Logic of Political Inquiry

PSC 691 Spring 2018
Department of Political Science,
Syracuse University
Monday 12:45-3:30, Maxwell Hall 309A

Professor Shana Kushner Gadarian

Contact Information
Office: 315 Eggers
Phone: 315-443-3718
Email: sgadaria@maxwell.syr.edu
Course website: blackboard.syr.edu

Office Hours
Monday 10-12 pm or by appointment

Course Overview: The goal of this class is to introduce you to how empirical political scientists study, think, and research. We will discuss the process of theory building, hypothesis testing, and how political scientists across subfields ask and answer substantive questions. We will study both qualitative and quantitative methods but focus on how these methods help test causality. The course will also focus on professionalization topics (i.e. how to become a political scientist, not just study political science). The assignments will help you develop the following course goals:

Learning Outcomes:

- To help you develop analysis skills to evaluate and produce political science research publishable in peer-reviewed journals.
- To help you develop writing skills analyzing empirical political science research.
- To develop presentational skills to use at conferences and as an instructor.

For each week's readings, you should be prepared to discuss the following questions:

- In your view, what do you see as some of the major strengths and weaknesses of the methods used to investigate the subject? What methodologies, broadly conceived (e.g., basic issues of design, measurement, etc.) do you feel are most appropriate, given the subject of inquiry, and to what degree do you think the substantive conclusions drawn are dependent on the particular methods employed?
- In your view, what are some of the major theoretical perspectives that structure research in a given area, what are their major strengths and weaknesses, and how do they compare with other perspectives you’re familiar with (encountered in the course or elsewhere)?
- How can this research be improved, in your view? What theories, methods and substantive foci deserve more attention in future research?
- What are the major implications of the findings for democratic theory and public policy? What relevance do the studies have for your interests? What does the study say about the way in which the American political system operates in practice – does the system live up to its billing as a democracy? According to what expectations and what definition of democracy?
COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:

Assignments: You are expected to read and analyze the readings prior to each week and come to class prepared to offer your insights. You are also expected to attend class each week and will need to inform me ahead of time if you will be absent. Multiple unexcused absences will lead to a lower grade.

Homework (50%)
1. Identifying research – Monday, January 22 by 9:30 am
2. IRB training through CITI: The Institutional Research Board oversees all projects using human subjects at Syracuse. In order to collect data through an intervention such as survey or an experiment, you will need to go through the online training provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) by 9:30 am, Monday, January 29. Email your CITI certificate to me to complete the assignment.
3. Hypotheses – by Monday, Feb 5 class time – Deriving hypotheses from stylizing facts
5. Observational data – by Monday, Feb 26 class time, Identifying variables

Grant proposal (50%):
Final proposals due by Monday, May 7 by 5 pm. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each 24 hours they are late. There are several interim deadlines.

There are multiple phases of this project. Please note the dates below:

1. Monday, Feb 19, Research Question (5%) (due in class): Submit a one page typed description of your research question, and explain how it fits into the general topical themes for the course. Provide an initial bibliography of at least 10 sources.

2. Monday, March 5, Research Design (10%) (Bring to class and be prepared to discuss): PREREGISTRATION PLAN Submit five to seven typed pages (with a bibliography) that identify your research question, review the literature relevant to your question, discuss the method of analysis you intend to employ, and describe any data or historical sources you will use to evaluate your hypotheses.

3. Monday, March 19, First Draft (15%): Submit the initial draft of your application, with all key parts included (introduction, theory, research design, analysis, references). Each draft will be read by the instructor and two other students in the class. The instructor will assign the student discussants for each paper. The two papers each student will discuss will be distributed via email by Friday, March 23.

4. Monday, April 2, Reviews (20%) (due via email by 12:00pm): Each student will write a typed review commenting on two other students’ papers in the class. The reviewers will be assigned “blindly”, so that the authors do not know who reviewed their papers. The reviews should take the form of a journal review, where you make specific recommendations about how to improve the paper. See the readings on peer review on how to structure your review.
5. Monday May 7 by 5 PM, Final Draft (50%): Submit your final grant proposal along with a memo responding to the reviewers’ comments in the previous round. I will take into consideration how well you responded to others’ criticisms when assigning a final grade. The final paper grade is based on the weighted component grades for each portion of the paper (research question, research design, first draft, reviews, and final draft).

**Course Policies**

**Scholastic Dishonesty and Academic Integrity**
There are many ways to succeed in this class. Cheating and plagiarism are not among them and will not be tolerated. The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see http://academicintegrity.syr.edu. Please see me if you have any questions about what constitutes original work. Plagiarism on research papers or the analytical papers will lead to an F for the course.

**Academic Freedom**
I encourage and value student participation. Keep in mind that since this is a class on politics, you will no doubt encounter point of views that differ from your own. Students in this class come from a variety of personal and academic backgrounds and these backgrounds may lead to a variety of perspectives on the political world. I believe that having a variety of viewpoints will make our discussions more interesting and will allow us to learn from each other. We will maintain a respectful dialogue even when we disagree and no student’s grade will be affected by his or her personal views.

**Accommodations**
If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), http://disabilityservices.syr.edu, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible. You are also welcome to contact me privately to discuss your academic needs, although I cannot arrange for disability-related accommodations.

**Religious Observances**
It is the policy of Syracuse University that no student should be refused admission or be expelled because he or she is unable to participate in any examination, study, or work requirement because of his or her religious holy day requirements. An opportunity will be provided to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may have been missed because of an absence due to a religious observance providing that I have been notified in writing one week before the absence. No fees will be charged to the student for the costs incurred by the University for such makeup work. In effecting this policy, the University agrees that no adverse or prejudicial effect should result to any student who avails herself or himself of its provisions.
At the end of the semester, your grade will be assigned based on the following scale:

A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72). F (69 and below). There are no D grades in graduate courses.

Books to purchase:

Jan 22 – Social Inquiry and Becoming a Political Scientist

a. KKV – p3-33

Homework: Identify 5 research questions that a political scientist might want to answer. Email to me by 9:30 am Jan 22.

Jan 29 – Transparency, reproducibility, the scientific method, ethics – Colin Elman visits

a. Shively, The Craft of Political Research, Chs. 1
b. Gerring, Jon, Social Science Methodology, Ch. 2

Assignment: Complete CITI training and email the certificate to me by 9:30 am Jan 29. [http://orip.syr.edu/human-research/training-list/Education%20and%20Training.html](http://orip.syr.edu/human-research/training-list/Education%20and%20Training.html)

Feb 5 – Building theories

a. Gerring, Jon. Social Science Methodology. Ch 2  

Assignment: Deriving hypotheses from facts. See assignment on Blackboard. Due in class Feb 5.

Feb 12 – Building blocks of theory – operationalization and assumptions


Feb 19 – Assessing theory - Simon Weschle visits

Assignment: Submit a 1-page typed description of your research question that you will use for your grant application. Provide an initial bibliography of at least 10 sources. Due in class Feb 19.

Research designs

Feb 26 – Observational data - Danielle Thomsen visits

b. Gerring, John. Social Science Methodology. Ch 8, 9 (“Causal Arguments, Causal analyses)

Assignment: Practicing with observational data. Assignment on Blackboard. Due in class on Feb 26.

March 5 –Barriers to inference in observational research: - Lamis Abdelaaty visits


Assignment: Research designs due in class March 5.

March 12 –No class, Spring Break – Work on your grant applications!

March 19 – Observational data: small/medium n research & peer review


Writing and communicating in the social sciences –

a. The Political Methodologist Special Issue on Peer Review (Fall 2015), pp. 2-24. URL: [https://goo.gl/3kfa3e](https://goo.gl/3kfa3e). (ALL)

**Assignment:** First draft of grant application due by class time via email March 19. Peer review to be assigned by Monday, March 26.

**March 26 – Historical analysis –** Steven White visits


**Assignment:** Catch up on your reading in other classes. (I’m feeling generous).

**April 2 – Natural/Field Experiments**


**Assignment:** Peer review (anonymous) of 2 classmates’ grant applications due by 12:00 pm via email March 26.

**April 9- Survey/Lab Experiments**

Assignment: Make an appointment to come visit me in office hours & discuss your proposal & the reviews.

April 16– Triangulating around research or Integrating multiple methods – Tom Keck visits

Seawright, Jason. Multi-Method Social Science, Chapter 8

In addition, Choose one of these sets of readings and be ready to present to the class. Your job is not to simply summarize the articles but to analyze the research and discuss how the answers we get may depend on what methods we use.

A. Judicial decision-making

B. Public goods provisions and democracy

C. Democracy and War-Fighting

D. Negative advertising

E. Audience Costs in International Crises

F. Colonial Legacies on political institutions

G. Intergroup relations

H. Social policy & the effects of prison

I. Violence and civil wars

J. Media effects


K. Political Responsiveness in the US


Assignment: Be prepared to present your set of readings, focused on how the different articles test similar substantive theories, using different methods

April 23 — Presentations and wrap-up — Rachel Leventhal-Weiner Skypes in

Assignment: Prepare a 10 minute conference style presentation of your grant proposal. The presentation should give limited background and focus on the research design and the hypotheses you will be testing with the design.

Some guides for giving excellent conference presentations:


April 30 — TBD (Professionalization discussion or another as determined by needs of class)