

NOTE: This syllabus has been designed for a class that meets once weekly, with an extra lab or discussion section held each week. However, the class could easily be altered to a two or three class per week schedule. Similarly, if this course were to be taught during an election, the class could be easily altered to include that electoral context. For example, the survey classes could be moved to allow for an exit poll assignment, in which students would be trained as interviewers and conduct interviews as one practicum, and analyze their results the following week.

PSCI XX: Applied Research Methods in Political Science

M 2:10-4:40pm

Instructor: Mollie Cohen

Office: XX

Office Hours: XX and by appt.

E-mail: mollie.j.cohen@vanderbilt.edu

Your final grade will be calculated using the following metric:

Practicum Assignments: 40%

Final Project: 40%

Participation: 20%

Your grade will be determined by your performance on practicum assignments, as well as your performance on the final project and your in-class participation. Practicum assignments are small group projects that are meant to give you hands-on experience with a particular research method. Your group will select a research topic for these assignments from a list of provided topics by the third class meeting. Your final project, a research design on the topic of your choosing, should be 15 pages long, double-spaced. You will be asked to submit a short project proposal (5% of the final paper grade) to me by the start of class on WEEK 5. I strongly encourage you to come talk to me about your ideas before this deadline. Over the course of the semester, you will have two additional paper deadlines: an annotated bibliography (10% of the final paper grade, due WEEK 7) and a first draft of the paper introduction (10% of the final paper grade, due WEEK 9).

The Vanderbilt Honor Code governs all work in this class. If you are unfamiliar with the Vanderbilt Honor System, please consult and read closely the details as laid out in the handbook: http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/the-honor-system

Citations: The final research paper, as well as the citations of articles and books in the body of the paper, must adhere to formatting guidelines for all papers written for courses in the political science department. You can find a memo detailing these guidelines on the department's web page, at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/political-science/undergraduate/paperformat2013.pdf>.

Further Writing Help: There are several deadlines for your final papers over the course of the semester to facilitate you writing the best paper possible. I will review these drafts closely and provide you with feedback on your ideas and writing over the course of the semester. If you feel that you need extra help

with your research and writing, I suggest you take advantage of the resources available at the Vanderbilt library, and at the Vanderbilt Writing Studio (<http://vanderbilt.edu/writing/>).

Turning in Work: Please submit all assignments to me before the start of class via e-mail (mollie.j.cohen@vanderbilt.edu). Late homework assignments will be penalized a half letter grade per day late, with the first penalty applied immediately following the deadline.

Expectations:

This is a small class, and we will discuss course material at length. Please come to class on time, having completed and the assigned reading and ready to discuss it with your classmates. Your participation in class is not just an important part of your grade, but also a sign of respect to the instructor and your peers. The academic enterprise is founded on the open exchange of ideas; to that end, we will hold regular in-class discussions. You may hold strong opinions about the topics we read about and discuss in this class. I expect you to follow the golden rule during in-class discussions and treat your classmates and their ideas with the same respect you would like to receive.

I will not enforce a strict attendance policy in this class; do note, however, that in-class participation accounts for 20% of your final grade.

We will be reading several articles from academic journals over the course of the semester. You will not be expected to understand all of the technical jargon or statistics used in these papers, although we will discuss some of these terms in class. It is more important that you glean the central ideas from these journal articles, and come to class having made a good faith effort to understand what you have read and ready to ask questions about any points of confusion.

Communication:

All class announcements (including updates to the syllabus) will be delivered via the Blackboard listserv. If you do not regularly check your university e-mail, I suggest you forward your university messages to an account you regularly use.

I am most easy to reach by e-mail. I check my e-mail regularly on weekdays, and will do my best to respond to communications from you within 24 hours during the week, but expect a slower turn around if you contact me on Saturday or Sunday.

I especially encourage you to come to my office hours. This is time that I have set aside specifically for you—you are absolutely welcome and encouraged to take advantage of this time. If for whatever reason you are unable to come to regularly scheduled office hours, please request an appointment, and I'll be happy to meet with you at some other time.

Laptop/ Tablet Policy:

Laptops, tablets, and smart phones put the world at our fingertips. While technology can be incredibly useful, it is often distracting during class. Because of this tendency to distract from rather than aid learning, laptops, tablets, and other electronic devices are not allowed in this course without instructor permission. If permission is granted, you may use the equipment for the sole purpose of taking notes. All requests regarding technology must be made in person, and non-compliance with the policy will result in a failing participation grade.

Week 1: Research in Political Science.

ALMOND, Gabriel. 1988. "Separate Tables: Schools and Sects in Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 21(4): 828-842.

MONROE, Almond, Gunnell, Shapiro, Graham, Barber, Shepsle, Cropsey. 1990. "The Nature of Contemporary Political Science: A Roundtable Discussion." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 23(1): 34-43.

MILLER, D.W. 2001. "Storming the Palace in Political Science: Scholars Join Revolt Against the Domination of Mathematical Approaches to the Discipline." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 21, A16.

HARDIN, Jervis, Monroe, Ostrom, Rudolph, Smiley, and Smith. 2002. "Shaking Things Up? Thoughts about the Future of Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(2): 181-205.

GRANT, J. Tobin. 2005. "What Divides Us? The Image and Organization of Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 38(3): 379-386. Course Packet

Week 2: Research Design: Concepts, Measurement, and Types of Studies. Also, Ethics: Historical Studies and the IRB

KING, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. "Descriptive Inference." Chapter 2 in *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994: 34-71.

SARTORI, Giovanni. 1970. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Review* 64(4): 1033-1053.

ADCOCK, Robert and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95(3): 529-546.

BROOKS, Sarah M. 2013. "The Ethical Treatment of Human Subjects and the Institutional Review Board Process." Chapter 2 in Layna Mosley (ed.), *Interview Research* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), pp. 45-66.

SIEBER, Joan E. 1992. *Planning Ethnically Responsible Research: A Guide for Students and Internal Review Boards*. Chapter 8 (pp. 79-95) and Chapter 9 (96-108).

Assignment: take the online IRB certification at [\[site here\]](#). Send a screen shot of the confirmation page to me by [\[end of week\]](#)

Week 3: Semi-Structured Interviews, participant observation, and Focus Groups

ABERBACH, Berry, Goldstein, Kozyreva, Leech, Rivera, Rockman, Sarovskii, and Woliver. 2002. "Interview Methods in Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35(4): 663-688.

GAMSON, William A. 1992. *Talking Politics*. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-12), Chapter 2 (pp. 13- 27), Chapter 4 (pp. 59-83), and Appendix A (pp. 189-201).

FENNO, Richard F., Jr. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in their Districts*. Introduction, (pp. xi-xvi), Chapter 5 (pp. 136-170), and Appendix (pp. 249-295).

Practicum 1A: Generate an interview script that addresses the research question your group wants to answer over the course of the semester. Interview one person from outside of class using this script. Make sure to take careful field notes; you'll be using these next week!

Week 5: Analyzing qualitative data

Note: Final project proposal due at start of class

SILVERMAN, David. 2006. *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text, and Interaction*. Chapters 3 ("Data Analysis") 8 ("Texts") and 9 ("Naturally Occurring Talk"). Sage.

STEWART, Favid W., Prem N. Shamdasani, and Dennis W. Rook. 2007. *Focus Groups: Theory and Practice*. Chapter 7 ("Analyzing Focus Group Data"). Sage.

Practicum 1B: Using either the provided focus group data or your group's interview transcripts from last week, summarize your findings. How do your interviewees' responses answer your core research question? Consider analyzing your data in terms of themes, key terms, and time spent on important topics. Have your interviews yielded testable hypotheses?

Week 6: Surveys: Writing survey questions; introduction to [Qualtrics/ survey monkey/ alternative software]

KROSNICKa, Jon A. 1991. "Response Strategies for Coping with the Cognitive Demands of Attitude Measures in Surveys." *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 5: 213-236.

KROSNICK, Jon A., and Duane F. Alwin. 1987. "An Evaluation of a Cognitive Theory of

Response-Order Effects in Survey Measurement.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51(2): 201-219.

BISHOP, George F., Robert W. Oldendick, and Alfred J. Tuchfarber. 1982. “Political Information Processing: Question Order and Context Effects.” *Political Behavior* 4(2): 177-200.

KING, Gary, Christopher J. L. Murray, Joshua Salomon, and Ajay Tandon. 2004. “Enhancing the Validity and Cross-Cultural Comparability of Measurement in Survey Research.” *American Political Science Review* 98(1): 191-207.

Practicum 2A: Working from your previous interview script, create a survey instrument that reflects your group’s research question. Consider what additional information you will need about your respondents to gain the most out of this exercise.

Week 7: Survey sampling and more questionnaire design

Note: Annotated bibliography due at start of class

BABBIE, Earl. 1999. “The Logic of Sampling.” In *The Basics of Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company: 169-207.

WEISSBERG, Herbert F. 2005. “Measurement Error Due to Respondents: Question Wording Problems.” *The Total Survey Error Approach: A Guide to the New Science of Survey Research* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press): pp. 72-113.

Practicum 2B: Revise your group’s survey instrument, paying close attention to ordering and wording effects. Are you priming your respondents to give particular answers? Then, write a brief description of how you would field your study. What is the population of interest? How would you draw your sample?

Week 8: Archival Research and Big Data: Best practices in data collection

FRISCH, Scott, Harris, Douglas, Kelly, Sean, & Parker, David. 2012. *Doing Archival Research in Political Science*. Cambria Press. (Chapters 2 and 5)

PEPINSKY, Thomas. 2007. How to Code. Working Paper, University of Colorado, Boulder.

Practicum 3: Consider your group’s research question. What would be the best way to use archival data to answer that question? Write a 5-page memo describing the archival research project you would ideally conduct. What data sources would you use? How

would you code the data you collect (provide a sample excel sheet)? What would be your method of selection for information from the archive?

Week 9: Experiments (lab and field): Treatment and control (and ethics)

Note: Final project introduction due at start of class

COOK, Thomas D., and Donald T. Campbell. 1979. *Quasi-Experimentation: Design & Analysis Issues for Field Settings*. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-36) and Chapter 2 (pp. 37-94).

DUCH, Raymond and Harvey Palmer. 2004. "It's Not Whether You Win or Lose but How You Play the Game: Self-Interest, Social Justice, and Mass Attitudes toward Market Transition," *American Political Science Review* 98(3): 437-452.

WANTCHEKON, Leonard. 2003. "Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin." *World Politics* 55: 399-422.

CANACHE, Damarys, Jeffrey J. Mondak, and Ernesto Cabrera. 2000. "Voters and the Personal Vote: A Counterfactual Simulation." *Political Research Quarterly* 53(3): 663-676.

BLAIS, André and Robert Young. 1999. "Why Do People Vote? An Experiment in Rationality." *Public Choice* 99(1): 39-55.

Practicum 4: Consider how you would apply experimental approaches to your research question. Write a 5 page memo describing: 1. The causal mechanism you would test in an experimental setting (that is, your hypothesis), 2. A proposed treatment, and 3. Your research protocol. Is this a lab experiment, a field experiment, or a lab in the field experiment? Why would you choose one setting versus another? What are the (dis)advantages of this choice?

Week 10: Meetings About Individual Projects

Week 11: Triangulation, or multi-method approaches

BRADY, Henry E. 2004/2010. "Doing Good and Doing Better: How Far Does the Quantitative Template Get Us?" Chapter 3 in Brady and Collier, Eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, (Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield): 53-67/67-82.

BARTELS, Larry M. 2004/2010. "Some Unfulfilled Promises of Quantitative Imperialism." Chapter 4 in Brady and Collier, Eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, (Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield): 69-74/83-88.

KING, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 2004/2010. "The Importance of Research Design." Chapter 11/7 in Brady and Collier, Eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry*, (Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield): 181-192/111-122.

MAHONEY, James. 2010. "After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research." *World Politics* 62(1): 120-147.

BROWN, Wendy. 2002. "At the Edge." *Political Theory* 30(4): 556-576.

Week 12: Individual Presentations

Week 13: Individual Presentations

Week 14: Course wrap up

Final project due by December XX.