This class is intended to provide you with an introduction to the enterprise of scientific research on politics. Through a combination of methodological works and notable applications of various research designs and methods, the class introduces the basic principles of research design, methods of data collection, and approaches to data analysis. By the end of the course, you should have a solid understanding of what you need to know in order to participate effectively in the discipline of political science, both by being a sophisticated consumer of diverse empirical research from all subfields of political science and by being able to design and conduct your own independent scholarly research.

Course Requirements

Class attendance and participation are mandatory and essential to the intellectual life of class discussions. We expect that you will come to each week’s class prepared to discuss the week’s required readings.

Learning to design original scholarly research is a central component of this course. You will therefore be required to prepare and submit an application to the National Science Foundation’s Graduate Research Fellowship Program. You will first submit a one-paragraph description of their proposed research topic on September 29th, followed by a rough draft of their application proposal on October 13th. Final drafts of the application will be due in class on November 3rd, and the NSF deadline for the application is November 16th.

Finally, building on your proposal for the NSF application, you will submit a more detailed 15-page research proposal at the end of the course, on December 8th.

Course Outline

I: Principles of research design

1. Models and theories, key terms and concepts, inductive and deductive model-building, internal and external validity (September 8)
2. Basics of hypothesis testing and causal inference. The experimental ideal. (September 15)

Recommended:

II: Data Collection

3. Selecting and sampling cases (September 22)
*DUE: Experimental Analysis Exercise*

Recommended:
4. Conceptualization and measurement (September 29)

DUE: One paragraph on research topic for NSF application


Recommended:


5. Measurement theory and principles of scaling (October 6)


Recommended:

6. Techniques and technologies for data collection – survey research, content analysis, interviewing, archival research, ethnographic fieldwork (October 13)

DUE: Rough draft of NSF application


III: Data Analysis

7. Large-N quantitative analysis of experimental data (October 20)


8. Large-N quantitative analysis of observational data (October 27)


9. Small-N comparative case study analysis (November 3)

DUE: Final draft of NSF application


Chapters 1-3 (pages 3-95)

Recommended

10. Within-case “process tracing” (November 10)

Recommended

NSF APPLICATION DEADLINE (NOVEMBER 15)

11. Combining multiple methodologies (November 17)
Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin 2008. “Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods.” In The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology, ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady and David Collier. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. (Chapter 33; 23 pages)
Tsai, L.L. 2007. Accountability without democracy: Solidary groups and public goods provision in rural China. New York:
Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5. (28 pages)

Recommended:

IV. Wrap-Up

12. **Ethics and IRB (December 1)**
Milgram, Stanley. “Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority.” *Human Relations* 18: 57-76. (19 pages)

13. **Philosophy of science (December 8)**
   **DUE: 15 page research proposal**