Political Science 230 - Methods of Political Research
Spring, 2002

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This course introduces students to the fundamentals of formal political science research techniques. While research methodology may seem like a dull issue to the lay observer, the subject is one of the most hotly contested in political science circles, often dividing departments and pitting scholarly journals against one-another in bitter, intense disputes.

Eighteen months ago, an anonymous email (authored by someone calling himself or herself "Mr. Perestroika") circulated among political scientists around the country, charging the discipline with being run by "a coterie" that "dominate and control" the major journals and impose "the same methodology" on everyone, thereby "ignoring diverse knowledges (sic) and methodologies." According to this point of view, it is pure folly to try to single-mindedly cram political phenomena into pre-fabricated statistical and game-theoretic frameworks developed for other disciplines (such as economics and the natural sciences). As Mr. Perestroika put it, "We are in the business of political science and not failed economics."

The inflammatory "Perestroika" email raises a number of questions whose answers are critical for those of us concerned with understanding politics in an ordered and rigorous way. What does it mean to be "scientific" in the context of a subject such as politics? Can we develop theories and test them in ways comparable to theory-testing in other disciplines? What unique challenges do we face in adapting the scientific method to political institutions and behavior? Is there room for multiple methodologies, and what unique purposes can different methodologies serve?

We will grapple with these and other questions, evaluating examples of different types of research, as well as considering philosophical critiques of different research approaches. In addition to examining the field with a critical eye, each of you will undertake a rigorous research project, culminating in a poster presentation the final week of the term.

Student grades will be based on the following: Assignments (3) • 25%; Participation (class and caucus) • 20%; Research Proposal • 10%; Project outline • 10%; Final Project • 35%. To make grades easily calculable, I•ll work on a point system in which there is a total of 1000 points possible. Therefore, the final project will be worth 350 points, and so on.

Because much of this course will involve discussion, it is imperative that you COMPLETE THE READINGS FOR EACH CLASS PERIOD AND COME TO CLASS PREPARED TO DISCUSS THEM. The quality of the course will suffer along with your grades if you do otherwise. Late assignments will drop by 4% of their total value for each day they are late. (An assignment worth 100 points drops by 4 points, an assignment worth 50 points drops by 2 points, etc.)

The following books are available for purchase in the bookstore:

- Johnson, Janet Buttolph, Richard A. Joslyn, & H.T. Reynolds. *Political Science Research Methods* (4th Ed.). Washington, DC:CQ Press, 2001.

- Theodoulou, Stella Z., and Rory O•Brien. *Methods for Political Inquiry: The Discipline, Philosophy, and Analysis of Politics*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999.
- Van Evera, Stephen. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Other readings are either handouts or reserve readings **(RR)** available at Gould Library.

I • Introduction • Political Science?

Preview of the Course

1. April 1

Political Science: History and Foundations

2. April 3

- Theodoulou & O•Brien, Chapter 1, Chapter 2
- Johnson et al. Chapters 1 (skim), Chapter 2

II • Asking Questions Scientifically

Reviewing The State of Existing Research

3. April 5

- Johnson et al. Chapter 6
- **ASSIGNMENT** (50 points): Locate JSTOR online at the library. Familiarize yourself with the journals available there. Do several searches on topics of interest to you. Read the abstracts of several articles, if available, or the introductions and conclusions, if there are no abstracts. Summarize your search (1 page or less) and hand it in.

Theorizing

4. April 8

- Theodoulou & O•Brien, Chapter 5
- Van Evera, Chapter 1

Hypothesizing

5. April 10

- Johnson et al. Chapter 3

Operationalizing

6. April 12

- Johnson et al. Chapter 4

The Research Proposal

7. April 15

- Theodoulou & O•Brien, Chapter 11
- Van Evera, Chapter 5

III • Varieties of Inquiry

Bivariate Analysis

8. April 17

- Johnson et al. Chapter 11 (skim), Chapter 12

Multivariate Analysis

9. April 19

- Johnson et al. Chapter 13, pp. 393-411.
- Duch, Raymond M., and Michaell Taylor. "Postmaterialism and the Economic Condition." *American Journal of Political Science*, 37:3 (August, 1993), pp. 747-779. **(RR)**

Issues in Multivariate Analysis • Dichotomous Dependent Variables

10. April 22

- Johnson, et al. Chapter 13, pp. 412-435.
- Krutz, Glen S., Richard Fleisher, and Jon R. Bond, "From Abe Fortas to Zoe Baird: Why Some Presidential Nominations Fail in the Senate." *American Political Science Review*, 92:4 (December, 1998), pp. 871-881. **(RR)**
- **ASSIGNMENT** (100 points): Go to the CMC, locate a political science data set. Open the data, locate a dependent variable of interest to you, generate descriptive statistics and estimate three different regression models. Turn in the results.

Controversy: When is Bivariate Analysis Appropriate?

11. April 24

- Abramson, Paul R. and Ronald Inglehart, "Education, Security, and Postmaterialism: A Comment on Duch and Taylor•s •Postmaterialism and the Economic Condition.•" *American Journal of Political Science*, 38:3 (August 1994), pp. 797-814. **(RR)**

- Duch, Raymond M. and Michaell Taylor. "A Reply to Abramson and Inglehart⬩s ⬩Education, Security, and Postmaterialism.⬩" *American Journal of Political Science*, 38:3 (August, 1994), pp. 815-824. **(RR)**

12. April 26

No Class ⬩ Work on Research Proposals

Case Studies

13. April 29

- Van Evera, Chapter 2
- **RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE**

Controversy: Should We Study Cases in the Same Way as Large "N" Studies?

14. May 1

- Thies, Michael F. "Keeping Tabs on Partners: The Logic of Delegation in Coalition Governments." *American Journal of Political Science*, 45:3 (July 2001), pp. 580-598. **(RR)**
- King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 3-12. **(RR)**
- Rogowski, Ronald. "The Role of Theory and Anomaly in Scientific Research." *American Political Science Review*, 89:2 (June 1995), pp. 467-470. **(RR)**

Experiments

15. May 3

- Johnson, et al. Chapter 5 pp. 111-133

16. May 6

MIDTERM BREAK

Controversy: Do Social Science Experiments Give Us Useful Information?

17. May 8

- Wolf, Patrick, Paul E. Peterson, and Marty West. "Results of a School Voucher Experiment: The Case of Washington, DC After Two Years." Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University, August 2001, Executive Summary. **(RR)**
- Miller, D.W., "The Problem With Studying Vouchers," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 13, 2001, p. A14. **(RR)**
- Gibson, James L., "A Sober Second Thought: An Experiment in Persuading Russians to Tolerate," *American Journal of Political Science*, 42:3 (July 1998), pp. 819-850. **(RR)**

Sampling, Interviewing, and Survey Research

18. May 10

- Johnson et al. Chapter 7, Chapter 10

Formal Models

19. May 13

- Theodoulou & O•Brien, Chapter 15
- Brams, Steven J. "To Mobilize or Not to Mobilize: Catch-22s in International Crises." *International Studies Quarterly*, 43:4, pp. 621-640. **(RR)**
- **PROJECT OUTLINE DUE**

IV • Beyond Methods to •Approaches•

Historical Institutionalism-I

20. May 15

Skocpol, Theda. "America•s First Social Security System: The Expansion of Benefits for Civil War Veterans." *Political Science Quarterly*, 108:1 (Spring, 1993), p. 85-116. **(RR)**

Historical Institutionalism-II

21. May 17

Bates, Robert H. "The International Coffee Organization: An International Institution." Chapter 15 in Robert H. Bates, Avner Grief, Margaret Levi, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, and Barry R. Weingast, Eds. *Analytic Narratives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 194-230. **(RR)**

Rational Choice Theory-I

22. May 20

Downs, Anthony. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper & Row, 1957, Chapter 1, pp. 3-20; Chapter 8, pp. 114-127. **(RR)**

ASSIGNMENT (100 points): Find an article in a major political science journal on a topic of interest to you and critically examine its methodology. Hand in a two-page evaluation of the article.

Rational Choice Theory-II

23. May 22

Olson, Mancur, Jr. "Collective Action: The Logic." Chapter 19 in Pietro S. Nivola and David Rosenbloom, Eds. *Classic Readings In American Politics*, 3rd Ed. New York: St. Martin•s/Worth, 1999, pp. 191-205. **(RR)**

Controversy: Is Rational Choice Theory Destroying Political Science?

24. May 24

Green, Donald, and Ian Shapiro. *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, Chapter 1, Chapter 3. **(RR)**

25. May 27

- Friedman, Jeffrey. "Economic Approaches to Politics." In Jeffrey Friedman, Ed. *The Rational Choice Controversy: Economic Models of Politics Reconsidered*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996, pp. 1-24. **(RR)**
- Fiorina, Morris and Ian Shapiro, exchange in the *New York Times*, February 26, 2000. **(RR)**

V • What Now?

Controversy: Where is Political Science Going?

26. May 29

- Theodoulou & O•Brien, Chapter 9

27. May 31

- Smith, Rogers M. "Still Blowing in the Wind: The American Quest for a Democratic, Scientific Political Science." In Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske, Eds. *American Academic Culture in Transformation: Fifty Years, Four Disciplines*. Pp. 271-305. **(RR)**

VI • Student Presentations

28. June 3

- POSTER SESSION ONE

29. June 5

- POSTER SESSION TWO