

POS 3930
Advanced Seminar: Research Design
Research Intensive Bachelor's Certificate Core Course

Dr. Cherie Maestas
Bellamy 569
cmaestas@fsu.edu
Office hours Mondays 1:30 – 3:00 and by appointment

Overview of the course

This course is designed to give you practical experience in conducting original political science research. The course begins from the perspective that the goal of political science is to build general knowledge about the causal processes that underlie political phenomenon. As part of this course, you will be asked to define a research question of interest in political science, develop a theoretical argument, and test the resulting hypotheses using original data that you compile during the semester. The objective of the class is to teach you how to start and finish an original research project of interest to you. Toward that end, this class will focus strongly on general principles of research design and analysis rather than specific topics within political science. Readings will be drawn from a diverse set of topics that are related to the students' interests in the class. The full reading list will be developed after assessing the topics of interest to students. You will be responsible for learning about and conveying the substantive information about your selected topic to the rest of the class.

The prerequisite for the course is the successful completion of POS 3713 Honors or RIBC Data Analysis so I will assume that you know the basics of using descriptive, explanatory and inferential statistics. I will also assume that you already know or can familiarize yourself with a statistical program suitable for analyzing data.

The class readings are drawn primarily from political science journals or academic books so there is no textbook for the course. Instead, you will be given a list of readings to download from Blackboard or from library databases. The class will be conducted “seminar style” which means that you will be expected to discuss each of the readings assigned for the class.

Through the combination of reading academic research articles and “hands on” experience developing your own paper, you will gain a deep understanding of how to develop a research project and use statistical techniques help answer theoretically interesting questions. By the end of this class, each of you will be able to plan and carry out basic quantitative analyses to explore research questions that interest you.

Evaluation Criteria

Participation (10%) and Comprehension quizzes (20%)	30%
Peer Reviews (5% each)	10%
Research Project (60% total)	
Proposal	5%
Theory & hypothesis paper	15%
Analysis paper	15%
Final paper and response memo	25%

Participation and Comprehension Quizzes

I will run this course much like a graduate level seminar so your attendance each week is expected and required. The course is part seminar and part lecture. Nuts and bolts concepts or techniques will be taught via short lectures. However, substantive examples of research will be discussed “seminar style.” You will be

expected to use the concepts and techniques learned in class to analyze and cogently discuss research examples. It is essential that you read the assigned material thoroughly prior to each class. Come prepared to discuss the material. I will call on students during class to summarize readings or to offer their reactions to various aspects of the readings.

After spring break, the class will transition to a workshop format where students bring their work to the class to share with others. During this time, you will be expected to read drafts of the work of your colleagues and provide feedback on their research. Your feedback is valuable so you are expected to be in class to encourage and support your colleagues in their research.

In addition, each class prior to spring break will begin with a 10 question comprehension quiz to check your understanding of the assigned readings. I'll give 6 to 78 quizzes during the semester but you will get to drop your lowest two quizzes. I do not offer make-up quizzes except in extraordinary circumstances (i.e. extended and well documented illness or family emergency)

Participation standards

A to A+ (Excellent) Student demonstrates exceptional mastery of the material, offers novel and insightful comments about the material, and demonstrates the ability to integrate ideas from multiple readings and apply them to new situations.

B+ to A- (Good) Student demonstrates normal mastery of the material by offering cogently argued points that accurately reflect the content of the reading, but did not necessarily demonstrate novel insights or integrate the readings with other material. Student demonstrates factual knowledge of concepts and techniques of design or is able to apply them appropriately in practical applications

B- to B (Fair) Student was able to clearly articulate the main arguments and/or evidence of the assigned research, but did not participate beyond basic reiteration of main points. Student lacks factual knowledge of concepts and techniques of design or shows some difficulty applying them to practical applications

C+ or lower (Poor) Student did not participate or the student's participation reflected a general lack of knowledge about the readings. Student lacks factual knowledge of concepts and techniques of design or is unable to apply them appropriately to practical applications

A 0 will be given for the participation grade for the day if the student is absent from class.

Peer Reviews

During the semester, you will be asked to provide a critical review of the work of your peers. You will be assigned one fellow student's "theory" paper to review and one fellow student's "analysis" paper to review. The purpose of these reviews is to assist your colleague in producing a stronger final paper. You will be expected to apply the concepts discussed in this course to critically evaluate your colleagues work and to offer suggestions for improvement. We will discuss this assignment in greater detail later in the semester.

Research Project

The largest single component of your grade in this class is your original research project, an independent research project that you will work on throughout the semester. Your assignment is to develop and execute an original research project that analyzes empirical data. During class, we will talk at length about how to identify datasets and find relevant data for your project.

There are three components to this project that will culminate in a final paper: the research proposal, a theory paper, and an analysis paper. The research proposal is a short paper (less than 5 pages) that outlines your research question and why it is of interest. The theory paper is a longer paper that must include a review

of the relevant literature in political science that addresses your topic of interest, your theory to address the puzzle you've outlined, and a set of theoretical hypotheses you will test using empirical datasets. In the analysis paper, you must operationalize your theoretical concepts and create an empirical test of your hypotheses using data you've compiled. The final paper should draw heavily from the proposal, theory, and analysis papers. Treat the theory and analysis papers as rough drafts of sections of the final paper.

Each theory and analysis paper will receive a critique from me and one from a class colleague. You must incorporate these comments and suggestions into your final draft of the paper and provide a separate memo describing how you responded to the comments in your revisions. The final paper grade depends both on the quality of the final paper and the quality of the response to earlier feedback. Late papers in any stage of the research project may be penalized.

Classroom Policies

Communication

You must have an email account that you check regularly and you need to confirm that the University has your email address on file. I will provide updates to the reading list or to the class schedule through email. In addition, I will post information about the class and the readings online on the blackboard website for this course.

If you need to reach me, the best way is through email. I check my email regularly and respond as quickly as I can. I hold office hours on Mondays from 1:30 – 3:00, but can meet with you by appointment at other times during the week. If we cannot schedule a time to meet during the day, we can arrange a phone conference.

Students with Disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act) Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:

- (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and
- (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
(850) 644-7164
sdrc@admin.fsu.edu
<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

Academic Honor Policy

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “. . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to]

strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm>.)

Note: Perhaps the primary danger of academic dishonesty in a graduate level course is plagiarism. Whether intentional or unintentional, plagiarism is a serious offense. It is the job of each student in the class to carefully check his or her papers to ensure that the ideas of others are properly cited. The following excerpt of discussion of plagiarism appears on the website:
<http://online.fsu.edu/learningresources/plagiarism/student.html>

“Your paper would be considered as “plagiarized” in part or entirely if you do any of the following:

- *Submit a paper that was written by someone other than you.*
- *Submit a paper in which you use the ideas, metaphors or reasoning style of another, but do not cite that source and/or place that source in your list of references.*
- *Submit a paper in which you “cut and paste” or use the exact words of a source and you do not put the words within quotation marks, use footnotes or in-text citations, and place the source in your list of references*

Weekly Topics

Following is a topic list and PARTIAL reading list that will be updated shortly once I've learned more about topical interests of students. Throughout the semester, I may add or drop readings as needed. Workshop weeks have no assigned readings but you will be expected to read drafts of your colleagues work and come prepared to comment on their research projects. Please plan to post your own work to Blackboard so that others can read it.

Week Of	Reading Assignment	Assignments Due
Jan 4	Topic – Getting Started; No assigned reading	
Jan 11	<p>Topic: Reading Political Science Research & Overview of Research Design</p> <p>Monday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethridge, Chapter 1 (Posted on Blackboard) • Cover & Brumberg 1982 “Baby Books and Ballots: The Impact of Congressional Mail on Constituent Opinion” <i>APSR</i> (ISI) <p>Wednesday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kellstadt and Whitten Chapters 3 & 4 • Carson et. al. 2007. “Candidate Quality, the Personal Vote, and the Incumbency Advantage in Congress.” <i>APSR</i> (ISI) 	
Jan 18	<p>Topic: Searching the Literature and Identifying Puzzles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McMenamin, Iain 2006 “Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature” <i>PS</i> • Kellstadt and Whitten Chapter 2 • Atkeson, Lonna Rae and Randall W. Partin. “Economic and Referendum Voting: A comparison of Gubernatorial and Senatorial Elections.” <i>APSR</i> 89(Mar.) 99-107 (ISI) 	
Jan 25	<p>Topic: Literature Reviews, Theories, and Hypotheses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aneshensel, Carol 2009. Chapters 1 & 2, <i>Theory Based Data Analysis for the Social Sciences</i> (BB) • Review K&W Chapter 2 <p>Other readings TBA</p>	Research Proposal Due on Wednesday
Feb 1	<p>Topic: Design Strategies for Assessing Causality; Datasets, Units of Analysis</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aneshensel, Carol S. 2009. Chapters 3-4, <i>Theory Based Data Analysis for the Social Sciences</i> (BB) 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Kellstadt & Whitten Chapter 4 – Research Design. Others Readings TBA	
Feb 8	Topic: Research Design and the Construction of Datasets Readings: TBA	
Feb 15	Topic: Measuring Concepts and Creating Operational Hypotheses Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kellstadt & Whitten Chapter 5 – Measurement Ethridge, Chapter 3 (BB) Other Readings TBA	Drop date is Feb 19
Feb 22	Topic: Measuring Concepts and Creating Operational Hypotheses Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethridge, Chapter 4 (BB) Other Readings TBA	Dataset Due
March 1	Topic: Testing Hypotheses and Drawing Inferences Readings: Aneshensel, Carol Chapters 5 & 6 <i>Theory Based Data Analysis for the Social Sciences</i> Other Readings TBA	
March 8	SPRING BREAK!	
March 15	Workshop: Literature review	Paper 1 Due
March 22	Workshop: Theory building	Peer Review 1 due
March 29	Workshop: Datasets and Measurement	
April 5	Workshop: Operationalizing Concepts	Analysis Paper Due
April 12	Workshop: Hypothesis testing	Peer Review 2 Due
April 19	Workshop: Interpreting results and drawing conclusions	
April 26	FINAL EXAM WEEK Papers and memo due in class at final exam date and time. Note, there is no separate final exam for this course. Exam Date: Wed. 12:30 – 2:30	Final paper and memo due