

Social Sciences 13300
Social Sciences Inquiry III
Spring, 2015-2016

Instructor: Roberto Carlos (Ph.D. Candidate)
Time: 9:00-10:20am, Mondays and Wednesdays
Location: Pick Hall 222
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Office Hours: Wednesdays Noon-2pm or by appointment

I. Course Purpose

This course is designed to complete the Social Sciences Inquiry sequence. The major goal of the course will be to empower you to complete a research project worthy of serious scholarly consideration. To do that the course is designed to both review and introduce different empirical research methods employed by social scientists across several disciplines. We will discuss a whole host of issues that come up when attempting to put together a good research project. We will examine what goes into constructing and testing theories. We will examine what is expected of a good research design. We will examine what the trade-offs are when we choose one method over another. Finally, we will examine some of the biggest methodological mistakes people make when attempting to do good research. In order to do all of this we will look to specific empirical examples from our readings and discussions.

II. Course Requirements and Grading

1. Participation (20%): Three things go into this grade. The first thing you must do is show you did the readings prior to class by actively engaging in class discussion. If you do not speak up in class to demonstrate that you have read and comprehended the material I will not have any other recourse but to assume you did not read. You are expected to have read before class and engage with one another. Plan accordingly as some reading days are heavier than others. The second factor in your participation grade is the feedback you provide each other. You will be asked to work together in class to help facilitate discussion, failing to do so will count against you. Additionally, in weeks where you and your classmates are asked to present you will be asked to provide in class feed back to your colleagues. So be attentive when your comrades present their projects. Finally, attendance. Attendance in class is important for the participation grade; however, one absence during the quarter will be excused.

2. Short presentation of research design (10%): Starting in week 5 of the quarter you should be prepared to present a concise 5- minute presentation of your approved topic and research design. You are expected to be specific about your plan of action, including what evidence and research methods you are planning to use. We do not expect your project to be ready to go, or perfect from the start. The point of this exercise is to tell the class what issues you are having so we can help come up with possible solutions, or a fresh perspective. After each short presentation, we as a class will work to provide you with various ways in which we think your research design can deal with any issues you may be having. The point of the feedback is to provide you with constructive criticism to help you put together the best possible paper. Having said that, your presentation must show that you have spent time thinking about the project and that you did not put it together hastily.

3. Presentation of final project (20%): In the last three weeks of class you will present a 20- minute presentation which will consist of your findings, your relevant literature review, and the methods you used to help you arrive at your conclusion. You are welcome to talk about what you see as the importance of your project and its real-world implications. You are also free to set up your presentation however you like. In essence, this is about you sharpening your presentation and research skills. This means you will have to present your project in an interesting and thoughtful way (this includes visual aids, print outs, etc.). Additionally, this includes the structure of your project, and time management.

4. Final paper (50%): Your final paper is due by 5pm CST on Monday, June 6th, 2016. The paper should have a research question, a relevant literature review, a discussion section that details the data and methods used, and finally an interpretation of your findings. Your final paper should be no longer than 20 pages. The page limit includes all charts, graphs, footnotes, etc. For helpful information about the final paper please see chapter 22 in our textbook. You can also look to the following book: Booth, W., G. Colomb and J. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (University of Chicago Press: 1995).

There are no extensions to the final due date. Papers turned in at 5:01pm June 6th 2016 or later, will lose 10% per day until they are turned in. Please use margins no smaller than 1 inch, double spacing, and 12 pt standard font size for the main body of the paper.

III. Readings:

You should purchase the following textbook, which is available at the Seminary Co-op and online (it is abbreviated throughout this syllabus as “EPA”):

Empirical Political Analysis: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods (8th Edition) by Craig Leonard Brians, Lars Willnat, Jarol B. Manheim, and Richard C. Rich (Pearson Longman: 2010).

Note that while the chapters on some specific methods are not required reading, you should still read them if you think they might be relevant for your particular project. The rest of the readings will be available via Chalk or link.

IV. Topics and Reading Assignments

Week 1

(M) Introduction. No required reading.

(W) Research Process and Social Science Theory

- EPA: chapters 1 and 2

Week 2

(M) Overview: Causality, Inference, Methods

- King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, “Causality and Causal Inference” in *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton Univ. Press: 1994): pp. 75-114.
- Gerring, John, “Methods” in *Social Science Methodology* by J. Gerring (Cambridge University Press, 2001): pp. 200-229.
- New York Times Article (link is:
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/09/nyregion/09placebo.html?_r=2&nl=nyre)

(W) Concepts: Operationalization and Measurement

- EPA: chapters 5, 14, 15
- Albertus, Michael. “Measuring Land Reform” in *Autocracy and Redistribution: The Politics of Land Reform*. Book manuscript in press, pp. 161-185; Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3. I will post this on Chalk.

Week 3

(M) Research Design: Rival Hypotheses, Quasi-Experiments, and Sampling

- EPA: chapters 4, 7
- King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, “Determining What to Observe” in *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton University Press: 1994): pp. 115-149.

(W) Methods: Survey Research and Elite Interviewing

- EPA: chapters 8, 9, 21

Week 4

(M) Methods: Statistical Analysis

- EPA: chapters 16, 17

(W) Methods: Statistical Analysis

- EPA: chapter 18

- Gary King, "How Not to Lie with Statistics: Avoiding Common Mistakes in Quantitative Political Science." *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Aug., 1986), pp. 666-687.

Week 5

(M) Student presentations of research design (in class)

- EPA: chapter 3

(W) Student presentations of research design (in class)

- EPA: chapters 22 and 23

Week 6

(M) Student presentations of research design (in class)

(W) Causal Mechanisms

- Elster, Jon, "A plea for mechanisms" in *Social Mechanisms: an analytical approach to social theory* by Peter Hedström and Richard Swedberg (Cambridge UP: 1998): pp. 45-73
- Levitt, Steven and Stephen J. Dubner "Where Have All the Criminals Gone?" in *Freakonomics* (Harper: 2005): pp. 117-144.

Week 7

(M) Empirical Applications: Concept Measurement and Causal Inference in Practice

- Gerber, Alan and Donald P. Green "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 94, No. 3 (Sept., 2000), pp. 653-663.
- Sinclair, Betsy "Social Campaign Giving: Could You Please Take Out Your Checkbook?" in *The Social Citizen: Peer Networks and Political Behavior* (Chicago Press: 2012): pp. 43-77
- Correll, Joshua, Bernadette Park, Charles M. Judd and Bernd Wittenbrink, "The Police Officer's Dilemma." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 83, No. 6 (2002), pp. 1314-1329

(W) Student presentations of final project (in class)

Week 8

(M) Student presentations of final project (in class)

(W) Student presentations of final project (in class)

Week 9

(M) Student presentations of final project (in class)

(W) Student presentations of final project (in class)

Week 10

(M) No Class: Memorial Day Holiday

(W) Student presentations of final project (in class)