# Course Description

This course will cover research methods and research design in political science. We will focus on concrete and practical issues of conducting research: picking a topic, generating hypotheses, case selection, measurement issues, designing and conducting experiments, interviews, field work, archival research, coding data and working with data sets, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, etc.

The course is designed for several audiences, including:

- PhD students in Political Science
- MAO students undertaking a major research project
- Advanced undergrads contemplating an honors thesis, or another major research project

Requirements vary by students’ degree program, as shown below.

Many of the readings and examples are drawn from the subfields of International Relations and Comparative Politics, but students in all subfields are welcome.

## Requirements, Due Dates, and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirements, by degree program:</th>
<th>PhD</th>
<th>MAO option 1</th>
<th>MAO option 2</th>
<th>Undergraduate option 1</th>
<th>Undergraduate option 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>Required of all students (20%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Papers/Exercises</td>
<td>4 (10% each)</td>
<td>4 (10% each)</td>
<td>6 (10% each)</td>
<td>2 (20% each)</td>
<td>3 (20% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>Diss. Prospectus or Research Design Chapter (25%)</td>
<td>Research Design (25%)</td>
<td>Research Design (20%)</td>
<td>Honors Thesis Prospectus (25%)</td>
<td>Research Design (20%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Required (15%)</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>Required (15%)</td>
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I. Class Participation
- Come to class prepared to discuss critically the week’s reading, as well as each others’ short papers, where applicable
- Grad students: discussion of concept measurement assignment on Feb 10 (no paper required).

II. Short papers/exercises:
Throughout the semester, there are options for short papers and hands-on exercises. Each student may choose a subset of these, depending on their particular interests and research needs.

1. Concepts & measurement exercise (short paper optional for undergrads)  
2. Replicate statistical results  
3. Design an experiment  
4. Case study research design ‘book review’  
5. Design a survey  
6. Conduct a survey  
7. Archival research  
8. Conduct an interview  
9. Teaching module (PhD students only)*  
10. Discussant for presentations (MAO & PhD students only)  

* Teaching module: Sign up for a class session in which there is reading required of PhD students only. Come to class prepared to explain that reading’s important arguments/concepts to the rest of the class.

Short papers are to be posted to CourseWorks & emailed to me as PDFs by 5pm the Sunday before the relevant class.

Note: some of these assignments require legwork in advance; **plan accordingly**.

III. Final Research Design Paper. Due May 12

**PhD students:**
- Dissertation prospectus that meets departmental guidelines for content, length, and form.
- Or, if you have already successfully defended a prospectus, your dissertation’s research design chapter/section.

**MAO students:**
- option 1: a practice dissertation prospectus that meets departmental guidelines for content, length, and form, OR
- option 2: a short (3-5pp) description of the research design for a seminar paper.

**Undergraduates:**
- option 1: a honors thesis prospectus OR
- option 2: a short (3-5pp) description of the research design for a seminar paper.

IV. Presentation of final paper in class. (April 14, April 21, and April 28)
Policy on Late Assignments
• One-third of a grade will be deducted for every day an assignment is late.
• Assignments will not be accepted more than one week late.
• No extensions or incompletes except in cases of documented family/medical emergency.

Course Materials
The following books are available for purchase at Book Culture Bookstore and are on reserve at Lehman (number of chapters assigned in [brackets]):


☐ Barrett, Christopher B. and Jeffrey W. Cason Overseas Research: A Practical Guide. 2nd ed. (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010). [all, but skim only]


☐ Mosley, Layna, ed., Interview Research in Political Science (Cornell 2013). [10+3 to skim]


Not at Book Culture, but available as an e-book

Recommended:


Academic Integrity
This course endorses the faculty statement on academic integrity, found here:
https://www.college.columbia.edu/faculty/resourcesforinstructors/academicintegrity/statement and reprinted here:

Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity
The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars’ work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others’ ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.

Electronic Devices in the Classroom
Recent research suggests that students using electronic devices & laptops in the classroom retain information at a lower rate than those who do not.¹ There is also research showing that taking notes by hand leads to a higher rate of comprehension than taking notes on a device.² On the other hand, many of us (myself included) increasingly use devices to read scholarly work.

You are grown ups, and your education at Columbia is precious to you (I hope), so I will (mostly) leave it to your judgement whether and how to use electronics in the classroom. If you can use them without texting/emailing/googling (except where directly relevant to class)/facebooking/tweeting/instagramming etc. etc., and without distracting your classmates, you may do so. However, my strong recommendation is that you take notes by hand, and use electronics only as e-readers during class. If the use of electronics becomes a problem, I reserve the right to revise this policy. I also reserve the right to cold call on anyone who appears to be distracted by his/her electronics. I may also sometimes ask for “lids down” during discussion – if you want to take notes during these times, make sure you bring old-fashioned writing implements (paper & pen) to class.


² http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/
CLASS SCHEDULE

Readings not available from Book Culture are posted on CourseWorks or are available through E-Journals  www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eresources/ejournals/

Note: Some readings are required for graduate students (PhD and MAO) only, these are recommended for undergraduates.

Week 1. January 20    Introduction


Graduate students – the following are strongly recommended if you haven’t already read them:

Karl Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery.

Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.


Week 2. January 27  Finding a Topic and General Research Design


  • Intro and Chapter 1, pp. 1-48 [all students]  
  • Chapters 3-4, pp. 89-116 [grad students, recommended for undergrads]  
  • Appendix: pp.123-128 [undergrads]


☐ Sample dissertation proposals (in CourseWorks)  
  (We will diagram the theories in these proposals, à la Van Evera, in class)

Recommended:


Bleich, Erik “Immigration and Integration Studies in Western Europe and the US” *World Politics* 60:3 (April 2008), (excerpt pp.512-519 on 4 types of scholarship).
Week 3. February 3  

Constructivism and Interpretive Methods

Guest appearance: Séverine Autesserre


**Recommended:**

Geertz, Clifford “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture” The Interpretation of Cultures (Basic Books, 1973), pp.3-30.


Assignment:
- Required of grad students as an oral exercise, graded as part of class participation.
- Undergrads may opt to complete it as one of their short paper/exercise components, in which case a 3-5pp write-up is required.

Choose a political concept of interest to you (e.g., terrorism, democracy, interdependence, civil war, war outcomes, statehood, etc.) that is measured in several ways in the discipline, at least one of which is quantitative. Examine two or three of the ways it is measured and coded, noting differences and potential problems, as well as (if relevant) pros and cons of quantitative vs. qualitative measures. Provide examples of some specific cases for which the different measurements make a difference. Come to class prepared to discuss and explain to rest of class. Note: if you choose a concept for which the recommended reading list contains an article on this exercise – e.g., democracy (Munck & Verkuilen), civil war (Sambanis), or the state (Bremer & Ghosn) – your assignment should discuss but move beyond the article.


☐ Adcock, Robert and Collier, David. “Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research.” American Political Science Review 95:3 (September 2001), pp. 529-46. (focus on last ~5 pages) [graduate students only]

☐ [Graduate students only] Major data sets and sources in Political Science – look through a few codebooks to familiarize yourself with some of the biggies, and any of particular interest to your research. For example:
- Polity IV Project: http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html
- CIRI Human Rights Data http://www.humanrightsdata.com/
- Political Terror Scale http://www.politicalterrorscale.org/
- Correlates of War: www.correlatesofwar.org/
- PRIO-Uppsala Armed Conflict: http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/
- Global Terrorism Database http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/
- Poole-Rosenthal Nominate scores http://pooleandrosenthal.com/
- Public opinion data (US & international) http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/
- Spaeth Supreme Court Database http://supremecourtdatabase.org/

A useful source that links to these and many other data sets is: www.paulhensel.org/data.html

I highly recommend that you attend:
Feb 12 12:15-2p CUIPS Professionalization Seminar: Doing Research in Difficult Places
IAB 707
Recommended:

Munck, Gerardo L. and Jay Verkuilen “Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy.” *Comparative Political Studies* 35:1 (February 2002), pp. 5-34.


Week 5. February 17  Working with Data: Multi-Method Designs, Coding, Replication, etc.

Assignment: Replicate and verify someone else’s (published) quantitative results (3-5pp). Note: this means more than just getting their data and do-file to see if you get the same output. It means playing with their specification to see how robust the results are (e.g., to dropping or adding controls, including interaction terms, using different models, etc.), and making sure you can replicate their main results without using the do-file.


☐ Zongker, Doug “Chicken Chicken Chicken: Chicken Chicken” *Annals of Improbable Research* 12 (September-October 2006), pp. 16-21 (see also [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yL_-1d9OSdk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yL_-1d9OSdk))

Recommended:


Some useful sources on dealing with specific quantitative issues:


ReLogit: King, Gary and Zeng Langche “Explaining Rare Events in International Relations” *International Organization* 55:3 (Summer 2001), 693-715.


See Gary King’s website, particularly the section on software, for additional information: [http://gking.harvard.edu/stats.shtml](http://gking.harvard.edu/stats.shtml)


Assignment: Design an experiment for your research question. If your topic (like many) is not easily amenable to experimentation consider whether any pieces of your argument could be studied with experiments, and the obstacles (feasibility & ethically) with fuller experimentation. (3-5pp)

Guest appearance: Chris Blattman


[Undergrads should read 1 of the following, grad students should read all 3:]


Recommended:


- Teele, Dawn Langan. *Field Experiments and their Critics: Essays on the Uses and Abuses of Experimentation in the Social Sciences*. (Yale University Press, 2014). Esp. Intro, Chapter 1 (Gerber, Green & Kaplan), Chapter 2 (Stokes), Chapter 3 (Barrett & Carter), Chapter 7 (Gelman), Chapter 8 (Imai, King & Stuart)& Chapter 9 (Shapiro).


Dunning, Thad. “Design-Based Inference: Beyond the Pitfalls of Regression Analysis?” in Brady & Collier, eds. Rethinking Social Inquiry Chapter 14, pp. 273-311. (R)

Hyde, Susan “The Future of Field Experiments in International Relations” Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science 628 (March 2010), pp. 72-84. (EJ)


Sekhon & Titiunik “When Natural Experiments are Neither Natural nor Experiments” American Political Science Review 106:1 (February 2012), pp.35-57.
Week 7. March 3  Case Studies I.  What are the options?


☐ George, Alexander L. and Bennett, Andrew. Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences. (MIT Press, 2005), Chapters 1, 3-6, 8-10.


☐ Beach, Derek and Rasmus Brun Pedersen Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines (U Michigan Press, 2013) Chapters 1-2, & 7 [grad students skim the rest]


Recommended:


Week 8. March 10  Case Studies II: Examples & Pitfalls

Assignment: Write a 600 word (or fewer) review of a book or article on a topic of interest to you that employs at least one in-depth case study. The review should focus in particular on the research design and the case study method(s) used.


Recommended:


Week 9. No Class – Spring Break
Week 10. March 24  
**Field Work and Surveys**

**Assignment:** Write a survey design, including discussion of population sampling strategy. (3-5 pp plus questionnaire as an appendix)

**Assignment x2:** Conduct your survey as a pilot. Write up what you found substantively, and what you learned by doing the survey (what worked, what to do differently next time, etc.)

**Guest Appearance:** [TBD]

- Barrett, Christopher B. and Jeffrey W. Cason *Overseas Research: A Practical Guide.* 2nd ed. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. (This is an easy read, just skim it, but remember to read it again before you do any actual overseas fieldwork)


**Recommended:**


Converse, Jean M. & Stanley Presser *Survey Questions: Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire* (Sage 1986)

**Week 11. March 31**

**Archival Research**

**Assignment:**
Visit an archive to research a specific question and write up results. (3-5pp)

**Guest appearance: Mira Rapp-Hooper**


**Recommended:**


Week 12. April 7  Interviewing, Ethics, and the IRB

Assignment:
Conduct an interview with a political actor and write up results of the interview (3-5 pp.)

Guest Appearance: [TBA]


Recommended:


Williams, Christine L. and Heikes, E. Joel. “The Importance of Researcher’s Gender in the In-Depth Interview: Evidence from Two Case Studies of Male Nurses.” *Gender & Society* 7:2 (June 1993), 280-91.


APSA Collaboration Report, available at: [http://www.apsanet.org/content_43659.cfm](http://www.apsanet.org/content_43659.cfm) (on issues of co-authorship and credit).


Weeks 13-15  
Class Presentations

April 14
□ Presentations TBA

April 21
□ Presentations TBA

April 28
□ Presentations TBA

Final Paper is due Tuesday, May 12 by 5pm.