

POSC 114  
THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
Winter 2012

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**Required Reading**

*Johnson, Janet Buttolph, and H.T. Reynolds. 2012. Political Science Research Methods, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. CQ Press. ISBN 978-1-60871-689-0.*

*Other required readings are available from the class iLearn website. You are absolutely responsible for reading them. If you do not plan to do the reading for this class, please do not enroll in it. There is a waitlist of people who want to take this course.*

**Course Requirements**

Section participation	15%
Journal article memoranda	15% (3 @ 5% each)
Midterm exam	15%
Theoretical model paper	15%
Concept and measurement paper	20%
Final exam	20%

**Course Description**

This course is focused on the design of empirical political science research: developing explanations for political behavior, events, and other phenomena, as well as testing those explanations. Normative concerns, social values, and philosophical ideas influence empirical research to be sure, particularly with regard to the research questions you ask, but we focus on the collection and analysis of evidence relevant to theoretical claims.

We will begin by examining the scope of political science. What are its major areas of research? What concerns define the discipline? After developing this context, we will discuss the process of empirical political science research: What makes for a compelling research question? What constitutes explanation? What role does theory play in empirical research? Finally, we survey approaches to investigating research questions and methods political scientists apply to problems. How do we observe phenomena to test our explanations? What standards can we use to evaluate research?

**Journal article memoranda/summaries**

Because this class investigates political science research techniques, you will read and evaluate contemporary political science research, focused on articles from political science journals. You will select many of these readings yourself. The articles must come from scholarly publications, not from magazines, newspapers, or opinion-oriented weblogs. The first of these article memoranda is due January 23. For this first article memorandum, I will supply a list of articles for you to choose from January 11.

The second article memorandum is due February 22. For this, I want you to have more choice, but I will require that the article be an empirical research paper published after 2007 in one of three general-interest U.S. political science journals (*American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*). Finding an appropriate article will take you either to the

basement stacks of Rivera Library, or to publisher websites accessed through the library. Select an article you find interesting and answer questions from the prompt. The article should be cleared with one of us (Prof. Johnson or Mr. Medina) in advance.

The third article memorandum is due March 14. For this memo, you will choose an empirical research article from the expanded list of journals: *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *American Politics Research*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *International Organization*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *World Politics*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, or *Electoral Studies*. The article should be cleared with one of us (Prof. Johnson or Mr. Medina) in advance.

Each article memorandum is worth 5% of your class grade.

### Theoretical model paper

The first major paper for the class gives you an opportunity to think about how the world works. One of the premises of social science research is that systematic explanations underlie many important social and political outcomes and events. These explanations are not deterministic, but in some way affect outcomes. For example, we know that more people vote when political authorities make it easier to vote (e.g., they provide polling places closer to where people live). We know that neighboring nations are more likely to fight wars with each other than nations across the globe from each other. Again, this doesn't mean that people who live next door to a polling place might abstain from voting (or forget to vote) or that militaries will always fight with neighboring nations and never cross an ocean for battle. These explanations are partial and represent tendency.

We want you to identify some outcome, a political phenomenon you are interested in, and develop an explanation for it. You will be guided by several of the readings in week 3. The paper is due **February 8**. We will discuss it in class and in section.

### Concept and measurement paper

The second major paper for the class calls upon you to figure out how to measure or observe a concept of interest. You will quickly find in this class that the concepts in political science are often quite broad—democracy, war, political participation. This is an issue for qualitative and quantitative research, so the assignment is not necessarily asking you how you will assign numbers to cases or outcomes. I will not allow you to use “democracy” or “political trust” for this paper, because we will be discussing those concepts and how to observe or measure them in class. This paper is due **March 7**. It too will be discussed in class and section.

**Note that as with all my classes, late papers will be graded, but with a letter-grade penalty for each week they are late. Any paper that is turned in will receive at least partial credit.**

### Exams

There will be two tests for the course, a mid-term and a final exam. Each will feature a mix of multiple-choice and short answer questions, and perhaps an essay. I have not written the tests yet. The mid-term will be in class on February 13. The final exam will be held during our scheduled final exam time, March 22, 7-10 p.m. If you are unable to attend the mid-term or the final exam, and need to schedule an alternative time, please note that I will only consider excuses that are authoritatively well-documented and presented to me at least one week before the requested rescheduled test. If you have an emergency, it must be well-documented (e.g., doctor's note).

### Extra credit

You will also have opportunities to earn extra credit for participating in and writing a short paper about an approved research talk or colloquium at UCR this quarter. There will be more details on this during the first few weeks of the quarter.

**Lastly, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will result in a loss of credit on the spoiled assignment and all cases will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity Programs.**

Course Schedule

January 9 Introduction

January 11 The scope of contemporary political science  
Katznelson, Ira and Helen V. Milner. 2002. "American Political Science: The Discipline's State and the State of the Discipline" in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, eds. Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. pp. 1-26.  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 1

January 18 Ways of knowing  
Carlson, James M., and Mark S. Hyde. 2003. *Doing Empirical Political Research*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Chapter 1. How Do We Know What Is True? pp. 2-17.  
Shively, W. Phillips. 2011. *The Craft of Political Research*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston, MA: Longman/Pearson. Chapter 1. Doing Research. pp. 1-12.

January 23 Social scientific approach to studying politics  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 2  
Kellstedt, Paul M., and Guy D. Whitten. 2009. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1. The Scientific Study of Politics. pp. 1-21.

**FIRST ARTICLE MEMORANDUM DUE**

January 25 Theory-building  
Lave, Charles A., and James G. March. 1975. *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*. Chapter 2. An Introduction to Speculation. New York: Harper & Row. pp. 10-47.

January 30 Reviewing previous research  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 3  
Carlson, James M., and Mark S. Hyde. 2003. *Doing Empirical Political Research*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Chapter 5. Reviewing Previous Research. pp. 96-124.

February 1 Concepts and variables  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 4  
Munck, Gerardo L., and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices." *Comparative Political Studies* 35:5-34.

February 6 Measurement  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 5

February 8 Causal inference: Experimental and observational research  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 6  
Dunning, Thad. 2008. "Improving Causal Inference: Strengths and Limitations of Natural Experiments." *Political Research Quarterly* 61:282-93.

**THEORETICAL MODEL PAPER DUE**

February 13 **MID-TERM EXAM, IN-CLASS**

February 15 Case selection and case studies  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 8  
Geddes, Barbara. 1991. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis* 2:131-50.  
Tarrow, Sidney. 2010. "The Strategy of Paired Comparison: Toward a Theory of Practice." *Comparative Political Studies*. 43:230-259.

February 22 Content analysis  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 9

**SECOND ARTICLE MEMORANDUM DUE**

February 27 Sampling  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 7

February 29 Survey research  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 10

March 5 Describing data  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 11

March 7 Statistical inference  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 12

**CONCEPT AND MEASUREMENT PAPER DUE**

March 12 Studying relationships I  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 13

March 14 Studying relationships II  
Johnson & Reynolds. Chapter 13, continued

Optional reading:

Berry, William D., and Mitchell S. Sanders. *Understanding Multivariate Research*. Westview Press.  
Chapter 1. Introduction; Chapter 2. The Bivariate Regression Model. pp. 1-28.

**THIRD ARTICLE MEMORANDUM DUE**

March 22 FINAL EXAM; 7-10 p.m.