of each methodology.

Requirements

The readings are a combination of books, book chapters, and articles. Some are general sources intended to acquaint you with a set of issues; others are applications that exemplify a methodological approach. The two required books are Gerring’s Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework (2nd ed.) and King, Keohane, and Verba’s Designing Social Inquiry (KKV), both available for purchase online and at the University Book Store. Other readings will be distributed electronically on the Learn@UW course website. Students are expected to do all of the required reading and come to class meetings ready to discuss the material. I will give advance notice when the readings are changed.

Class meetings will mostly be in a seminar format interrupted by occasional mini lectures. You should expect to participate in the dissection of each week’s required readings.

There will be five short homework assignments scattered throughout the semester. These exercises will allow you to develop a specific skill, evaluate competing research designs, and see how theories work in practice. Each assignment will take time to execute, but should not run longer than 5 double-spaced pages. Please deliver these to me in hard copy. A ★ indicates when the assignment will be distributed. It will generally be due 7-10 days later and should be uploaded to the appropriate dropbox folder.
For the final paper each student will develop an original research design. The paper should efficiently synthesize the relevant literature and outline the hypotheses, arguments, or theory to be examined. In more detail, it should propose an empirical research project, a sort of blueprint for a study that depends only on resources that are typically available to a graduate student. I hope that the research design will eventually lead to a paper in another seminar, a conference presentation, or part of a dissertation.

An abstract of at least one page is due in the dropbox by **Monday, November 20**. Final papers are due in the dropbox by **Thursday, December 21**. Most papers will be about 20 pages long and should not be much longer unless you are combining the paper with another course or actually undertaking the research in the paper. Please consult with me if want to be considered for these options.

**Grades**

Final grades are based on a weighted average of letter grades from three sources: contributions to class participation (25%), homework assignments (35%), and the final paper (50%). Please talk with me anytime during the semester if you have questions about the material, requirements, or your performance.

**Introduction & Inference: The General and the Particular (September 6 and 13)**

**Required**
- Gerring [Chapters 1-3]
- KKV [Chapters 1 & 2]

**Recommended**
- Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. 2006. “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research.” *Political Analysis* 14:227-249.
Measurement I: Concept Operationalization (September 20)

Required
Gerring [Chapter 5]

Recommended
★ Assignment 1: Measuring Educational Quality

Measurement II: Reliability and Validity (September 27)

Required
Gerring [p. 80-6 & Chapter 7]
KKV [p. 150-68]

Recommended

Theories, Hypotheses, and Inference (October 4)

Required
Gerring [Chapters 6 & 8]
Recommended
★ Assignment 2: Durkheim’s Hypotheses

Collecting Data (October 11)

Required
Gerring [p. 74-80 & 86-95]
KKV [Chapter 6]

Recommended
★ Assignment 3: Fact Finding

Specification and Spuriousness (October 18)

Required
KKV [p. 168-84 & 199-207]
Recommended

No Class October 25

Causation, Necessity, and Sufficiency in Small-N Studies (November 1)

Required
Gerring [Chapters 11 & 12]
KKV [Chapter 3]

Recommended

Lab and Field Experiments (November 8)

Required
Gerring [Chapter 9 & p. 256-73]
KKV [p. 185-99]

Recommended


★ Assignment 4: Designing an Experiment

Quasi-Experiments (November 15)

Required
Gerring [p. 273-90]

Recommended
Case Selection, Case Methods, Sampling, and Generalization (November 22)

Required
KKV [Chapter 4]

Recommended
★ Assignment 5: Selecting a Sample

Qualitative Interviews and Participant Observation (November 29)

Required
Rivera, Sharon Werning, Polina M. Kozyreva, and Eduard G. Sarovskii. 2002. “Interviewing Political Elites: Lessons from Russia.” *PS: Political Science & Politics*. (Also see other articles in the symposium in the same issue.)

**Recommended**


**Survey Research (December 6)**

**Required**


**Recommended**


Communicating Research (December 13)

Required
Data Access and Research Transparency (DART) web site: www.dartstatement.org

Recommended