

POSC 114
THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
Fall 2004

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Hours: Wednesday, 1-3 p.m. and by appointment

Required Reading

Goldberg, Bernard. 2003. *Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How the Media Distort the News*. 2nd ed. New York: Perennial/HarperCollins.

Shively, W. Phillips. 2002. *The Craft of Political Research*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Other readings available from Rivera Library's basement journal stacks or through J-STOR, <http://www.jstor.org>.

Course Requirements

Journal article evaluation memoranda	30% (6 @ 5% each)
Goldberg argument paper	10%
Goldberg evidence paper	10%
Political science interest inventory	10%
Quizzes	10% (2 @ 5% each)
Research design project	30% (Group 20%, Individual 10%)

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 building tests of your explanations. Normative concerns and values influence empirical research, particularly with regard to the research questions you ask, but we focus on the collection 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? As part of this, we will evaluate a research project that does some things right and other things pretty poorly from the perspective of a social scientist: Bernard Goldberg's book on political bias in television news.

You are also responsible for developing your own original research design. This will be a group project, with the class divided into several research teams. Your team will identify an interesting research question, review relevant literature related to the question, elaborate an original explanation for the phenomenon of interest, and design a research project intended to test your hypotheses. A *particularly* strong project would include preliminary results of the investigation, but this is not a requirement.

Please note my office hours and feel free to come by on Wednesday or schedule an appointment.

Journal article memoranda/summaries

Because this is a class investigating political science research techniques, you will read and evaluate a number of articles from political science journals. You will select most of these readings yourself. The articles will need to come from scholarly publications including: *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *American Politics Research*, *Social Science Quarterly*, *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 first of these article memoranda is due October 4. It should be an article from one of the top three general-interest U.S. political science journals (*American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*) and published since 2002. 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 particularly interesting and answer the questions provided in the prompt.

The second article summary is due October 18. For this memo, you will choose an article from the expanded list of journals above and related to the general subject area of your group project. The article will be drawn from the expanded list of journals above or other scholarly journals cleared with me in advance. The memo will follow a prescribed format we will discuss in class October 15. When you turn in your article memo, you should bring copies for yourself, each member of your research team, and me.

The other article evaluation summaries are due November 15 and 24. Two article summaries will be due on each of these days. They will come from the bibliography your team builds for its research project and be drawn from the expanded list of journals above or journals cleared with me.¹ They will inform your literature review. One defining characteristic of these summaries is that no one in your team will read the same articles. If it turns out that you summarize articles that members of other teams use, that will be acceptable, but the goal within the team is to fan out and cover as much literature as possible in as economical a way as possible.

Political science interest inventory

October 8 is the last day students can drop or add this class on PAWS. Consequently October 11, the Monday following this deadline, is a **mandatory** class. At this time, you will take a political science interest inventory. It should require most of the class period. The interest inventory is required (participation worth 10% of the course grade, but not graded like a conventional test). I will use responses to the inventory to assign students to research teams. The interest inventory should help make sure students with the most compatible research interests are working together. Your responses to the interest inventory will be informed both by your previous political science courses, as well as early lectures in the class on the scope of the discipline and research programs in political science.

Quizzes and participation in team meetings

On October 18 and November 22, I have set aside class time for research teams to meet in class. It is important that every team member attend these meeting. In order to encourage your participation in these team meetings, I will administer a short quiz on the readings, particularly the Shively book on each of these days. The quizzes will not be difficult for students who are keeping up with the reading. The purpose of the quizzes is to encourage attendance on these two days of class.

Goldberg, Bias

As we discuss the process of social research, we will analyze Goldberg's book in two phases. First, you will write a paper analyzing Goldberg's argument: Why is the media biased? What mechanism is at work? Goldberg has a theoretical story quite at home with the social sciences. It could be supported or refuted with evidence and replication. You will identify and explain his principal story explaining liberal bias in East-coast news organizations in the first of two papers, 2-4 pages, due October 25.

A second paper is due November 8. In this second paper, also 2-4 pages long, you will evaluate the Goldberg's evidence. Does he convince you that CBS and other elite media organizations have a liberal bias? Does he provide evidence that supports his story? What could he do to be more persuasive on his basic descriptive claim as well as his theoretical story? Goldberg specifically shuns social science methods because he is so confident he is right, systematic inquiry seems unnecessary. I'm not so sure and neither should you. This isn't to say he's wrong, but is he convincing?

¹ If you think you would like to use materials from books or edited volumes rather than scholarly journals, let me know and we can figure out a way to accommodate this. But we will restrict ourselves to volumes from university presses and other scholarly, research-oriented books.

Final Projects: Group Assessment, Individual Assessment

The final project for the course is a research proposal you write with other members of a research team. The total number of research groups will depend on the kinds of interests identified by the interest inventory and the final size of the class. The teams will likely be in the range of 5-7 students each.

A successful research design for the class will likely require a paper in the range of 20-30 pages. The research design will develop and pose a research question. It will explain why the research question is interesting to scholars and important to society. The design will include a review of related literature and a discussion of the original contribution of the proposed research. It will focus on an original set of theoretical expectations for the problem – also informed by literature on the topic – and the discussion of an appropriate method for collecting evidence that would support (or fail to support) the expectations you develop. As noted above, a particularly strong paper would make an effort to actually collect and analyze relevant data and I am willing to advise teams on ways to accomplish this.

Your research team will turn in its final project as a group on November 29 – just one copy. Before class on November 29, a designated person from each group will e-mail me (martin.johnson@ucr.edu) a one-page summary of the project that follows the format of the article summaries. These will be printed for distribution to the class.

On November 29, at the beginning of class, we will also conduct an individual assessment of the team projects, following the format of a short exam. After you turn in your paper, you will be asked to summarize the project without making reference to your notes or consulting your team members. You will also be asked to describe your contribution to the project in specific detail. **The intent of this individual assessment is to ensure that each person in the group is accountable for her or his individual contribution as well as the success of the group as a whole.**

Lastly, each group will be responsible for presenting their research design to the class, explaining the motivation for the question and its importance, reasoning out the hypotheses, and explaining how the research design will work to test these expectations.

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.

This will not apply to the interest inventory or the quizzes. Only in the case of extreme medical emergency and for other rare documented obligations will you receive the opportunity to make up the interest inventory or the quizzes. If you fail to attend class on October 11, October 18, or November 22, you will **not** receive partial credit on the missed work.

Plagiarism will result in a loss of credit on the spoiled assignment and all cases will be referred to the Student Judicial Affairs Office.

Course Schedule

September 27 & 29	Scope of Political Science Read Shively Chapter 1
October 1 & 4	Political <i>Science</i> ?
October 4	Research article memorandum #1 due
October 6 & 8	Research questions and hypotheses Read Shively Chapter 2
October 11	Interest inventory in class, attendance required
October 13	Concepts & definitions Read Shively Chapter 3
October 15	Literature review
October 18	Team meetings, Quiz 1 , and Research article summary #2 due Quiz will treat Shively Chapters 1-3
October 20 & 22	Developing theoretical arguments Read Shively Chapter 10
October 25	Goldberg argument memo due
October 27 & 29	Causation Read Shively Chapter 6
November 1 & 3	Survey of research designs
November 5 & 8	Sampling and case selection
November 8	Goldberg evidence memo due
November 10 & 12	Measurement Read Shively Chapters 4 and 5
November 15	Research article summaries #3 and #4 due
November 15 – 19	Fundamentals of statistical inference Read Shively 7-9
November 22	Team meetings, Quiz 2 Quiz will treat Shively Chapters 4-7, 9-10
November 24	Similarities between qualitative and quantitative methods Research article summaries #5 and #6 due
November 29	Final projects due, individual project assessment
November 29 – December 1	Team project presentations