Duke University
Political Science 330
Research Design & Qualitative Methods
Spring 2006
Tuesdays, 2:50 - 5:20, Keohane Quad, Building 4B, Room 402
course website at: http://courses.duke.edu
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office hours: Mondays 1:30 - 2:30

Objectives
PS330 is a course in methods in the broadest sense. The first part of the course deals with fundamental issues that are essential for almost all social science research: concepts and measurement, ontology and epistemology, causation and inference. The second part of the course deals with issues of research design (focusing on problems of case selection in non-statistical research) and specific methodological tools and techniques for empirical research, including archival research and the critical use of sources, qualitative interviewing, surveys and questionnaire design, as well as content and discourse analysis.

The purpose of the course is to learn specific new skills—possibly for your own use in empirical work you might do—and to become more aware of your own and others' epistemological assumptions, assumptions about causality, and standards for judging empirical research in political science. The course should put you in a stronger position to constructively critique such research from a methodological point of view, including work that employs some of the specific techniques discussed here or uses data generated through such techniques (often without awareness of the implications). It also should allow you to design better research projects yourself. The final session looks at some of the issues involved in conveying our work to others through narratives: What is it, beyond the research design, that makes the stories we tell about politics more or less compelling?

Requirements
Active and thoughtful participation in class discussion (based on having done the readings in advance) are an essential part of this course and will count for 20% of the grade. To ensure that everyone has a fair chance to contribute, I may call on students at times. I also would urge you to post questions that you would like us to discuss and potentially continue our conversation via the Blackboard "Discussion Board," where separate fora have been created for each topic/week.

The remainder of the grade will be based on short assignments throughout the semester and possibly a final exam (which, if held, will count for 2 short assignments). For weeks 2-5, I will team up students in pairs with similar substantive interests. The two students within each pair will alternate as paper writers and commentators. The paper writers must write a paper of 3-5 double-spaced pages on the assigned question and must share their papers by posting them on Blackboard (each paper as a separate "thread") by Sunday evening 10pm before the seminar (drop off one hard copy in my box by 11am on Monday). The commentators must then write a short response memo (1 single-spaced page, max.) on the paper with which they are paired, drawing on the readings as appropriate. Those memos must be posted by 5:30pm on Monday, linked to the corresponding paper. The response memos should begin by commenting on the
strength of the paper (1/3 of the memo, max.), then provide a constructive criticism of the paper. In week 6, everyone will write a short paper on causal inference. In the second part of the semester, you will do several skills exercises—ranging from a research proposal focused on case selection to questionnaire design and content analysis exercises, as well as actual interviews. Some of these exercises will be done in class, some after we have dealt with the particular method/technique in class. Some may be done in small groups (as indicated).

Readings

Many of the required readings are articles from journals that are available to you online via Duke's electronic journal holdings or bibliographic databases (online); some other readings are on electronic reserves (e-res); a few are unpublished manuscripts. Whenever possible, I have created links to these readings directly from the "online syllabus" on the course website (access restricted to students enrolled in the class). All books from which we read any chapters have been placed on reserve at Perkins library. In addition, the following books, from which we read multiple chapters over the course of the semester, have been ordered at Duke's Textbook Store:


*Caveat lector*: While I am trying to expose students to a variety of ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives and draw on work from all of the empirical subfields of political (I thank numerous colleagues for sharing syllabi and suggestions to make this possible), assigned readings surely still reflect my own biases, or at least the limits of my own familiarity. For this reason (and others) this syllabus—just as Weberian science—is a work in progress, and suggestions for improvements and additions are most welcome.

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1 Please use "author date:page" format of in-text citation, using the syllabus as your list of references. When referencing works not contained on the syllabus, be sure to include a single-spaced list of works cited at the end of the paper/memo. References count as part of the page maximum for papers.

* For sharing syllabi or suggesting specific readings, I thank Andrew Bennett, Scott de Marchi, Chris Gelpi, Peter Hall, Patrick Jackson, Robert Keohane, Andrew Nathan, Dan Nexon, Paul Pierson, Guillermo Trejo, Jeremy Weinstein, and Steven Wilkinson.
PART I: FUNDAMENTALS

1. Introduction (17 January 2006)

Social Science?


There is no such thing as a logical method of having new ideas ....
— Karl Popper

Choosing Questions


Recommended

2. Concepts, Measurement, and Descriptive Inference (Jan.24)


Applications in Political Science I: Democracy


Applications in Political Science II: Power


**Recommended**


**Assignment, Concepts & Measurements:** Select a concept that is very important to a line of research in which both you and your commentator are particularly interested. Discuss the concept and its measurement in that line of research (with reference to specific, published work) in light of our readings. Have scholars in the literature that you have chosen addressed issues of validity and reliability more or less successfully than in the literature on democracy or power (choose one)?

**PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE**

3. Positivistic "Growth of Knowledge" Approaches to Epistemology (Jan. 31)


Recommended


Assignment, Positivistic Epistemology: Identify a Lakatosian research program in political science. Carefully specify its "hard core" and its "protective belt" of auxiliary hypotheses. To what extent has scholarship in this line of research followed the trajectory suggested by Lakatos? Does Popper or Kuhn better capture actual political science scholarship? (If you decide to write your paper on the Democratic Peace, neorealism, rational choice, or another line of research discussed as a "research program" in the existing literature, you must assess the progress of this research program beyond the works discussed in published work; you might want to attach a note to point out to what extent this is the case.) NB: Those writing memos this week, in addition to providing constructive criticism of the paper to which they are responding, should address the normative question which epistemological stipulations (of the set Popper, Kuhn, and Lakatos) political science should follow.

4. Critiques and Non-Positivist Approaches (Feb. 7)


**Recommended**


Assignment, Non-Positivist Epistemology: Select a non-positivist approach from among those about which we read or beyond. Identify and define it, clarify its central tenets, and make a case for how an existing empirical analysis in political science could have been improved or fruitfully complemented through adopting this approach. What criteria should be used to judge work in this tradition?

5. Causality & Counterfactuals (Feb.14)


Recommended


Counterfactuals


Recommended


Christopher Winship's website: http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~winship/cfa.html

Assignment, Causality: Select a published article that advances a causal argument and is familiar to you from having been assigned in the field seminar in American or Comparative Politics or IR. (If you would prefer to write about a recently published work that is of special interest to you and your commentator, talk to me.) Drawing on this week's readings as appropriate, identify clearly the central causal argument, the implicit or explicit counterfactual, and the hypothesized causal mechanism(s). Do so in
your own words, improving on the clarity of the author's exposition. Then discuss what notion of causality is implicit in the theoretical argument of the author.

6. Causal Inference and Hypothesis Testing (Feb. 21)


Highly Recommended:


Recommended


Assignment, Causal Inference: Return to the work selected last week. Based on this week's readings, provide a constructive criticism of the research design, focusing on issues of causal inference (everyone, 2-3 pages).
PART II:  
PRACTICAL ISSUES IN RESEARCH DESIGN; APPLIED METHODS & TOOLS

7. Case Studies and Case Selection  (Feb. 28)


Highly Recommended:


Recommended:


Exemplary Empirical Work (certainly not a comprehensive list!):


**Assignment, Case Selection:** Write a research proposal of no more than 5 pages, for a research project that aims to contribute to causal explanation through case studies. The causal explanation should be (in some part) your own, though you are free to develop an idea on which you will be writing a paper for another course or draw on work you have already done in another course. Be very clear about the causal hypothesis and provide at least a brief statement of the causal logic and hypothesized mechanism(s). In the remainder of your research proposal pay special attention to issues of case selection (be sure discuss your case selection in light of this week's readings), but also be sure to specify how you will carry out the research for (each of) the cases. While the project may be hypothetical, it should be feasible for you as an individual PhD student, given your resources (incl. language and other skills you have or can reasonably acquire within no more than 2 years).

8. **In the Archives and In the Field** (March 7, Prof. Guillermo Trejo will co-teach)

*History will not be kind to Neville Chamberlain. … I know because I am going to write it.* — Winston Churchill as quoted by David Cannadine (FT 19 Nov 2005).

**Historiography: Archival Research & Critical Use of Sources**


**Recommended, Historiography/Archival Research:**


*Field research can be likened to a giant shopping expedition … exposure to a wider selection of items when one arrives at the store, or the discovery that certain items are not longer in stock or are over-priced can force a complete rethinking of the week's menu.* — Evan Lieberman 2004:4.

**Field Research**


Recommended, Field Research:


Use of Sources and Academic Norms


Assignment, Archival & Field Research: This week's assignment has two parts; both due Monday 5pm:

PART I: Do the exercises Set A in the "Evidence" chapter from Furay and Salevouris (pp.145-160)—I suggest that you print those pages separately from the PDF and submit them, only, but you can also submit the entire chapter, if you prefer.

PART II: Imagine a fieldwork situation in which you are trying to conduct research (be sure to specify the location and your research objective). Identify three problems that you are likely to encounter in this field research and how you might deal with them (based on the readings *and* your own imaginative engagement with the local culture and the needs of your research project). The total write-up should not
exceed 3 pages and can be based on your research proposal from last week or on a research project that you have conducted.

9. Fuzzy Set Analysis (March 28, Bunche Lab, Dept of Political Science)


Assignment, Fuzzy Set Analysis: There is no assignment to be done in advance, though there may be a brief data analysis exercise after class.

10. Sampling, Surveys & Questionnaires (Friday, March 31, 4-6pm)*

* Note special time; this class is a make-up session for March 21.

Sampling


Survey Questionnaires


Recommended: Sampling

Recommended: Surveys/Questionnaires


Assignment, Survey Design: The assignment for this week has three parts. (1) By Monday, 3/27, request that OIT (919-684-2200) set up a "polling place" for you via/for Duke's online survey tool, "ViewsFlash." You will need to choose an individual name of this "polling place;" it is recommended that you keep it short. Be sure to get an individual polling place. (2) By 10am on Friday (3/31), write a memo of 2-3 pages in which you suggest three revised or additional questions for a business survey among standards experts (or two question and one suggestion for a change in research design) to better distinguish between Mattli and Büthe's theoretical argument and alternative explanations (either the alternatives discussed in their article or alternatives that you yourself might discern). One question may be a variant of one of the questions used by Mattli & Büthe (as mentioned in the article), i.e., involve a change in question wording, response options, etc.; the other two questions should be new. The questions might be based on what you identify as a weakness of their survey/questions or might simply aim for additional observable implications. Each question should be accompanied by a brief discussion of its strengths and weaknesses, based on the methods readings for this week. (3) We will spend part of the class on learning ViewsFlash. After the class (by Monday), encode your three questions, put them up as a non-password-protected survey, and post the URL link for the survey as a follow-up to your memo.
11. Qualitative Interviews  (April 4; with Judge James Wynn as interviewee guest)


Berry, Jeffrey M. "Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing." PS: Political Science and Politics vol.35 no.4 (December 2002): 679-682.


Assignment, Interviewing: We will be joined for this class by the Rt. Honorable James A. Wynn of the North Carolina Court of Appeals, who has kindly agreed to be interviewed by students in this class. Judge Wynn has inter alia served as a judge on the NC Court of Appeal and NC Supreme Court, as well as for the U.S. Navy—at times as the only African-American on those courts; and since NC judges are elected, he has four times run for elected office. For more background information, see his biography at: http://www.nccourts.org/Courts/Appellate/Appeal/ or www.judgewynn.com.

Team up in groups of 2. Select a topic about which you want to interview Judge Wynn; the assigned chapters from H. W. Perry's book suggest some possible topics about the judicial case selection of appellate courts, but you may also interview the judge about other issues about which he will be able to speak based on his professional experience. Prepare well for this interview, as you would for an interview for your dissertation or a major research project (except that you will be working as a team
here, which is otherwise rarely the case in social science research). By 5pm on Monday, April 3, each team must post 1 page (single-spaced) outlining the topic(s) about which you intend to interview the judge, what choices you have made with respect to format, recording responses, etc. You may diverge from your plan in the actual interview, but be prepared to discuss your reasons (in light of the assigned literature!) during the post-interview analysis, when Judge Wynn (and I) will provide feedback on the interviews. Each team gets to interview him for 15 minutes.

**12. Content & Discourse Analysis, incl. Network Analysis** (April 11)


**Recommended:**


**Assignment, Content Analysis:** This assignment has again two parts: (1) Work again in the groups of two formed for qualitative interviewing. Jointly develop specific instructions/coding rules for a content analysis for the hypothetical research project specified below. (2) Separately, carry out the content analysis the content analysis, as specified below, based upon the coding rules on which you (in your team of two) agreed. The coding instructions should be posted by 5pm on Monday; bring a memo with the results of your content analysis to class, so we can discuss and compare them (you will need to hand in your results at the end of class). Also, come to class with some suggestions of alternative (maybe better) ways to achieve the specified research objective.

**Project and Instructions/Coding Rules:** As part of a research project, you want to assess to what extent US media coverage of various less developed countries in 2001 created an image of need for development assistance (specifically with a view to "need" that would make it easier, for development NGOs that are engaged in such a country, to raise funds through private donations from U.S. citizens). To get at this issue, conduct a content analysis of the country's coverage in the New York Times. For the larger project, you seek this information on a monthly basis for all of 2001 (1/1 - 12/31) and for all non-OECD countries, but for purposes of this assignment, you will focus solely on the months of January and February and the country of Egypt. As a practical matter, will only be able to analyze a maximum of 300 news stories per country, so your coding instructions may have to reflect this limitation of the overall project. There is a fair chance that not all stories that your search finds will be relevant, but you need to develop explicit coding rules for determining whether it is. For this reason, you will probably want to look at some (but not all!) stories before finalizing your coding rules.

**Content Analysis:** Your record of the actual analysis should contain an entry for each NYT story that you find for the country between Jan.1 and Feb.28, 2001, clearly identifying each story such that replication and cross-coder comparison is possible, as well as information about how you have coded the story. You also must report the numerical score(s) for Egypt for January 2001 as a whole and February 2001 as a whole (which must be derived such that they will be comparable across countries).

[Hint for those not familiar with searches LexisNexis Academic: Select "U.S. News" from the "Step One" menu (under the "Guided News Search" tab); select "NorthEast Regional Sources" from the "Step Two" menu; specify "New York Times" in Step Five. Appendix 2, "Using NEXIS for Text Acquisition for Content Analysis" in Kimberly Neuendorf's *The Content Analysis Guidebook* (Sage, 2002; on reserve at Perkins) provides a further introduction to LexisNexis, though probably in more detail than you'll need.]

**13.1. Developing and Testing Hypotheses with a Temporal Dimension**

(April 18, at Prof. Büthe's house; exact time to be arranged)


**Recommended, Temporality:**

13.2. Telling Stories? Narratives in Political Science  (April 18)


The original W. Rhys Roberts translation (Oxford UP, 1924; no longer in copyright) is available in full online, e.g. from http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.html (search for "Aristotle and Rhetoric" for other public domain translations).  The revised Oxford translation (Princeton UP, 1984) are on reserve.


Recommended:


Beyond PS330

One could teach a full course on virtually every single week's topic of PS330.  PS330 can only give you an introduction and hopefully a foundation on which you can build if you were to decide to use any one of these methods in your own work.  Even with that caveat, there are a number of methods with which we will not deal with at all, mostly for lack of time.  I want to flag a few readings for at least one of them:

Experimental Methods


Natural Experiments: