

GV505

Research Design in Political Science

Department of Government,
London School of Economics and Political Science
Reading List, 2nd Term 2009

Teacher responsible

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Availability

This course is only available for students on Stream A of the MRes/PhD in Political Science.

Course Content

The aim of the course is to provide members of the MRes/PhD programme with some basic ‘foundations’ for undertaking advanced research in political science. We will learn how to critically evaluate existing research, how to identify an interesting research question, how to develop and implement a method for answering the question, and how to present the results of the research. The course is organised into 3 sections:

1. Lectures and discussions on theory development, inference, case studies, experiments and combining small-n with large -n research (weeks 1-6);
2. Simulation: You become journal referees! MRes students evaluate the research design of quantitative and qualitative articles published in leading journals (weeks 7-8); and
3. Opportunity to present and discuss some of your own early research design ideas (weeks 9-10).

Method of Assessment

There will be no exam. Instead, you will be required to complete two assignments:

- 1) 33% of the grade – a 2-2,500 word paper, in which you critique the research design of a recent article in a top political science journal (e.g. APSR, BJPS, AJPS, EJPR, CPS etc.). Your choice of article **must be approved** by SH or PM. Two copies of your paper must be submitted before the end of week 8. You should also attach copies of the original article. Submit to the general office (H318) and get a receipt.
- 2) 67% of the grade – a 4-5,000 (maximum) word paper, in which you evaluate the existing research in a particular area of political science, **AND** suggest how the research agenda can be taken forward (i.e. this could be used as a draft of some of the elements of your Research Prospectus). This paper must be submitted at the end of the first week of the summer term. Again, two copies and submit to H318.

Seminars Topics and Schedule

All seminars are on Thursdays 1-3 pm, Room A379 (Third Floor, Main Building).

1. (a) Course set-up and introduction
(b) Research Questions (SH)
2. Theory Construction (SH)
3. Inference (PM)
4. Case Studies and 'Small-N' Research (PM)
5. Mixed Methods (PM)
6. Experiments and Quasi-Experiments (SH)

7. Evaluating Research Articles 1: Qualitative and Comparative
8. Evaluating Research Articles 2: Quantitative

9. Presentations by MRes researchers of their research design
10. Presentations by MRes researchers of their research design

References in the Reading List

There is no set text. But as on-going political science professionals you will probably find it useful to have copies of the first three books listed.

King, G., Keohane, R. & Verba, S. (1994) *Designing Social Inquiry*, Princeton UP. [KKV]

Geddes, B. (2003) *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*, University of Michigan Press [GEDDES]

Brady, H. & Collier, D. (eds) (2004) *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, Rowman & Littlefield. (A kind of reply to KKV) [B&C]

Box-Steffensmeier, J., H. Brady & D. Collier (eds) (2008) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. OUP. Too expensive to buy! [OXFORD HANDBOOK]

Geertz, Gary (2006). *Social Science Concepts*. Princeton U.P.

Gerring, J. (2001) *Social Science Methodology: A Critical Framework*, CUP.

Goodin, R. & Klingemann, H-D. (eds) (1996) *A New Handbook of Political Science*, OUP. [G&K]

Robertson, J.D. and Perry, R. (2001) *Comparative Analysis of Nations: Quantitative Approaches*, Westview Press. [ROBERTSON AND PERRY]

Scarborough, E. & Tanenbaum, E. (eds) (1998) *Research Strategies in the Social Sciences: A Guide to New Approaches*, OUP.

1. Research Questions

Issues

- How do I pick a research question?
- Should I look carefully for a 'gap' in existing knowledge, if so how?
- Or can I allow myself to be motivated by my fascination about a particular topic?

Essential Reading

GEDDES chapter 1 ('Research Design and the Accumulation of Knowledge') and chapter 2 ('Big Questions, Little Answers: How the Questions You Choose Affect the Answers You Get').

KKV chapter 1 ('The *Science* in Social Science')

2. Theory Construction

Issues

- What is a 'theory', and why is it necessary? What does it do for us?
- What makes a good theory – explaining everything poorly vs. explaining a few things well
- Different types of theories.

Essential Reading

Morton, R. (1999) *Methods and Models: A Guide to the Empirical Analysis of Formal Models in Political Science*, Cambridge UP (chs 1-2, and 9)

Goertz, Gary (2008), 'Concepts, Theories and Numbers...', in OXFORD HANDBOOK.

Additional Reading

Collier, D. & Mahon, J. (1993) 'Conceptual "Stretching" Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis', *American Political Science Review* 87, 845-55.

Fearon, J. D. (1991) 'Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science', *World Politics*, 43, 169-95.

Collier, D. & Levitsky, S. (1997) 'Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research', *World Politics* 49, 430-51.

Zuckerman, A. (1997) 'Reformulating Explanatory Standards and Advancing Theory in Comparative Politics', in M.I. Lichbach & A.S. Zuckerman (eds) *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, CUP.

3. Inference

Issues

- Is there a useful distinction between quantitative and qualitative research, or between an inductive and a deductive logic of inquiry?
- descriptive and explanatory inference, causality and uncertainty.
- 'The content is the method'. In other words, social science, indeed all science, depends primarily on its rules and methods, not on its 'subject' matter.
- What is inference and why is it so important? What is causal inference?
- Does a Case Study really deserve to be called a 'comparative' method?
- Problems of Selection Bias. Especially in qualitative (small n) research, the decision as to which cases, observations or countries to include is often crucial, indeed may even determine, the results that we get.

Questions

- 1) 'The only reliable method of making gains in knowledge and social progress is through scientific enquiry. Anything else is just chat.' Discuss.
- 2) 'You can't prove anything with a case-study.' Examine the advantages **and** the disadvantages of case-study research.
- 3) How can we best ensure that our results are not merely an artefact of the cases that we chose?

Essential Reading

KKV, ch. 2-3 - ch. 3. 'Causality' and 'Casual Reasoning' are difficult topics both in social scientific and philosophical accounts of established knowledge. There is no settled consensus. Ch 3 presents KKV's counterfactual definition of causality. This is not an easy chapter but it is worth reading carefully. In general, KKV is an excellent text on scientific approaches to social inquiry. Note, however, that we do not present it as a bible or other sacred text. Many political scientists contest aspects of KKV's book (e.g. the symposium in APSR 89:2, see below).

B&C, ch's 1, 2 & 13 ('Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology').

Additional Reading

Gerring, John (2005), 'Causation: A Unified Framework for the Social Sciences', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17:2, 163-98.

Brady, 'Causation and Explanation in Social Science', pp.217-71 in OXFORD HANDBOOK.

Collier, D. and Mahoney, J. (1996) 'Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research', *World Politics* 49, 56-91.

American Political Science Review 89:2 (June 1995), 454-81. Five other political scientists review different parts of KKV's book and then KKV respond.

Agresti, A. and Finlay, B. *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*. Chpt 10.

Achen, C. (1986). *The Statistical Analysis of Quasi-Experiments*. Berkeley: U of California Press. (a classic statement on selection bias by a political scientist).

Moe, T. (1979) 'On the scientific status of rational models', *AJPS* 23, pp.215-43.

Davis, J. (1985) *The Logic of the Causal Order*, Sage.

Nicholson, M. (1992) *The Scientific Analysis of Social Behaviour*, Cambridge UP

From the philosophical literature see also:

Chalmers (1999), ch. 4 ('Deriving Theories from the Facts: Induction')

MacIntyre, A. (1985) 'The Character of Generalizations in Social Science and their Lack of Predictive Power'.

Hollis, M. (1994) *The Philosophy of Social Science*, CUP, Chpt. 3.

4. Case Studies and 'Small-N' Research

Issues

- The logic of comparative enquiry. In principle anything could be compared with anything. In practice some comparisons are likely to be better than others, in the sense of producing meaningful non-obvious findings.
- Compare what? The need to segment before comparing. The choice of countries: which countries?; how many countries or cases? Most common choices: binary comparisons; comparing 'similar' countries; comparing 'contrasting' countries; asynchronic comparisons.

Essential Reading

Rose, R. (1991) 'Comparing Forms of Comparative Analysis', *Political Studies* 39, 446-462.

Gerring, J. (2004) 'What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?', *American Political Science Review* 98:2, 341-354.

Additional Readings

Gerring, John (2007). *Case Study Research: Principles and Practice*. Cambridge University Press.

George, Alexander and Andrew Bennett (2004). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Rose, Richard. (1991) 'Comparing Forms of Comparative Analysis', *Political Studies* 39, 446-462.

Gerring, John (2008), 'Case-Selection for Case Study Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative Techniques', in OXFORD HANDBOOK.

Bennett, Andrew (2008), 'Process Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective', in OXFORD HANDBOOK.

Fearon, James and Davis Laitin (2008), 'Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods', in OXFORD HANDBOOK.

Lieberson, S. (2000), 'Small N's and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the reasoning in Comparative Studies based on a Small Number of Cases', in R. Gomm, M. Hammersley & P. Foster (eds) *Case Study Method*. Sage

Yin, RK. (2003) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4th edition. Sage.

Gerring, John (2005), 'Causation: A Unified Framework for the Social Sciences', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 17:2, 163-98.

E.Gene DeFelice (1986), 'Causal Inference and Comparative Methods', *Comparative Political Studies* 19.

Robertson, J.D. and Perry, R. (2001) *Comparative Analysis of Nations: Quantitative Approaches*, Westview Press.

McKeown (1999) 'Case Studies and the Statistical Worldview', *International Organization*, 53, 1, pp. 161-138.

Geertz (1973) 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, pp. 3-30.

'Controversy in the Discipline: Area Studies and Comparative Politics' (R. Bates, C. Johnson and I. Lustick), *Political Science and Politics*, 30:2 (June 1997), 166-79.

Collier, D. (1995), 'Translating Quantitative Methods for Qualitative Researchers: The Case of Selection Bias', *American Political Science Review*, 89:2, 461-66.

Lustick, I. (1996) 'History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias', *American Political Science Review*, 90:3, 605-18

Eckstein, H. (1975) 'Case Study and Theory in Political Science', in Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (eds), *Handbook of Political Science* vol.7. Addison Wellsley.

5. Mixed Methods

The decisions that we make at the research design stage in very general terms (concerning questions and case selection, treatments, type of inference etc) imply different explicit methods.

Essential Reading

Lieberman, E.S. (2005) 'Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research', *American Political Science Review* 99(3) 435-452.

Additional Reading

Rohlfing, Ingo (2007), 'What You See and What You Get: Pitfalls and Principles of Nested Analysis in Comparative Research', *Comparative Political Studies* 20:10.

Tashakkori, Abbas and Teddlie, Charles (2003). *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*. Sage.

Gerring, J. (2001) *Social Science Methodology: A Critical Framework*, CUP. (as much as possible, especially chpts 2, 8 and 9.

Scarborough, E. & Tanenbaum, E. (eds) (1998) *Research Strategies in the Social Sciences: A Guide to New Approaches*, OUP. ['The Book' from the Essex ECPR summer school on research methods. There are overview chpts on each of the following methods: OLS and logistic regression, structural equation models, Latent Class models, Multi-Level modelling, Time-Series, Event History Analysis, Game Theory, Discourse Theory]

Morton, R. (1999) *Methods and Models: A Guide to the Empirical Analysis of Formal Models in Political Science*, Cambridge UP.

6. Experiments and Quasi-Experiments

Issues

- what is the difference between a 'field experiment' and a 'lab experiment' in political science?
- what is a 'quasi-experiment' in political science?
- what is the nature of causality in experimental research as opposed to standard quantitative methods?
- how can experimental research be combined with large-n probabilistic methods (e.g. OLS regression)?

Essential Reading

Morton, Rebecca & Kenneth C. Williams, 'Experimentation in Political Science', in OXFORD HANDBOOK.

Gerber, Alan S. & Donald P. Green, 'Field Experiments and Natural Experiments', in OXFORD HANDBOOK.

Additional Reading

McDermott, R. (2002) 'Experimental Methods in Political Science', *Annual Review of Political Science* 5: 31-61.

Morton, R. & K.C. Williams (2008) 'From Nature to the Lab: Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality', <http://politics.as.nyu.edu/docs/IO/2797/experiment.pdf>

Campbell, D.T. (1957) 'Factors Relevant to the Validity of Experiments in Social Settings', *Psychological Bulletin* 54: 297-312.

- Gerber, A.S. & D. Green (2002) 'Reclaiming the Experimental Tradition in Political Science', in I. Katznelson & H.V. Milner (eds) *Political Science: State of the Discipline*, Norton.
- Kinder, D. & T. Palfrey (eds) (1993) *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*, University of Michigan Press.
- Lupia, A. & M. McCubbins (1998) *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* CUP.
- Wantchekon, L. (2003) 'Clientalism and Voting Behavior: Evidence of a Field Experiment in Benin', *World Politics* 55: 399-422.
- Gerber, A.S. & D.P. Green (2000) 'The Effects of Canvassing, Direct Mail, and Telephone Contact on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment', *American Political Science Review* 94: 653-63.
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7. Evaluating Research 1: Qualitative and Comparative Research

Note that applies to weeks 7-8. At the prior weeks class we will select three articles to be evaluated the following week, and divide you into teams of 3 (i.e, 3x3). Each team will present one article – and critique it from a research design and substantive point of view. We will discuss how to do this. Overheads and/or power point can be used and each team member must present a section of the presentation – ie. no non-presenters! The presentation of a paper should not exceed 15mins.

*** Please note that although each team will present only one article, **all of us** must read **all three** articles for each week.

Examples of Qualitative/Quantitative Research (others will be added and we will collectively select the articles for review this year)

- Carol Mershon (1996), 'The Costs of Coalition: Coalition Theories and Italian Governments', *APSR* 90:3, pp.534-54. (a case study that uses quantitative data, but nothing more data analytic than percentages!).
- Avner Greif and David Laitin (2004), 'A Theory of Endogenous Institutional Change', *APSR*, 98:4:633-652
- Junko Kato (1998), 'When the Party Breaks Up: Exit and Voice among Japanese Legislators', *APSR* 92:4, pp. 857-70 (mostly two case studies, with some Probit regression).
- Arend Lijphart (1996), 'The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation', *APSR* 90:2, pp.258-268. [not sure about this one – in one sense the article is crap!]
- Gary Miller and Norman Schofield (2003), 'Activists and Partisan Realignment in the United States', *APSR* 97(2):245-260
- Amie Kreppel (1997), 'The Impact of Parties in Government on legislative Output in Italy', *EJPR* 31:3, pp.327-50.
- Robert Pape (2003), 'The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism', *APSR* 97:3, 343-62.
- Ian Lustick, Dan Miodownik and Roy Eidelson (2004), 'Secessionism In Multicultural States: Does Sharing Power Prevent or Encourage it?', *APSR* 98:2, 209-230 (addresses small-N / Large-N issues and one of the first examples of agent-based modeling in a big-time, mainstream poli sci journal. Read it in colour!).
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8. Evaluating Research 2: Quantitative Research

Issues

- What are the pros and cons of large-n statistical research?
- How applicable are statistical methods in comparative political analysis?
- Things To Avoid! (indeterminate research designs; dependent variables that are not dependent!; measurement error; bias; endogeneity etc)
- E.g. Problems of Endogeneity. This is the problem of ambiguous directions of causality. In other words, since most political research is not genuinely experimental, we usually cannot manipulate or alter our 'independent' (explanatory) variables. Our inability to do this leads to the problem of endogeneity, that is, that the values of our explanatory variables are sometimes a consequence, rather than the cause of, our dependent variable

Reading

PETERS chpt 9 ('Statistical Analysis').

Gary King (1986), 'How Not to Lie with Statistics: Avoiding Common Mistakes in Quantitative Political Science', *AJPS* 30:3, pp.666-87.

John D. Robertson and Robert Perry (2001). *Comparative Analysis of Nations: Quantitative Approaches*. Boulder, Co: Westview Press.

Robert Jackman (1985), 'Cross National Statistical Research and the Study of Comparative Politics Systems', *AJPS* 29, pp. 161-82.

John Frenreis (1983), 'Explanations of Variation and Detection of Covariance: The Purpose and Logic of Comparative Analysis', *Comparative Political Studies* 16, pp.255-72.

Darrell Huff (1954), *How to Lie with Statistics*. W.W. Norton and Co. (a light hearted look).

W.L. Miller (1995), 'Quantitative methods', in Marsh, David and Gerry Stoker (eds) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. London: Macmillan.

Gary King (1990), 'When not to use R²', *Political Methodologist* 3, pp11-14.

John Fox (1991). *Regression Diagnostics*. Sage 79.

Robert Adcock and David Collier (2001), 'Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research', *APSR* 95:3, pp. 529-46.

King, Gary; Michael Tomz; and Jason Wittenberg (2000), 'Making the Most of Statistical Analyses: Improving Interpretation and Presentation,' *AJPS*, Vol. 44: 2, pp. 341-355.

Charles Ragin (1987). *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley: U of California Press.

Examples of Quantitative Research (others will be added and we will collectively select the articles for review this year)

We will probably review three articles each week, in teams of two or three.

Donohue & Levitt (2001) 'The Impact of Legalized Abortion on Crime', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 116, 2, pp. 379-420.

Laver, Michael and Kenneth Shepsle (1998), 'Events, Equilibria, and Government Survival', *AJPS*, 42:1, 28-54.

Laver, Michael and John Garry (2000), 'Estimating Policy Positions from Political Texts', *AJPS* 44.3, 619-34.

James Gibson and Amanda Gouws (1999), 'Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Attributions of Blame and the Struggle over Apartheid', *APSR* 93:3, pp.501-17.

George Tsebelis (1999), 'Veto Players and Law Production in Parliamentary Democracies: An Empirical Analysis', *APSR* 93:3, pp.591-608.

9-10. Presentations by the Researchers

A first chance to present the research ideas you have for your PhD.