Surveys and Experiments

PSC 700- Spring 2019
Department of Political Science,
Syracuse University
Monday, 12:45-3:30, Eggers 100A

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Office Hours
Tuesday 10 am - 12 pm (or by appointment)

Course Overview: The goal of this class is to introduce you to the use and analysis of two methodologies increasingly used in political science – surveys and experiments. We will explore both technical aspects of surveys and experiments – what they can measure, how they can measure it, and what types of questions they allow political scientists to answer – as well as read substantive social science that utilizes these methods. You will also all become practitioners this semester by completing a research project that uses either survey or experimental data and writing it up in the style of an article in the Journal of Experimental Political Science. Given my own area of study, we will mainly focus on the US, but please feel free to offer perspectives from comparative politics as well.

Learning Outcomes:
1. Presentational Skills: Students will present original research at the end of the course
2. Writing Skills: Develop an original research project in the form of a journal article.
3. Research skills: Practice and hone quantitative skills and research design in designing and conducting original research.

For each week's readings, you should be prepared to discuss the following questions:
1. 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)?
2. 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?
3. Do the authors engage with each other? Is this engagement fruitful for furthering the field? Would we learn more as political scientists by more study in this area? What do we still not know?
4. 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?
5. 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 advantages of using either survey research or experimental research for the particular theoretical question being studied? What are the potential or actual disadvantages?

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:**

**Short assignments (30%):** 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. Your participation grade will be made up of these components: completing IRB training through the Office of Institutional Research, assignments and active, engaged participation in class, which includes workshopping your paper ideas each week.

1. **IRB training through CITI (5%):** 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 **Monday, Jan 28 at 9:30 am.** Email your CITI certificate to me.
   http://orip.syr.edu/human-research/training-list/Education%20and%20Training.html
2. **Bringing in survey questions (5%)** – see assignments at the end of each week’s reading
3. **Active engagement (10%):** Active student participation is essential to a successful seminar. Your participation should be intelligent, informed and frequent. Optimally, all three. Tradeoffs among them should not be necessary.
4. **Research paper presentation (10%):** During the last week of class, you will present the findings of your research in a 10 minute conference style presentation.

**Discussion leading (20%):** Two times over the course of the semester, you will help to lead discussion. Your job is to provide an outline of each reading and start a discussion of thinking through the critical issues in the articles, the methodological issues or problems they raise, and what researchers should take away from the article.

**Research paper (50%):**

A **15-20** page double-spaced research paper in the model of an article in the *Journal of Experimental Political Science*. (The page limit is for the text; figures and references can take up additional pages.) The paper should focus briefly on the research question and previous literature, and focus more heavily on how you tested the theoretically derived hypotheses, what the benefits as well as the drawbacks of the method are that you chose, and what these findings add to our knowledge about your topic. Papers should also pose alternative hypotheses and outline how your research design can help eliminate alternative explanations or what additional data you would need to do so. Pick a question or a theory from the course or one of your other courses and apply it to a problem of interest to you. These papers will use either secondary or newly collected survey or experimental data to test a theoretically derived hypothesis. Papers are **due on Wed, May 8 by 5 pm.** Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each 24 hours they are late.

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

1. **Monday, February 4,** 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, February 25,** 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 the data you will use to evaluate your hypotheses.

3. **Friday, March 8,** First Draft (15%) (due via email by 5:00pm): Submit the initial draft of your paper, with all key parts of the paper included (introduction, theory, research design, analysis, references). Each draft will be read by the instructor and another student in the class. The instructor will assign the student discussants for each paper. The other paper each student will discuss will be distributed via email by Sunday, March 10.

4. **Monday, March 25,** 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. More detailed instructions (including examples) will be distributed later.

5. **Wednesday, May 8** by 5 PM, Final Draft (50%): Submit your final paper by email 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).
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.

Readings:
Most of our readings will be from journal articles in political science, communication, economics or psychology. I’ve intentionally made the reading load lighter in this course compared to other graduate courses to accommodate for the fact that you will also be working on your projects throughout the semester. However, that means that we will not cover all the possible topics on each subject. If you are interested in additional reading, please see me and I can make recommendations for further reading. They are all easily accessed using JStor (www.jstor.org) or going directly to the journals website through the library. When we are assigned a book chapter, I will make it available to you via Blackboard unless we are reading multiple chapters that create a copyright problem. We will read many chapters from the Druckman, et al Handbook of Experimental Political Science. I strongly recommend that you purchase this book through an online retailer. I have also made it available through Course Reserves at Bird Library.


**January 14 - Class overview: Causality, correlation, and social research**

Readings:


**Assignment: None**

**Jan 21 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day, No Classes**

**Jan 28 - Surveys: The Survey Interview and Nature of Survey Response, Sampling**

Readings


e. An update to the Common Rule and what it means: [http://researchintegrity.syr.edu/human-research/common-rule/](http://researchintegrity.syr.edu/human-research/common-rule/)
Recommended readings:


Assignments: IRB Certification Due

Feb 4 - Surveys – Measurement issues; question wording and ordering effects

Readings:


Recommended readings:


Assignments: 1. Using Roper iPoll (http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html ) or the American National Election Studies (electionstudies.org), bring in an example of alternative question wordings for the same topic. Think about the consequences of the question wording choices. Bring short write up of this into class to discuss.

2. Research paper idea due (see Research paper assignment part a)

Feb 11- Survey Design. – Response options, ordering, anchoring vignettes


Recommended reading


Assignment: Using Roper iPoll (http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html ) or the American
February 18 – The future of survey research – quasi experimental research/natural experiments

e. Sampling and inferences: Discussion about the use of CCES to study non-citizens

Assignment: Fill out an IRB application for your research. Find the forms here (http://orip.syr.edu/human-research/human-research-irb.html) (Even if you are doing analysis of secondary data, this is an exercise to go through how you would fill this out in the future.

February 25 – Why experiments and how to analyze experimental data


Recommended readings:


Methods to get closer to causality:


**Assignment:** Research Design due. (Please use the format of a pre-registration document. See examples at [www.egap.org](http://www.egap.org). These don’t need to be extensive, but do need to contain all of the information from the EGAP online form ([http://egap.org/design-registration/standards-project-registration/](http://egap.org/design-registration/standards-project-registration/)) as well as your research design and expected tests.)

**March 4 – Experimental design – Subjects and ethics  (Traveling – need to reschedule for later this week)**


**Recommended readings:**


Ethics and experiments


f. Some reflections on the Montana field experiment:
Assignment: Friday, March 8 by 5 PM. Rough draft of paper.

March 11 – SU Spring Break, No class

March 18 - Survey based experiments


Recommended reading:


Assignment: Visit Time-Sharing Experiments in the Social Sciences (http://www.tessexperiments.org/) and find a study from the last 5 years. Bring it in and be ready explain the research question and the survey experimental design.

March 25 – Laboratory experiments


Recommended readings:


**Assignment**: Peer review due.

**April 1. – Field experiments**


**Recommended readings:**


**Assignment**: Visit Evidence in Governance and Politics ([http://egap.org/](http://egap.org/)), read a brief about an RCT and bring into class to share.

**April 8 – Field experiments II**


Topical applications of surveys and experiments -
As you read, think about the advantages and disadvantages of studying the same question with various methodologies. What more do we know by utilizing multiple methods? What do we still not know?

April 15 – Emotion


April 22 - Intergroup relations


April 29 – Research presentations
Assignment: Prepare a 10 minute conference style presentation of final research project. The presentation should give limited background and focus on the findings and implications of the findings for the broader literature.

Some guides for giving excellent conference presentations:


Wednesday, May 8 by 5 pm. Final paper due.
Advanced methods that we won’t cover


Natural experiments


**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. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. 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.

CAMPUS RESOURCES
There may be times during the semester that you need assistance, academically or otherwise. There are a wide variety of campus resources that may be able to help. Please consider using help when you need it. If you don’t know what type of help you need, you can ask me or other faculty in PSC.

- Counseling Center: http://counselingcenter.syr.edu/faculty-staff/helping-students-in-distress.html
- Writing Center: http://wc.syr.edu/?_ga=2.101027140.454082058.1534346263-1387513330.1433439063
- Tutoring Services: Center for Learning and Student Success: http://class.syr.edu/tutoring/
- Financial Counseling: http://financialaid.syr.edu/financialliteracy/
- Sexual Harassment/Title IX Concerns: Sheila Johnson-Willis, compliance officer sjohnson@syr.edu (315) 443-0211
- Career Services: http://thecollege.syr.edu/advising/index.html?_ga=2.101048900.454082058.1534346263-1387513330.1433439063
- Other personal health resources: http://dailyorange.com/2018/08/heres-breakdown-personal-health-resources-available-su-students/
HARRASMENT
Federal and state law, and University policy prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sex or
gender (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, stalking, sexual
exploitation, and retaliation). If a student has been harassed or assaulted, they can obtain
confidential counseling support, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, from the Sexual and Relationship
Violence Response Team at the Counseling Center (315-443-4715, 200 Walnut Place, Syracuse, New
York 13244-5040). Incidents of sexual violence or harassment can be reported non-confidentially to
the University’s Title IX Officer (Sheila Johnson Willis, 315-443-0211, titleix@syr.edu, 005 Steele
Hall). Reports to law enforcement can be made to the University’s Department of Public Safety
(315-443-2224, 005 Sims Hall), the Syracuse Police Department (511 South State Street, Syracuse,
New York, 911 in case of emergency or 315-435-3016 to speak with the Abused Persons Unit), or
the State Police (844-845-7269). I will seek to keep information you share with me private to the
greatest extent possible, but as a professor I have mandatory reporting responsibilities to share
information regarding sexual misconduct, harassment, and crimes I learn about to help make our
campus a safer place for all.