

Designing Social Inquiry POLITICAL SCIENCE 3105

University of Colorado-Boulder

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<http://socsci.colorado.edu/~bairdv/>

Office Hours: Wed 1-3:30

(also by appointment)

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the systematic study of political science. We will study how political scientists explain the attitudes and behaviors of human beings and how those attitudes and behaviors interact with their political institutions to achieve various outcomes. This course is designed to survey the wide range of research designs and methods employed in political science research, including normative analysis, interpretive analysis and causal analysis. It will provide an introduction to students planning to write honors theses and will be useful for any student planning to do research in political science as part of a senior seminar or capstone course. In this course, students will have

- improved their critical thinking skills.
- engaged in a critical analysis of important theoretical assumptions, claims, and arguments in a particular aspect of the existing theoretical literature on a topic in political science.
- developed an appreciation for the various methods that political scientists use to explain their world.

Structure of Course

The lectures will provide the necessary background information necessary to complement your reading. The lectures will not reproduce the reading. You will be required to pick a topic from the variety of aspects of political science scholarship, evaluate that scholarship and develop your own research design that would add to the current body of knowledge regarding your topic, given your evaluation of that literature. (The description of this assignment follows the Course Outline). This approach allows for the achievement of the goals for this course, which are as follows: 1) to obtain a good understanding of the how to design inquiry in political science; 2) to obtain familiarity with current research in an area in political science; and 3) to strengthen critical writing skills, which means an ability to make non-obvious arguments and to anticipate and reconcile all possible weaknesses of that argument.

We will be having class lectures in the data lab in Ketchum. You should be able to use any of the ITS labs on campus in the same way, logging with their IdentiKey Login and Password.

The list of the labs with the numbers of computers, etc. is at

<http://webdata.colorado.edu/labs/map/>, the more general information on labs is at

<http://www.colorado.edu/ITS/MSG/itslabs.html>

Course Requirements

You are required to come to every class day, *prepared by the reading for discussion*. There will be FOURTEEN HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS (listed on website) due throughout the semester; together, they will be worth 40% of your grade (you will be able to drop two assignments). There will be four quizzes throughout the semester, worth a total of 20% of your grade. You can drop one quiz grade. And there will be one 12-15 page research paper (25%). 5% of your final grade will be based on a three minute oral presentation of your final research paper. There is a take home final exam worth 10% of your final grade. These papers, assignments and quizzes and their respective topics will be discussed during the course of the semester.

There are many resources on the website (<http://sobek.colorado.edu/~bairdv/>) that can be used in preparing exams and the final paper.

You are expected to keep a copy of your work in case something is lost. **Incompletes are strongly discouraged by the College and are only given for non-academic reasons.**

The Rules

Please email me or come by my office at any time to discuss issues with the class. I am usually there and I usually answer emails from students within minutes of receiving them. I genuinely look forward to discussing issues in the class with students. I encourage you to use email or office visits for any issues related to the class.

In this class, we will be dealing with a great number of sensitive issues. I encourage feedback on my teaching style and the materials, both anonymously by email and otherwise, for any reason at any time, as long as it is respectful. Along those same lines, I always encourage students to disagree with anything I say at any time, again, as long as it is respectful. I expect all students to treat each other with respect as well. If I feel that you have treated me or any other student with disrespect, I will ask you to meet me in my office. If you continue at any other time to treat me or other students with disrespect, I will ask you to leave the classroom. Potentially, this kind of behavior could result in being dropped from the class. If you have any questions about my policies, or the University's policy regarding classroom behavior, do not hesitate to bring it up in class or talk to me about it in my office. The University's general Code of Conduct can be found at the following website: <http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html> and its code of conduct guidelines for the classroom can be found at the following website: <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html>

Religious Observation

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

Sexual Harassment

I am required by law to report to university officials any sexual harassment that I observe or that is reported to me. The university's sexual harassment policy can be found at the following website: <http://www.cusys.edu/~policies/Personnel/sexharass.html>

Academic Honesty

All the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Any time that you consult outside sources, you **MUST** cite those sources. If you consult outside sources without citation, even if you are not citing the sources directly, this constitutes cheating. Failure to put quotation marks around direct quotations constitutes plagiarism and will always result in an F for the class. Misattribution of sources (citing certain quotations or ideas as coming from a source other than the one that they come from) will result in a lower grade. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. **If you cheat, you will fail the course.**

Please review the University's policy regarding academic integrity:

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/acadinteg.html>

Disabilities Accommodation

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) provides protection from illegal discrimination for qualified individuals with disabilities. Students requesting instructional accommodations due to disabilities must arrange for such accommodation. Please review the University's services for such accommodations: <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/>

Required Texts

Kellstedt Paul M., Whitten Guy D. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Cambridge University Press (United States), 2008.

Course Outline

The purpose of the first part of this class is to differentiate the various kinds of arguments that political scientists make. First, there is the issue of fact and summarizing. There are also normative arguments that communicate what the speaker's view of what the world "ought" to be. There are also interpretive arguments, as for example an argument about what the Supreme Court means when it says that speech that presents a "clear and present danger" is not protected speech. There are also causal arguments, such as "alienation from the government causes people to participate in politics." In the beginning of the class, we will talk about the various different kinds of arguments and there will be a quiz in which you will be required to differentiate among the various kinds of arguments. Bring Kellstedt and Whitten for the quiz – it is open book!

Date		Topic	Assignments Due
Monday	January 11	Introduction to Political Science and Political Philosophy	
Wednesday	January 13	Introduction to Political Theory	Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 1, 2
Monday	January 18	Quiz I: Statement types (bring your book)	Assignment 1: Write an essay defending an original causal political theory
Wednesday	January 20	Evaluating causal arguments	Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 3

The next portion of the class deals with causal theory. The most important yet most difficult job of a social scientist is to explain why things happen. What causes war? What causes people to participate in politics? What causes democratic stability? One way to answer such questions is to identify variation in war, participation and democratic stability and then look for attributes that go along with these political phenomena. Causal theories ought to be as exhaustive as possible; however, your model of the world must not (and actually should not) match the world precisely. Thus, we develop a model of the world with the simultaneous goal of keeping the explanations as simple as possible while being as accurate as possible. This section will deal with how to think about variation and variables, how to find evidence for co-variation and how to measure variables. We will also engage in questions of how to “control” for other variables in your model of political phenomena.

We will also look at the notion of “spurious,” “intervening” and conditional relationships. Spurious relationships occur when concepts are empirically correlated but not because they are causally related. Intervening relationships happen when one variable causes another which then causes another. We will look at several ways of using data analysis to show that relationships are either spurious or intervening, using crosstab analysis and multiple regression analysis.

Date		Topic	Assignments or Reading Due
Monday	January 25	<u>Introduction to political science data analysis</u>	<u>Almond and Genco, Clouds and Clocks</u>
Wednesday	January 27	<u>Concepts, units and variables</u>	Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapters 5 and 6
Monday	February 01	<u>Central tendency, variation, standard deviation</u>	Assignment 2: Invent a concept and then create a variable that would measure that concept
Wednesday	February 03	<u>Covariation and correlation</u>	Assignment 3: Open the National Election Study using SPSS, conduct frequency and central tendency analysis
Monday	February 08	<u>Spurious relationships</u>	Assignment 4: Invent an example of a spurious relationship; Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 7
Wednesday	February 10	<u>Hypothesis testing</u>	
Monday	February 15	Quiz II: Variables, concepts, units, spurious relationships	
Wednesday	February 17	<u>Linear crosstabs and bivariate regression</u>	Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 8 and 9
Monday	February 22	<u>Using controls in crosstabs: identifying spurious and intervening effects</u>	Assignment 5: Crosstab and correlation analysis
Wednesday	February 24	Review: Crosstabs, controls and bivariate regression	Assignment 6: Bivariate regression analysis
Monday	March 01	<u>Discussion of final paper</u>	Assignment 7: Crosstab analysis, controlling for a common cause
Wednesday	March 03	<u>Using controls in crosstabs: identifying</u>	Assignment 8: Crosstab analysis, controlling for an intervening cause

<u>interaction effects</u>			
Monday	March 08	Quiz III: Crosstabs, controls, and bivariate regression	Assignment 9: Paper topic and bibliography
Wednesday	March 10	<u>Multiple Regression</u>	Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 10
Monday	March 15	Interpreting Multiple Regression	Assignment 10: Multiple regression analysis
Wednesday	March 17	Criticizing Multiple Regression	Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 12

The next section of the course will deal with a variety of kinds of research designs, with a particular focus on situations in which the data are “messy” or when you have to collect your own data. We will think carefully about the rules of inference that are applied for the various kinds of designs. We will be focusing on qualitative analysis, such as case study analysis, with a particular emphasis on selecting those cases. You will be aware of how selection bias could affect your inferences. We will also look at how to collect your own data, using surveys or experiments. You will be expected to criticize various research designs in the literature as well as to design some of your own research ideas.

Date	Topic	Assignments or Reading Due
Monday	March 29	Case study analysis <u>Ellen Immergut, Institutions, Veto Points, and Policy Results: A Comparative Analysis of Health Care</u>
Wednesday	March 31	Selection bias Assignment 11: Outline plus one section of the literature review for final paper
Monday	April 05	Experimental designs <u>Gilliam and Iyengar, Prime Suspects: The Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public</u>
Wednesday	April 07	Quiz IV: Criticizing multiple regression models and other research designs Assignment 12: Experimental research design

This portion of the class has to do with interpretation and normative political theory. One way of engaging in political science is to do careful textual analysis of ancient and contemporary texts. These texts could be works of political philosophy or historical archives or legal documents. The meaning of the text is interesting because it could give us insights into human nature or how political institutions affect human behavior. We will be investigating how to engage in textual analysis with an in class assignment and an out of class assignment in interpreting Rousseau’s view of human nature. The question in these assignments is: what does Rousseau mean when he says what he says. We will then engage in contemporary normative analysis in which we will read a contemporary political scientist, Tom Regan, and his ethics about human and animal life. Having discussed this example of contemporary normative analysis, students will come up with their own example of a normative research idea. We will also read an example of using historical interpretative analysis.

Date	Topic	Assignments or Reading Due
Monday	April 12	Interpretation: in Rousseau, Second Discourse (on website; print class assignment: and bring to class) Rousseau’s First <u>Excerpt</u>

		Discourse	Full Discourse
Wednesday April 14		Discussion of interpretation assignment	Assignment 13: One page interpretation of Rousseau's Second Discourse
Monday	April 19	Normative analysis	<u>Regan</u>
Wednesday April 21		Normative analysis: Research design ideas	Assignment 14: Normative research idea
Monday	April 26	Historical Interpretation	<u>Weingast, The Rule of Law</u>
Wednesday April 28		Oral Presentations	

Take home Final Exam Due April 30th 5:00 pm, by email

Final exam will be a take home exam. You will read a political science article and provide a three page critical essay of that study.

Final paper Due: Friday, May 6th, 5:00 pm, by email

Final Paper Assignment

You should find a research topic dealing with political science. Everyone's research question is the same: What causes _____ to vary/change (across people, geographic units, time)? You should review the academic literature associated with previously found explanation for what makes your _____ vary/change (across people, geographic units, time)? From that literature, you should deduce your own theory from an idea that comes from a lacuna (something missing) in that literature. You should develop a research design that would answer the question and explain how you intend to go about doing this research and the implications of the findings that you expect.

Outline of your paper:

- I. **Research Question** – First Sentence or Two. What causes _____?
- II. **Why the Question is Important** – 2 pages.
- III. **Literature Review** – 6-8 pages. This is the bulk of the paper. The outline of this section is a list of causes of the political phenomenon you are interested in. You should highlight and resolve to the best of your ability any contradictions to the literature. Think of this part of the paper that is making the argument that YOUR study needs to be done. Each section will be an argument about the manner and extent to which that particular concept causes your political phenomenon of interest. Be sure to consider both sides of the argument. You will need to deal with all relevant counterarguments.

Here is an example of an outline of the literature review:

What causes the tendency to litigate to vary across people?

- A. Political disadvantage
- B. Perception that courts are fair
- C. Number of people in social networks
- D. Anger
- E. Self esteem
- F. Severity of the grievance
- G. Attribution of blame of government

H. Resources (income, wealth, information, education)

For each bullet point, you will mention what the literature has to say about whether this concept causes a tendency to litigate. You will discuss many different scholars and their findings in terms of how they relate to your conclusions about the manner and extent to which each concept is a cause of your political phenomenon of interest.

- IV. **Summary of Literature Review:** Implications for your Research. One or two paragraphs. The summary of the literature review should introduce your research design. How are you going to contribute to what we already know?
- V. **Research Design.** 2-3 pages.
- VI. **Discussion of the Implications of Expected Findings:** You should answer the question: What difference does it make for our understanding of politics, perhaps in terms of how minorities can be better protected, better representation, better economic growth, or other things that we care about ... that we now know what we are able to conclude from your research? 2 pages.

You will be graded on the rigor of your discussion of the literature and on the internal consistency of your arguments. I will pay close attention to whether you have considered all potential counterarguments or inconsistencies presented by the literature in your discussion. You will also be graded on the creativity of the research design as well as your ability to answer the question: what difference does this research make in its contribution to previous literature? The answer to this question enables you to connect the first parts of the paper with the last.

Web Resources for Topics

www.apsanet.org

www.jstor.org