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. I allow for some flexibility in the topics covered in the second part to meet students' specific needs, but I intend to cover archival research and the critical use of sources, field research, 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. The course should put you in a stronger position to constructively critique published research (and work in progress) from a methodological point of view. This is an important skill both for work that employs the specific techniques that we discuss in this course and for work that "only" uses data generated through such techniques—often without awareness of the implications. The course also aims to make you more aware of your own and others' epistemological assumptions, assumptions about causality, and standards for judging empirical research in political science, as well as allow you to design better research projects yourself. In the final session we may look 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. For weeks 1-4, I will team up students in pairs with similar substantive interests. The two students within each pair will alternate as paper writers and commentators. Each paper writer must write a paper of 3-5 double-spaced pages on the assigned question and must share the paper by posting it on Blackboard (each paper as a separate "thread") by Sunday evening 10pm before the seminar (drop off one hard copy in my box by 11:30am 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.¹ In week 5, everyone will write a 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),¹ 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 do not count against the length limit for papers.

² 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. Promise and Limits of Social Science (26 January 2010)

Social Science?


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

**Choosing Questions**


**Recommended**


**Assignment, Social Science:** Write a short essay about one of the following two (sets of) questions: (1) What is the role of norms or values in political/social science research? What should it be? (2) What is at stake in the debate over parsimony in social science research? Should scholars privilege it as a goal?

You may draw on additional material beyond the assigned readings—as warranted and in such a way that your discussion partner will find it accessible—but not as a substitute for engaging all of the pertinent readings this week.

**2. Concepts, Measurement, and Descriptive Inference** (Feb.2)


**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  (Feb. 9)


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. 16)


**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, and Causal Inference** (Feb.23)


Recommended


Counterfactuals

Recommended


Causal Inference and Hypothesis Testing


**Recommended**


**Assignment, Causality and Causal inference:** 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 another work that is of special interest to you, 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. Discuss what notion of causality is implicit in the theoretical argument of the author. Then, provide a constructive criticism of the research design, focusing on issues of causal inference (everyone, 4-6 pages).

**PART II:**

**PRACTICAL ISSUES IN RESEARCH DESIGN; APPLIED METHODS & TOOLS**

**6 & 7. Case Studies and Case Selection** (Mar. 2 & 16)


Highly Recommended:


Recommended:


Assignment, Case Selection (due Thu, 4 March 2010): 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 to 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 23, 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**


Moravcsik, Andrew. "Active Citation: A Precondition for Replicable Qualitative Research." *PS: Political Science & Politics* vol.43 no.1 (January 2010): 29-35.
**Assignment, Archival & Field Research:** This week's assignment has two parts; both due Tuesday 8am:

**PART I:** Do the exercises Set A in the "Evidence" chapter from Furay and Salevouris (pp.145-160)—You may either print those pages separately from the PDF and submit them on paper, with your responses written in, or you may type your responses into a Word document. If you do the latter, please set off each response and be sure to be very clear which question you are answering in any given paragraph.

**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 may be based on your research proposal from weeks 6&7 or on a research project that you have conducted. Please submit Part II as a Word document via the Discussion Board on the course website.

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9. **Fuzzy Set Analysis** (March 30, note special location: SSRI Computer Lab)


Recommended, Field Research:

Ragin, Charles C. *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000: all, but esp. chs. 1, 2, 4, 6-10

**Assignment, Fuzzy Set Analysis:** Come to class prepared to talk about real research scenarios (and possibly an actual dataset of your own) that is particularly suitable for fuzzy set analysis—and be prepared to talk about the drawbacks and limitations of such an analysis.

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10.1. **Sampling, Surveys & Questionnaires** (April 6, 4:25 - 6:00 pm)

*Note special location: SSRI Computer Lab*

* Note that April 6 is a double session

**Sampling**


Survey Questionnaires


Recommended: Sampling


Recommended: Surveys/Questionnaires


10.2. Experimental Methods in Political Science (April 6, 6:30 - 8:00pm)
(Prof. John Aldrich will co-teach)


Recommended: Experimental Methods


Natural Experiments:


Assignment, Survey Design and Experiments: The assignment for this week has three parts. (1) By 5pm on Monday (5 April 2010), post 1-2 paragraphs on the Blackboard Discussion Board, identifying a political science research question that might be addressed through an experiment (possibly but not necessarily a survey experiment). Elaborate in a few sentences about how you imagine such an experiment might be implemented, what the key insights are that you would expect to gain from that experiment, and what the key concerns are that you might have about this research strategy. You are welcome to make an experimental research proposal that's related to your actual research interests, but you are also free to come up with a completely unrelated research question.

(2) By 8 am on Tuesday (4/6), write a memo of 2-3 pages (max) 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 the strengths and weaknesses of your choice of question type, wording, etc, based on the methods readings for this week.

(3) We will spend part of the class learning Checkbox, the online survey software provided and supported by SSRI. After the class (by Friday, 4/9), encode your three questions and additional ones as needed such that you will have encoded at least one radio button question, on checkbox question, one likert question, and one free-text question (you will learn in class what these types of questions are). Put up the resulting survey as a non-password-protected survey, and post the URL link for the survey as a follow-up to your memo. You may do this using the "guest" account assigned to you in class *or* you may request your own checkbox account from Alexandra Fox <af64@duke.edu> at SSRI. Having your own account will doubtlessly be useful if you think you are going to work with surveys again reasonably soon; otherwise you won’t need it (you may request the account on 4/6/2010; not earlier).

11. Qualitative Interviews  (April 13)
Interviewee Guest: Rt. Honorable James A. Wynn, Jr., Senior Associate Judge, NC Court of Appeals


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


Recommended on Interviewing Methods

Recommended Interview-Based Research in Political Science

Recommended on Courts and Judicial Politics

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/.
Team up in groups of 2 or 3 (for a total of 6 groups). 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 interview research). By 10pm on Monday, April 12, 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.

12.1. Content Analysis, Discourse Analysis, and Quantitative Narrative Analysis
(April 20, 4:25 - 6:45pm)
* Note that April 20 is a double session (session 12.2. is not mandatory but highly recommended)
Background Reading for Assignment:

Recommended:
Franzosi, Roberto. Quantitative Narrative Analysis. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010, esp. ch.3 ("Computer Storage and Retrieval of Narrative Information") and ch.4 ("Things to Do With Words").

12.2. Network Analysis (April 20, 7:30 - 9:00 pm)
(Prof. Michael Ward will co-teach)

Recommended:

Assignment, Content Analysis/Quantitative Narrative Analysis: This assignment has again two parts. Some of it you may, if you wish, carry out in groups of two or three: (1) Develop specific instructions/coding rules for a content analysis for the research project specified below (see also background reading). (2) Carry out the content analysis, as specified below, based upon those coding rules. The coding instructions should be posted on Blackboard by 5pm on Monday (4/19); 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 ready to discuss alternative (maybe better) ways to achieve the research objective (specified below).

Project and Instructions/Coding Rules: As part of a research project, you want to assess to what extent U.S. media coverage of various developing countries in 2001 created an image of need for development assistance (specifically: a perception of "need" that would make it easier, for development NGOs, to solicit donations from private citizens). To get at this issue, conduct a content or quantitative narrative 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 - 12/31/2001) 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, you will only be able to analyze a maximum of 300 news stories per country over the course of the entire year, so your coding instructions may have to reflect this limitation of the overall project. There is a fair chance that not all NYT stories about Egypt will be relevant, but you need to develop explicit coding rules for determining whether any given story is relevant. 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 one entry for each NYT story that you find for the country between Jan.1 and Feb.28, 2001. Be sure that you clearly identify each story such that replication and cross-coder comparison is possible, and most importantly, of course, record what score you have assigned to the story, given your coding scheme. 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). You may carry out the analysis "manually" by reading the selected NY Times stories (e.g. in LexisNexis) or you may use a computer program for the analysis, such as the programs discussed in the reading by Hopkins and King or in Franzosi's *Quantitative Narrative Analysis* (on reserve at Perkins).

[Hint for those not familiar with searches in LexisNexis Academic: 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 an introduction to LexisNexis, though probably in more detail than you need for this assignment.]

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**14.1. Developing and Testing Hypotheses with a Temporal Dimension**  
(April 27, at Prof. Büthe's house; details to be arranged)

* Note that April 27 is a double session


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**14.2. Telling Stories? Narratives in Political Science**  
(April 27)

The translation by W. Rhys Roberts (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). Selections from the 1984 revised Oxford translation are on e-reserve.


**Recommended:**


Allison, Graham T. "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis." *American Political Science Review* vol.63 no.3 (September 1969): 689-718


