This graduate course provides an introduction to methodological issues faced in empirical work across the social sciences, with primary reference to political science. The issues addressed here are intended to apply to any empirical approach – qualitative or quantitative, experimental or observational – and to any sort of theory, whether descriptive or causal. That said, the emphasis of the course is primarily on causal inference (rather than description) and the explanation of classes of events (rather than particular events), since these are the preoccupations of social science today.

This is not a course in statistics. However, it will be helpful to have some familiarity with this important set of topics. If you have not already taken PO841, you might consider browsing through an introductory stats text.

Because of confusion in the past it is necessary to underline the following point. Although this course is conducted in prose (there is no software and very little math) it is manifestly not about qualitative methods. In my opinion, there are very few methodological issues that are exclusively qualitative or quantitative in nature. This course is about methodology. Period.

The course is designed primarily for graduate students. Qualified undergraduates may also be considered if circumstances warrant, but must receive the permission of the instructor. Students are advised to take this class in their first semester, as the ground covered here will be useful for substantive work in all subfields (except Political Theory). There are no pre-requisites, although the student is assumed to have a background in political science or in some other field of social science.

GRADES
Your grade for this class will be comprised of three components, equally weighted: (a) participation (serving as class discussant at one meeting, presenting your own proposal at another meeting, attendance, in-class quizzes, and general class discussion); (b) a final exam; and (c) an original research proposal. Instructions regarding the proposal are contained in a separate document, to be posted on the course web site.

ABSENCES
Since the class meets a limited number of times throughout the semester, only one excused absence will be granted. I shall overlook the first class meeting, which is largely organizational; further absences will be penalized. Late papers will also be penalized. No excused absences, makeups, extensions, or incompletes will be granted without documentation of medical, religious or personal reasons, or for official Boston University business. If you will be missing class for religious reasons you must inform me of these dates during the first week of class.
MINI-LECTURES
I will begin most class meetings with a mini-lecture. I will also try to conclude each meeting with a brief wrap-up of the “take-home” messages, along with a brief glance ahead to the readings for the following week. In any case, the lectures are intended to supplement, not replace, that week’s readings. Indeed, there is no way that I can present all the important material in lecture format. There is simply too much of it. Nor would it be helpful for me to spoon-feed the information to you. So, make sure that you do the reading carefully (don’t depend on me to synthesize it) and ask questions about subjects raised in the readings that you do not understand. I will endeavor to explain them, or direct you to more specialized readings.

CLASS PARTICIPATION
Whether this course is enlightening or not will depend primarily upon how students contribute to the process. I expect active participation from all students in every session – beyond the mandatory presentations. I will not lecture extensively. Nor do I intend to act as quiz-master, eliciting points. I will play this role if necessary, though I am hoping that the discussants will relieve me of this burden. To reiterate: you must participate regularly in order to get a good grade in this class. Shyness, or unfamiliarity with the English language, is no excuse. This is a talking profession. Yadayadayada. Please be attentive to standard rules of decorum: avoid dogmatism, respect others’ views, and try to move class discussion forward (pay attention to what others say and respond to the previous point).

DISCUSSANT
Each person will be responsible (singly or in tandem with someone else) for leading class discussion for one or two meetings. Your job is to raise questions, to correct mistakes (or at least offer your own opinion, when you have a different interpretation), and in general to ensure that everyone understands the issues raised by the readings for that week. In other words, you’re the instructor. I must emphasize that this does not let others off the hook for doing careful reading that week. No free-riding.

PRESENTING YOUR PROPOSAL IN CLASS
At the beginning of the semester you will sign up to present your proposal at a specific class meeting. Only one student will present at each class meeting so we need to space these presentations out over the course of the semester. The advantage of going early in the semester is that it will force you to get started and you will get our feedback at an early stage. The disadvantage, evidently, is that you will have less time to construct your proposal.

In any case, what you present to us is up to you. Keep in mind that the more finished this product is, the better, and more useful, our feedback will be. If you present only a paragraph then you’ll have to spend most of the time telling us more about your project and this will take away from more specific comments that you might receive from the class. Thus, it is in your interest to construct as complete a proposal as you can within the time constraints of the semester. The point to remember is that you will be graded only on the final product – what you turn in at the end of the semester. Thus, the presentation is entirely for your benefit. Use it wisely by preparing as good a proposal as you can and by listening carefully (and taking notes) on what members of the class have to say. I hope that the class will function like a dissertation-writing workshop (which I strongly advise you to create, once you reach that stage). I want us each to help each other. Note that I also usually present work-in-progress, so this is truly a community activity.
Please send everyone a copy of your proposal via email by noon one day before the day you are to present. We will critique, and praise, each proposal in class. Ideally, your written proposal will speak for itself, though you will have a chance, of course, to respond to comments and to expatiate on your ideas.

While the primary beneficiary of each of these class discussions will presumably be the writer of that day's proposal, I also expect this to be a learning experience for the rest of us. My own experience is that one learns as much from one's colleagues' successes and failures as one does from general reading about methodological principles or highly polished academic articles. So, the discussion of proposals is an integral part of the course. I hope that you will read each others' work carefully -- out of a sense of mutual obligation and as a model for things you might wish to explore (or avoid) in your own work.

**Final Exam**
The final exam will cover everything -- all required reading and all in-class discussion. (Many of the questions on the final will have been discussed in class.) It is a closed-book, closed-note test -- just you and the exam. I strongly encourage you to study in small groups for the final.

**Readings**
The reading for graduate courses is extensive; this course is no exception. As it is, we are barely scratching the surface of this vast subject matter. Each week's reading will probably take you more than one night to get through. Do not wait until the night before to start reading!

Note also that some of the readings are chosen for their heuristic value, not necessarily for their methodological rigor. Just because a book or article appears on this syllabus does not mean that it has received a seal of approval from the rabbinical council.

Most of the assigned readings are available for purchase or can be downloaded from the web. Others will be posted on the course site. Please let me know ASAP if you cannot obtain a reading so I can straighten things out. And please bring all required readings to class (or have them accessible on your laptop) so that we can refer to specific passages.

Additional readings on these and other subjects are contained in an on-line Bibliography posted at CQRM. Additional material to accompany SSM is available on-line at Cambridge University Press - [www.cambridge.org/gb/knowledge/isbn/item6566290/?site_locale=en_GB](http://www.cambridge.org/gb/knowledge/isbn/item6566290/?site_locale=en_GB).

**To Purchase**


**Recommended**

THIS COURSE AND YOUR GRADUATE EDUCATION
This course is one of a handful you will take at BU as part of your MA or PhD. It offers an opportunity to learn a lot about methodology. I have structured the course as best I can to facilitate this. However, how much you take away from this course is primarily up to you. Think of this course as an opportunity to learn, not simply a hoop that you must jump through. Think of me as a facilitator. It will be more fun that way, for me and for you.

Introduction (TBA)
Sign up for class presentations.

Readings:
Gerring, John. “Guidelines for the Proposal.” [Describes the writing assignment, due at the end of the semester. Posted on our site.]
Feel free to consult other papers and books on writing/publishing listed in the on-line bibliography as you craft your proposal.

Basics
In this section of the course, classes will be fairly structured. I will lecture from SSM and will solicit comments, questions, and hopefully some interaction as we go along.

General Framework (TBA)
Proposal:
Readings:

Description (TBA)
Proposal:
Readings:
Causation I (TBA)
Proposal:
Readings:

Causation II (TBA)
Proposal:
Readings:

Data Gathering (TBA)
Discussant:
Proposal:
Readings:
Gerring, John; Dino Christenson. 2014. *An Applied Guide to Social Science Methodology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 14, 18]

Expert Coding and Textual Analysis (TBA)
Discussant:
Proposal:
Readings:
Expert coding…
For other examples of large-scale coding projects see: Archigos, Comparative Constitutions Project, Correlates of War, Freedom House, Global Leadership Project, NELDA, Polity.
Archival/document-based Research…
Harrison, Hope. “Inside the SED Archives: A Researcher's Diary.” *CWIHP bulletin*.
Quantitative text analysis…
Software…

Experiments (TBA)
Discussant:
Proposal:
Readings:

Examples...

Natural Experiments (TBA)
Discussant:
Proposal:
Readings:
Dunning, Thad. 2012. Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Read all chapters except Part II, which you can skim]

Causal Inference: Debates (TBA)
Discussant:
Proposal:
Readings:
Gerring, John; Jason Seawright; Adam Glynn; Andrew Bennett. 2011. “Symposium: Perfecting Methodology or Methodological Perfectionism?,” Qualitative and Multi-Method Research: Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section on Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (Spring) 8-33.

Case Studies I (TBA)
Discussant:
Proposal:
Readings:
Case Studies II (TBA)

Discussant:
Proposal:
Readings:

Humphreys, Macartan; Allan Jacobs. [on process tracing, qual/quant evidence]

Examples...


Larger Issues

First draft of research proposal due (TBA)

Turn in your drafts by email attachment. I will try to return them to you with comments in a week.

History of, and Debates about, Political Science (TBA)

Discussant:
Proposal:
Readings:

History...

Browse back issues of the APSR, available on JSTOR or in hard-copy format in the library.

DSI versus RSI...


Multiple Methods ...
Bennett, Andrew, Bear Braumoeller. 2006. “Where the Model Frequently Meets the Road: Combining Formal, Statistical, and Case Study Methods.” Ms. [Should be on CQRM web site]

Interpretivism

More Debates (TBA)
Discussant:
Proposal:
Readings:
Political Science/Political Praxis, Reaching Consensus, Value-Neutrality,…
Is Truth/Consensus Possible?…
Tobarrok, Alex. 2005. “Why Most Published Research Findings are False.”

Broad-based Critiques, Jeremiads, Defenses…
Mr. Perestroika. 2000. “On the Globalization of the APSA and APSR: A Political Science Manifesto.” [The email that sparked the movement.]

Final Exam (TBA)

Final draft of research proposal due (TBA)
Turn in drafts by email attachment in Word format.

Addendum
The Craft of Political Science

Career advice...


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