This course provides an introduction to methodological issues faced in empirical work across the social sciences, with primary reference to political science. The issues addressed here are intended to apply to any empirical approach -- qualitative or quantitative, experimental or observational -- and to any sort of theory, whether descriptive or causal. That said, the emphasis of the course is primarily on causal inference (rather than description) and the explanation of classes of events (rather than particular events), since these are the preoccupations of social science today.

This is not a course in statistics. However, it will be very helpful to have some familiarity with this important set of topics. To this end, I strongly advise that you take concurrently, or have taken previously, an introductory course in statistics, such as PO841. As a second-best alternative, I suggest reading an introductory text on the subject (see syllabus appendix for suggestions).

The course is designed primarily for graduate students. Qualified undergraduates may also be considered if circumstances warrant, but must receive the permission of the instructor. Students are advised to take this class in their first semester, as the ground covered here will be useful for substantive work in all subfields (except Political Theory). There are no pre-requisites, although the student is assumed to have a background in political science.

**GRADES:** Your grade for this class will be comprised of three components, equally weighted: (a) participation (serving as class discussant at one meeting, presenting your own proposal at another meeting, attendance, and general class discussion); (b) a final exam; and (c) an original research proposal. Instructions regarding the proposal are contained in a separate document, to be posted on the course web site.

Since the class meets a limited number of times throughout the semester, only one excused absence will be granted. I shall overlook the first class meeting, which is largely organizational; further absences will be penalized. Late papers will also be penalized. No excused absences, makeups, extensions, or incompletes will be granted without documentation of medical, religious or personal reasons, or for official Boston University business. If you will be missing class for religious reasons you must inform me of these dates during the first week of class.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION:** Whether this course is enlightening or not will depend primarily upon how students contribute to the process. I expect active participation from all students in every session. I do not wish to lecture extensively. Nor do I intend to act as quiz-master, eliciting points. I will play this role if necessary, though I am hoping that the discussants will relieve me of this burden. To reiterate: you must participate regularly in order to get a good grade in this class. Shyness, or unfamiliarity with the English language, is no excuse. This is a talking profession. Yadadayada. Please be attentive to standard rules of decorum: avoid dogmatism, respect others’ views, and try to move class discussion forward (pay attention to what others say and respond to the previous point).

**DISCUSSANT:** Each person will be responsible (singly or in tandem with someone else) for leading class discussion for one or two meetings. Your job is to raise questions, to correct mistakes (or at least offer your own opinion, when you have a different interpretation), and in general to ensure that everyone understands
the issues raised by the readings for that week. In other words, you’re the instructor. I must emphasize that this does not let others off the book for doing careful reading that week. No free-riding.

**PRESENTING YOUR PROPOSAL IN CLASS:** At the beginning of the semester you will sign up to present your proposal at a specific class meeting. Only one student will present at each class meeting so we need to space these presentations out over the course of the semester. The advantage of going early in the semester is that it will force you to get started and you will get our feedback at an early stage. The disadvantage, evidently, is that you will have less time to construct your proposal.

In any case, what you present to us is up to you. Keep in mind that the more finished this product is, the better, and more useful, our feedback will be. If you present only a paragraph then you’ll have to spend most of the time telling us more about your project and this will take away from more specific comments that you might receive from the class. Thus, it is in your interest to construct as complete a proposal as you can within the time constraints of the semester. The point to remember is that you will be graded only on the final product – what you turn in at the end of the semester. Thus, the presentation is entirely for *your* benefit. Use it wisely by preparing as good a proposal as you can and by listening carefully (and taking notes) on what members of the class have to say. I hope that the class will function like a dissertation-writing workshop (which I strongly advise you to create, once you reach that stage). I want us each to help each other. Note that I also usually present work-in-progress, so this is truly a community activity.

Please send everyone a copy of your proposal via email by noon one day before the day you are to present. We will critique, and praise, each proposal in class. Ideally, your written proposal will speak for itself, though you will have a chance, of course, to respond to comments and to expatiate on your ideas.

While the primary beneficiary of each of these class discussions will presumably be the writer of that day’s proposal, I also expect this to be a learning experience for the rest of us. My own experience is that one learns as much from one’s colleagues’ successes and failures as one does from general reading about methodological principles or highly polished academic articles. So, the discussion of proposals is an integral part of the course. I hope that you will read each others’ work carefully -- out of a sense of mutual obligation and as a model for things you might wish to explore (or avoid) in your own work.

**FINAL EXAM:** The final exam will cover everything -- all required reading and all in-class discussion. (Many of the questions on the final will have been discussed in class.) It is a closed-book, closed-note test -- just you and the exam. I strongly encourage you to take notes during class and on the readings and to study in small groups for the final. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to pull things together if you have only the readings to fall back on at the end of the semester.

**READINGS:** The reading for graduate courses is extensive; this course is no exception. As it is, we are barely scratching the surface of this vast subject matter. Each week’s reading will probably take you more than one night to get through. Do not wait until the night before to start reading!

Note also that readings are chosen for their heuristic value, not necessarily for their methodological rigor. Just because a book or article appears on this syllabus does not mean that it has received a seal of approval from the methodological rabbinical council.

**NOTATION:** * = To purchase  ** = To be posted on the class web site (Courseinfo)  *** = Available on-line. Please bring all required readings to class so that we can refer to specific passages. Some readings are assigned twice on the syllabus; if so, the second assignment is marked as “review.” Readings not marked by an asterisk are suggested, but not required. (Additional examples for a subset of topics may be found on my PO502 syllabus, which is posted on my BU homepage.)

**TO PURCHASE:** (check Fetchbook.info for used editions)


**RECOMMENDED:**

**Organization** (DATE)
Sign up for class presentations.

**Readings:**
**Gerring, John.** “Guidelines for the Proposal.” [Describes the writing assignment, due at the end of the semester.]

**Description**

**Overview** (DATE)
**Discussant:**
**Proposal:**

**Readings:**

**Concepts…**

**Measurement…**
Gathering Data and Measurement Issues (I) (DATE)

Discussant:

Proposal:

Readings:

Behavior-based quantitative evidence...

Wars, regime transitions, voting, deaths, murders, ...

Archival/document-based Research...

**Harrison, Hope. “Inside the SED Archives: A Researcher's Diary.” CWIHP bulletin.**

**Lieshout, Robert H., Mathieu L.L. Segers, and Anna M. van der Vleuten. “De Gaulle, Moravesik, and The Choice for Europe.” Journal of Cold War Studies 6:4 (Fall) 89-139. [skim]**


Goldgeier, James M. 2004. “Training Graduate Students in Conducting Archival Research.” NewsNet (October). [Describes the GWU Cold War summer school program, which is oriented toward US, Russian and other archives of use to those studying foreign policy and IR.]


Textual (Content/Discourse) analysis...

Guest discussant: Andrew Reeves


**Field Research, Ethnography**


Lieberman, Evan et al. 2004. “Symposium: Field Research.” *Qualitative Methods* (Spring) [CQR web site]


Gathering Data and Measurement Issues (II) (DATE)

**Discussant:**

**Proposal:**

**Readings:**

**Interviews...**


Dexter, Lewis. *Elite and Specialized Interviewing.*


Focus groups…


Simon, Judith Sharken. 2007. “How to Conduct a Focus Group.”

Survey research…

Guest discussant: Sigrun Olafsdottir (?)


Stoker, Laura. 2003. “Is it Possible to do Quantitative Survey Research in an Interpretive Way?” Qualitative Methods: Newsletter of the American Political Science Associations Organized Section on Qualitative Methods 1:2 (Fall) 13-6. [see CQRW web site]


Experiments…

[See later section on research design]

Causation

Overview (DATE)

Discussant:

Proposal:

Readings:


[Further readings on this topic are listed under the following two sections]
Experiments and Quasi-Experiments (DATE)

Discussant:
Proposal:
Readings:

General discussion…


Examples…

**Readings:**

*Proposal:*

*Discussant:

*Critiques of*

*Examples:


Humphreys, Macartan; William A. Masters; Martin E. Sandbu. 2006. “The Role of Leaders in Democratic Deliberations: Results from a Field Experiment in Sao Tome and Principe.” *World Politics* 58 (July) 583-622.


Websites: ExperimentCentral and Poverty Action Lab.

**Critiques of the Statistical Analysis of Observational Data**

*Discussant:*

*Proposal:*

*Readings:*

*Examples...


**Kittel, Bernhard. 2006. “A Crazy Methodology?: On the Limits of Macroquantitative Social Science Research.” International Sociology 21, 647-77.**


Comparisons of experimental and nonexperimental analyses


**Case Studies: General Issues** (DATE)

**Discussant:**

**Proposal:**
Readings:


Case Studies: Variants, Examples, Extensions (DATE)

Discussant:

Proposal:

Readings:

Examples and commentary…


Mahoney, James. 1999. “Nominal, Ordinal, and Narrative Appraisal in Macro-Causal Analysis.” *American Journal of Sociology* 104:4 (January) 1154-96. [This is the original version of a chapter that is reprinted in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer. It has a more detailed discussion of Skocpol’s *States and Social Revolutions*.]


Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [read ch 1 and skim the rest if you have a copy]


Readings:

***Chamarbagwala, Rubiana; Martin Ranger. 2006. “Son Preference, Voting Behavior, and India’s Missing Women.” Unpublished paper. [if you can’t find it on the web I have a copy]


Crothers, Lane; Charles Lockhart (eds). 2000. Culture and Politics: A Reader. New York: St. Martin’s. [Pay particular attention to chs 1-4, 6-7, 10, 12-4, 18]


Conclusions

First draft of research proposal due (DATE)

Turn in your drafts by email attachment in Word format. I will try to return them to you with comments in a week.

History of a Discipline (DATE)

Discussant:
Proposal:
Readings:

***Browse back issues of the APSR, available on JSTOR or in hard-copy format in the library.


Adcock, Robert. [Manuscript in process]


Calls for reform…


Interpretivism… [perhaps place with previous section]


Current Debates (DATE)

**Discussant:**

**Proposal:**

**Readings:**

“Perestroika”…

***Mr. Perestroika. 2000. “On the Globalization of the APSA and APSR: A Political Science Manifesto.” [The email that sparked the movement.]


Influence on policymakers and publics, basic science versus problem-solving, normative thinking versus neutrality...


Smith, Rogers M. 2002. “Should We Make Political Science More of a Science or More about Politics?” PS: Political Science and Politics (June) 199-201.


Lynd, Robert Staughton. 1939/1964. Knowledge For What?: The Place of Social Science in American Culture. New York: Grove Press. [chs 1, 4-6]


Unity and Plurality...


Multi-Method approaches...

Bennett, Andrew, Bear Braumoeller. 2006. “Where the Model Frequently Meets the Road: Combining Formal, Statistical, and Case Study Methods.” Ms. [Should be on CQRM web site]


Sociological Methodology 32, 103-32.

Sociology

Is Social Science Possible? (DATE)

Discussant:
Proposal:
Readings:


Can Consensus be Reached?...


Ethics…


http://www.apsanet.org/section_513.cfm


Writing, publishing, pursuing a career…


***The academic review process: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRBWLpYCPY


Carter, Ralph G.; James M. Scott. 1998. “Navigating the Academic Job Market Minefield.” PS: Political Science and
Gerring, John. “Advice on Essay-writing.” [posted on my BU homepage]
See also APSA web page with links to articles from APSR, PS, and POP related to careers, jobs, and networking.
[http://apsanet.org/content_13150.cfm]

Final Exam (DATE)

Final draft of research proposal due (DATE)
Turn in drafts by email attachment in Word format.

ADDENDA

Web resources (each has its own set of links)
Consortium for Qualitative Research Methods (CQRM) homepage:
[http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm/]
Political Methodology homepage:
[http://web.polmeth.ufl.edu/]
Committee on Concepts and Methods homepage:
[http://www.concepts-methods.org/]

Lexicons
Literature reviews of political science subfields, issues and methodologies


Oxford Handbook of Political Science. 2007- [multiple volumes]

Introductory Statistics Texts and Review Articles


Everitt, Brian; Sophia Rabe-Hesketh. [various years]. Handbook of Statistical Analyses Using Stata. Chapman & Hall. [not much on stats, but a good intro to Stata]

Freedman, David, Robert Pisani, Roger Purves, and Ani Adhikari. [various years]. Statistics. New York: W.W. Norton. [Very good and very thorough introduction, but little on regression.]

Freund, John E. [various years]. Modern Elementary Statistics. Pearson/Prentice Hall. [Introductory.]


Hamilton, Lawrence C. [various years]. Statistics with Stata. Duxbury Resource Center. [Excellent for those learning Stata]


Various manuals published by Sage (see their home page at sagepub.com).

Web Resources

http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/


http://www.psychstat.smsu.edu/scripts/dws148f/statisticsresourcesmain.asp

Big Theory

IR Paradigms...


Dessler, David; John Owen. 2005. “Constructivism and the Problem of Explanation.” Perspectives on Politics 3:3 (September) 597-610. [assign, if this section is included in the course]


Fearon, James; Alexander Wendt. 2002. “Rationalism v. Constructivism: A Skeptical View.” In Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth Simmons (eds), Handbook of International Relations (London: Sage). [assign, if this section is included in the course]

Hasenclever, Andreas; Peter Mayer; Volker Rittberger. 2000. “Integrating Theories of International Regimes.” Review of International Studies 26:1 (January) 3-33. [assign, if this section is included in the course]


**Democratic Peace…**


Oren, Ido. 1984. “The Subjectivity of the Democratic Peace: Changing U.S. Perceptions of Imperial Germany.” International Security 20:2 (Fall) 147-84. [assign, if this section is included in the course]


**International Relations: Methodology of a Subfield**


McDermott, Rose. 2007. “New Directions for Experimental Work in International Relations.” Unpublished manuscript, Department of Political Science, UCSD.


**Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)**


of California.


Schneider, Carsten; Claudius Wagemann. *Set-Theoretic Methods: A User's Guide for Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Fuzzy-Set in the Social Sciences.* [book manuscript; the best user’s guide]


“Symposium: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA).” 2004. *Qualitative Methods: Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section on Qualitative Methods* 2:2 (Fall). [posted on the CQRM web site]

Wickham-Crowley, Timothy. 1991. “A Qualitative Comparative Approach to Latin American Revolutions.”

Causal graphs, Bayesian nets


Pearl, Judea. 2009. “Causal Inference in Statistics: An Overview.” *Statistics Surveys* 0. [a good introduction to graphical models]


Bayesian approaches


Pearl, Judea. 2005. “Bayesianism and Causality, or, Why I am only a Half-Bayesian.” Ms.


Philosophy of Science

General treatments...


Logical Positivism and fellow travelers...


Interpretivism

Realism...

Lakatos

Kuhn

Popper and company…

Waldner, David.

Tooley, Michael.

Shapiro, Ian;

Manicas, Peter.

Leplin, Jarrett (ed).

Laudan, Larry.


Bhaskar, Roy; Margaret Archer; Andrew Collier; Tony Lawson; Alan Norris (eds). 1998.

Bhaskar, Roy.

Lakatos, Imre.


International Studies Quarterly 46, 231-62. [review]


Realism...


Waldner, David. 2007. “Inferences and Explanations at the K/T Boundary...and Beyond.” In Richard Ned Lebow and Mark Irving Lichbach (eds), Theory and Evidence in Comparative Politics and International Relations (Palgrave/Macmillan).

Interpretivism...

Review readings listed under Description (above).
Critical Theory...

Feminism...

Sociology of Science...

Other Radical Critiques...
Crews, Frederick. 1986. *Skeptical Engagements*. [See chapter on psychoanalysis and poststructural literary criticism.]

Social Science versus Natural Science...

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