1 Course Description

Why do citizens vote? Do Get-Out-the-Vote campaigns work to increase turnout? Does campaign spending increase a candidate’s likelihood of electoral success? Why are Democrats and Republicans becoming increasingly polarized? How well do Members of Congress represent the interests of their constituents? How effective was President Clinton’s welfare reform in alleviating poverty? Are high-quality schools enough to close the achievement gap? How do electoral rules affect the political representation of the poor? What are the consequences of immigration for social policy in the New Europe? Is economic development necessary for democratic governance? Does indiscriminate violence incite insurgent attacks? Why do some civil wars last longer than others? Can international laws protect civilians during military conflict?

This course is about how we answer important political and social science research questions, and introduces fundamental topics in research design and data analysis. Although the course material includes concepts that are relevant to both quantitative and qualitative research methods, this course emphasizes quantitative research methods and provides an introduction to basic statistical analysis. At the successful completion of the course, students will be well-prepared to conduct independent research, including senior honor theses.

N.B. This course meets Stanford’s General Education Requirements for Disciplinary Breadth in Mathematics (i.e., GER:DB- Math).
2 Requirements and Grading

Course requirements include four assignments (representing 70% of the final grade), and a final exam (30%).

A. Assignments (70%). There are four assignments for this course:

1. **Measuring Difficult Concepts**
   - Distributed 7 April, due 16 April.
   - 10%

2. **The Challenges of Observational Studies**
   - Distributed 21 April, due 30 April.
   - 15%

3. **Describing Variables and Making Rigorous Comparisons**
   - Distributed 5 May, due 14 May.
   - 15%

4. **Analyzing Complex Relationships**
   - Distributed 17 May, due 28 May.
   - 30%

Note:

All assignments will offer two options:

- **Option A** will present students with a series of questions based on current political science research, and classic social science examples. Students will be asked specific questions and offered the opportunity to evaluate secondary data sources and published analysis.

- **Option B** will help students begin work on their honors thesis projects. Students will have the opportunity to develop and analyze their own data-sets, and to establish some preliminary support for their motivating intuition.

Assignments should be submitted through the Coursework class website.

Extensions for assignments will not be granted, and late assignments will be penalized by 3% for each day an assignment is late.

Requests that a graded assignment be reviewed (beyond tabulation errors) must be made in writing, and must include a 2-3 paragraph discussion detailing the basis of the request.

B. Final Exam (30%). A final exam for this course will be held during the regular Spring quarter exam period (time and location TBA). Course participants will be asked to evaluate specific components of the research design and data analysis of a current political science article.

3 Discussion Sections

Each student should enroll in a discussion section, and attend weekly. Sections are designed to provide an applied analysis of important concepts covered in lecture and course materials, usually drawing on cutting-edge research, and to provide hands-on political analysis training that will be helpful in the preparation of assignments.
4 Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, 723-1067 TTY).

5 Books, Required, and Recommended Reading

This course draws heavily on the following two books:


Other books that frequently or substantially contribute to lecture and section material, and/or provide support for the assignments include:


All of these books are widely available, and are on reserve at Green Library. Other required readings are available through JSTOR, other on-line journal archives, or will be posted on the Coursework website.

**Please note:** Readings should be completed before class, in the order listed on the syllabus, and course participants should be prepared to discuss each book, article, or chapter. Recommended readings supplement lectures and sections, and while participants are not responsible for their content, they may find these readings especially helpful in the preparation of assignments and for greater understanding of course content.
6 Software

The second part of the course (beginning 26 April), and Assignments 3 and 4, will require that participants use Stata, a software package for statistical analysis that is widely used in political science research and graduate training. Stata is included in the Leland software package, for use in the Sweet Hall computer clusters and is also available for purchase by Stanford students through a campus-wide licensing agreement (refer to [https://www.stanford.edu/services/softwarelic/stata/order/index.html](https://www.stanford.edu/services/softwarelic/stata/order/index.html)). Course participants should note that the access to the software through the licensing agreement can take a few weeks; personal orders should be placed early in the quarter.

7 Course Outline

PART 1. Fundamentals of Research Design

29 Mar Introduction: Puzzle-based Social Science Research

Recommended Reading


31 Mar Evaluating Causal Arguments


Recommended Readings

1 Apr  SECTION: What is the Relationship between Economic Development and Democracy?


5 Apr  Concept Formation and Measurement 1


Recommended Readings


7 Apr  Concept Formation and Measurement 2

Guest lecture: Professor Paul Sniderman

*Note. Read only section A in preparation for our class meeting; sections B and C provide the basis of Assignment 1 (Option A).*

A. Measuring Racial Prejudice


Recommended Readings

B. Measuring Democracy


C. Measuring Power


8 Apr SECTION: How well do Members of Congress Represent the Interests of their Constituents? (Measuring Democratic Responsiveness)


12 Apr Experiments

Guest lecture: Professor Jim Fearon


Recommended Readings


14 Apr Observational Studies 1: Selecting Cases, Sampling

- Skocpol, Theda (1979). “Chapter 1. Explaining Social Revolutions: Alternatives to Existing Theories,” in *States and Social Revolutions*. Cambridge UP.
Recommended Readings


15 Apr  SECTION: *Do Get-Out-the-Vote Campaigns Work?*


16 Apr  **Assignment #1 – Measuring Difficult Concepts – due by 5pm.**

19 Apr  **Observational Studies 2: Confounding Variables**


21 Apr  **Policy Evaluation and Intervention-Based Research**


22 Apr  SECTION: *Are High-Quality Schools Enough to Close the Achievement Gap?*


PART 2. An Introduction to Data Analysis

26 Apr  **Quick Math Refresher**

28 Apr  **Describing Variables**


29 Apr  **SECTION: Getting Started in Stata**

- Pollock, “Chapter 1. Introduction to Stata ” and “Chapter 2. Descriptive Statistics,” in *A Stata Companion to Political Analysis*, pp. 5-41.

30 Apr  **Assignment #2 – The Challenges of Observational Studies – due by 5pm.**

3 May  **Making Comparisons**

Guest lecture: Professor Jonathan Wand

- Wand, Jonathan (2010). TBA.

**Recommended Readings**


5 May  **Inference: Generalizing Beyond Your Data**


**Recommended Readings**


6 May  **SECTION: Do Presidents “Win” More Often on Foreign Policy Issues?**

10 May  **Effective Data Visualization**  
Guest lecture: Professor Simon Jackman


**Recommended Readings**


12 May  **Analyzing Complex Relationships: An Introduction to Regression**


**Recommended Readings**


13 May  **SECTION: Regression Analysis in Stata**


14 May  **Assignment #3 – Describing Variables and Making Rigorous Comparisons – due by 5pm.**

17 May  **Regression with Indicator Variables and Interaction Terms**

Recommended Readings


19 May **Multivariate Regression 1**

Guest lecture: Professor Phillip Lipsy


20 May **SECTION: How do neighborhoods affect individuals’ voting decisions?**


24 May **Multivariate Regression 2**


Recommended Readings


PART 3. Integrating Research Design and Data Analysis

26 May **Does Indiscriminate Violence Incite Insurgent Attacks?**


27 May **SECTION: Review Session 1 – Key Concepts in Data Analysis**

28 May **Assignment #4 – Analyzing Complex Relationships – due by 5pm.**

31 May **Memorial Day**
2 Jun  Does Increasing Campaign Spending Improve Candidates’ Chances of Electoral Success?


3 June  SECTION: *Review Session 2 – Key Concepts in Research Design*