

SS 302C: Social Science Research and Methods
(42240)
T/th 9:30-11:00
Mezes 1.120

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This course will serve as a broad introduction to political science research. There are many “big” questions that social science research (and political science more specifically) can shed light on. Many of these often seem too confusing, too divisive, too distant, or even unanswerable. Certainly, the way many of these issues are discussed in popular discourse often involves assertions based in dubious reasoning or divorced from facts. Put frankly, political discourse in the U.S. suffers from a deficit of social science reasoning. But we can do better. And this course will be a window into how we can do better. It is at core a course in empowerment – empowerment of how to think about answers to big questions of the social world.

Logistically, the course will be framed around (1) an introductory text presenting the logic of research design and common approaches to answering social science questions and (2) specific studies that use these methods to attempt to answer questions. (1) will explain the common foundations of social science theory and methods, while (2) will showcase various applications.

This course may be used to fulfill the social and behavioral sciences component of the university core curriculum and addresses the following four core objectives established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: communication skills, critical thinking skills, empirical and quantitative skills, and social responsibility.

Textbook:

John Gerring and Dino Christenson. 2017. *Applied Social Science Methodology: An Introductory Guide*. NY: Cambridge University Press.

Course grading

20% weekly quizzes

20% presentation of article + article summary assignment

25% midterm exam

25% final exam

10% class participation

Each student will sign up to present **1** article during the semester. You may find the sign-up sheet for article presentations under the “collaboration” tab in Canvas (this will take you to a google doc). These presentations should be professional (I strongly recommend using slides to orient the presentation) and last 10-15 minutes followed by an open-ended Q&A and discussion. **Weekly quizzes and exams may include questions over the articles**, so there is good reason to prepare well and deliver a clear presentation to your classmates. And if you’re not presenting, there is good reason to pay attention to the presentation and ask questions! You may, of course, also read even the articles you don’t present (and I encourage everyone to do so).

You may miss **1 weekly quiz with no penalty**; after that missed quizzes will count as a 0 (with the exception of one of the reasons listed below). If you complete all the quizzes, I will drop the lowest score when computing your final class grade. Quizzes will be available through the Canvas quiz tool; due dates should be listed on the course homepage.

We will not have a scheduled class on exam days. Instead, for both the midterm and final, the exam will open at 9:30 am and remain open until 11:59pm.

Finally, class participation is an important component of your grade. I will not take attendance, but you are expected to have completed the assigned readings before class and be able to answer questions and contribute to class discussion. And you should be attentive and prepared to ask questions after your peers’ presentations.

Grade Scale

Grades will be rounded to the nearest percentage point (i.e. .5 and above will be rounded to the next percentage point).

- A 92-100
- A- 90-91
- B+ 88-89
- B 82-87
- B- 80-81
- C+ 78-79
- C 72-77
- C- 70-71
- D+ 68-69
- D 62-67
- D- 60-61
- F Below 60

Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students: All students should be familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html> .

Deadlines, Exams, absences: *Absolutely no late assignments will be accepted or alternate exam arrangements made, with the exception of an illness, a university-approved function, or death in the immediate family that clearly interferes with your ability to finish the assignment on time.*

Please provide documentation where appropriate and contact me before the deadline or scheduled exam time. This can be in the form of a simple email. Failure to notify me will result in a zero for the assignment or exam. This may be waived if one of the above events makes it impossible to notify me ahead of time. And of course, if you believe you have contracted covid and are awaiting a test or have covid and are too sick to attend class or complete an assignment/exam, let me know.

Religious holy days: A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence.

Add/drop and incompletes: Refer to the university catalog at <http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi06-07/ch4/ch4f.html#Adding.and.Dropping.Courses> and <http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi06-07/ch4/ch4d.html#Grades>

Students with Disabilities: The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD's website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/>.

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited: No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

COVID Caveats: To help keep everyone at UT and in our community safe, it is critical that students report COVID-19 symptoms and testing, regardless of test results, to [University Health Services](#), and faculty and staff report to the [HealthPoint Occupational Health Program](#) (OHP) as soon as possible. Please see this [link](#) to understand what needs to be reported. In addition, to help understand what to do if a fellow student in the class (or the instructor or TA) tests positive for COVID, see this [University Health Services link](#). Stay home if sick and contact me to see about work missed.

University of Texas Honor Code: "As A Student Of The University Of Texas At Austin, I Shall Abide By The Core Values Of The University And Uphold Academic Integrity."

COURSE CALENDAR:

Tuesday August 23: **Introduction**, go over syllabus, introduce each other, establish course expectations and goals.

Thursday August 25: **Ch. 1 in Gerring**, the role of social science in society

Examples:

- Epidemiology and the problem of modeling human behavior
 - o “Why relations between economists and epidemiologists have been testy.” *The Economist* November 14 2020.
- Covid vaccine distribution
 - o George Lowenstein and Cynthia Cryder. 15 December 2020. “Why Paying People to Be Vaccinated Could Backfire.” *The New York Times Upshot*.
- The prevalence of conspiracy theories:
 - o Matthews, Robert. 2005. “Why do people believe weird things?” *Significance*.
- Election fraud?
 - o Jo Craven McGinty. 4 December 2020. “Can an Accounting Tool Detect Election Fraud?” *Wall Street Journal*.

August 30: **Theory 1** Discuss Ch. 2 in Gerring. Descriptive vs. Causal Arguments, explanation as goal

Kevin Clark and David Primo. 2012. *A Model Discipline*. Read Ch. 2 (posted on canvas)

Sept 1: **Theory 2, examples**

- Descriptive
 - o Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, Erica Frantz. 2014. “Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Dataset.” *Perspectives on Politics* 12(2): 313-331.
- Causal
 - o McDonald, Patrick J. 2015. “Great Powers, Hierarchy, and Endogenous Regimes: Rethinking the Domestic Causes of Peace.” *International Organization* 69(3): 557-588.

Sept 6 **Theory 2, examples (cont.)**

- Formal and informal theory
 - o Fearon, James. 1995. “Rationalist Explanations for War.” *International Organization* 49(3): 379-414.

- Thomas, Jakana and Kanisha Bond. 2015. "Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations." *American Political Science Review* 109(3).

Sept 8: Conceptualization and Measurement, read Ch. 3 in Gerring, discuss operationalization and measurement

Sept 13: examples from the study of democracy – Polity, Freedom House, Przeworski, V-dem

- The census – how do we count people? Janet Adamy and Paul Overberg. Nov. 27 2020. "The Census Predicament: Counting Americans by Race." *Wall Street Journal*.
- Michael Coppedge, John Geering et al. 2011. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(2): 247-267
- Read through Polity project website:
<https://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html>
- [Read through v-dem website](#)
- [Bright line watch](#)
- Discuss coding choices

Sept 15: analysis – Read Ch. 4 in Gerring; discuss unit of observation, population vs. sample, quantitative vs. qualitative, validity and reliability.

Sept. 20: Examples

- Jeff Carter and Charles Smith. 2020. "A Framework for Measuring Leaders' Willingness to use Force." *American Political Science Review* 114(4): 1352-1358.
- Alexander Schuessler. 1999. "Ecological Inference." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Arts and Sciences* 96: 10578–10581.

Sept. 22: causal frameworks Read Ch. 5 in Gerring, discuss material vs. ideational theory, structural frameworks, interactive frameworks.

Read Ch. 3 in Clark and Primo

Sept. 27: examples – structural theory, formal theory, political psychology

- Oatley, Thomas. 2011. "The Reductionist Gamble: Open Economy Politics in the Global Economy." *International Organization* 65(2): 311-341.
- Groseclose, T. and McCarty, N., 2001. The politics of blame: Bargaining before an audience. *American Journal of Political Science*, pp.100-119.

Sept. 29: more examples

- Shana Kushner Gadarian and Bethany Albertson. 2014. "Anxiety, Immigration, and the Search for Information." *Political Psychology* 35(2): 133-164.
- Kelly Zvobgo and Meredith Loken. 2020. "Why Race Matters in International Relations." *Foreign Policy* 237.

Oct. 4: Causal mechanisms, Read Ch. 6 in Gerring, covariation vs. causation

Oct. 6: review

Oct. 11: MIDTERM EXAM

Oct 13: Experiments, Read Chapter 7 in Gerring

Oct. 18: examples of field, lab, and survey experiments

Greenstein, Michael and Nancy Franklin. 2020. "Anger increases susceptibility to misinformation." *Experimental Psychology* 67(3): 202-209.

Findley, Michael, Daniel Nielson, and J.C. Sharman. 2015. "Causes of non-compliance in international law: a field experiment on anonymous incorporation." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(1): 146-161.

Oct. 20: More examples

Susan Hyde. 2007. "The Observer Effect in International Politics: Evidence from a Natural Experiment." *World Politics* 60: 37-63.

Nese, Annamaria, Niall O'Higgins, Patrizia Sbriglia, Maurizio Scudiero. 2018. "Cooperation, punishment, and organized crime: a lab-in-the-field experiment in southern Italy." *European Economic Review* 107: 86-98.

[LaCour scandal](#)

[The "replication crisis"](#)

Oct. 25: Large-n analysis – Read Ch. 8 in Gerring

Oct 27: Examples

- Daniel Posner. 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.

- Claudia Goldin and Cecilia Rouse. 2000. "Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of 'Blind' Auditions on Female Musicians." *American Economic Review* 90(4): 715-741.

Nov. 1: More Examples

- Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James Robinson. 2000. "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation." *American Economic Review* 91(5): 1369-1401.
- Andrew Kerner. 2015. "Can Foreign Stock Investors Influence Policymaking?" *Comparative Political Studies* 48(1): 35-64.

Nov. 3: Case Study designs -- Read Ch. 9 in Gerring

Nov. 8: Examples

- Amy Liu and Jacob Ricks. 2012. "Coalitions and Language Politics: Policy Shifts in Southeast Asia." *World Politics* 64(3): 476-506.
- Clarie Adida. 2011. "Too Close for Comfort? Immigrant Exclusion in Africa." *Comparative Political Studies* 44(10): 1370-1396.

Nov. 10: more examples

- Doner, Richard, Bryan Ritchie, and Dan Slater. 2005. "Systemic Vulnerability and the Origins of Developmental States: Northeast and Southeast Asia in Comparative Perspective." *International Organization* 59(2): 327-361.
- Henry Hale. 2011. "Formal Constitutions in Informal Politics. Institutions and Democratization in Post-Soviet Eurasia." *World Politics* 63(4): 581-617.

Nov. 15: The Creative Process – read Ch. 12 in Gerring

Nov. 17: Wrap on Univariate Statistics, Data Gathering, Probability and Inference: Read Ch. 13, 18, 19 in Gerring

Nov. 21-25 FALL BREAK

Nov. 29: Review

Dec. 1: **FINAL EXAM**