

Political Science 349/449: Political Science Research Methods

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Kelly M. McMann
Case Western Reserve University
Department of Political Science
Office Address: 218 Mather House

Email Address: kelly.mcmann@case.edu
Phone Number: 216-368-5565
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30 to 2:30 pm
and by appointment

How do political scientists investigate puzzles and defend their conclusions? This course illuminates this question by examining approaches that researchers use to understand political events and processes. In doing so, the course provides students with skills—such as the ability to evaluate and conduct research—that are helpful to completing capstones, theses, and dissertations and succeeding in a variety of careers. Students will learn and apply key techniques, including hypothesis construction, operationalization of concepts, measurement, sampling and probability, causal inference, and the logic of controls. They will use these techniques to develop a research question, conduct a literature review, and craft a research proposal. By the end of the semester undergraduates and graduate students will have a proposal that can be used as the foundation for a capstone, thesis, or dissertation prospectus, respectively. This proposal can also serve as part of a grant application, particularly for those interested in original data collection.

Course Materials

Books and Articles: The book *Political Science Research Methods* (9th edition) is available for purchase at the bookstore. Obtain the correct edition. Other course materials are available on Canvas under Course Documents, unless otherwise noted with the citations. *Political Science Research Methods* provides basic descriptions of the techniques we will be using in class and some examples of their application. Chapters from other methodological texts, such as *Case Study Research* and *Protecting Study Volunteers in Research*, will augment these descriptions. Manuscripts and publications by the instructor and other researchers and sample assignments from a past student will provide examples of applying these techniques. Paper or electronic copies of readings should be brought to class the days they are assigned.

News: Students are strongly encouraged to follow national and world news in part because awareness of political events and trends can help students develop research questions. These sources offer high quality coverage:

- *The New York Times* can be accessed for free by CWRU students by following the instructions at <https://researchguides.case.edu/NYT>
- *The Economist* can be accessed for free by CWRU students by selecting *The Economist* at <https://researchguides.case.edu/az.php?a=e>
- National Public Radio (WKSU 89.7 FM) broadcasts brief news updates at the top of the hour and news analyses throughout the day. See www.wksu.org for the schedule, recordings, and podcasts.

Canvas: Students will post assignments on Canvas. Under Discussions, select the appropriate assignment and follow the instructions there.

Course Requirements

Project: Students will work on their own projects during the semester so that they can practice using techniques they learn and so that they will be better prepared to begin a capstone, thesis, or dissertation. The project consists of the following assignments. To turn in each assignment, post the file on Canvas before the start of class on the day it is due or, in the case of the final proposal, by the listed deadline. Bring a paper or an electronic copy with you to class as we will often work on them.

Research Topic (August 30) Students should write a one-paragraph description of a political research topic that they may want to study during this semester and in the future. Proposing more than one is fine, but each should be described in its own paragraph. To develop a topic, students should draw on their knowledge of national and world affairs from the media, think about their interests, and review their notes and readings from previous classes. These courses may include those outside of the discipline, such as history or psychology, as other fields also bring to light political concerns. Research does not need to be conducted to select a topic. Only a research topic, not a research question, is required. Grading of topic descriptions will be based on the detail provided and the quality of writing.

Research Question (September 6) Students should write one political science research question, based on their research interests; their reading of reviews of the field, subfield, and research topics; and class readings and exercises about question development. Students should be interested enough in the question to make it the focus of their projects for this course. Students will be able to adapt it over the next few weeks.

Literature Review (September 20)—The literature review should explain how answering the research question will help reduce weaknesses in existing knowledge about the topic, should include a single-spaced works cited, and should otherwise be four to five double-spaced pages long. Grading will be based on the extent to which the review makes a compelling case that answering the research question will help reduce weaknesses, represents progress conducting research on the question, is well written, and meets the criteria described in the Literature Review Writing Guidelines.

Experimental Design (October 16)—In approximately three double-spaced pages, each student should state his or her research question and hypothesis and propose an experiment or field experiment that will test the hypothesis. The experiment must be ethical. Grading will be based on the extent to which the description effectively applies this design approach, represents progress in thinking about the research project, is well written, and meets the criteria described in the Experimental Design Writing Guidelines.

Case Study Design (November 1)—In three to five double-spaced pages, each student should state his or her research question and hypothesis, including the causal mechanism, and propose a case study design, specifically a most-similar most-different design, to test the hypothesis, including the causal mechanism. Grading will be based on the extent to which the description effectively applies this design approach, represents progress in thinking about the research project, is well written, and meets those additional criteria described in the Case Study Writing Guidelines.

Large-N Cross-Case Design (November 15)—In approximately three double-spaced pages, each student should state his or her research question and hypothesis and propose a large-n cross-case study to test the hypothesis. Grading will be based on the extent to which the description effectively applies this design approach, represents progress in thinking about the research project, is well written, and meets those additional criteria described in the Large-N Cross-Case Writing Guidelines.

First Version of Proposal (November 29)—**Undergraduates** should submit an 11- to 12-page double-spaced research proposal that includes two designs. **Graduate students** should submit a 14- to 15-page double-spaced research proposal that includes three designs. All proposals should draw on the literature reviews and design descriptions already written. In selecting designs students should consider which would be more feasible for a capstone, thesis, or dissertation. Grading will be based on the extent to which the proposal makes a compelling case for the research question and the designs, improves upon the earlier versions, is well written, and meets those additional criteria described in the Proposal Writing Guidelines.

Presentation of Work in Progress (December 4 or December 6) Each student will give a four-minute oral overview of his/her/their proposal, keeping in mind that classmates will have read it in advance or be familiar with all or parts of it. Grading will be based on the extent to which the presentation makes a compelling case for the research question and the designs, the presentation is clear and engaging, and the presentation meet those additional criteria described in the Presentation Guidelines.

Final Proposal (Monday, December 11, 4:50 pm) For the final proposal, students should follow the instructions for the first version and incorporate useful suggestions from classmates and the instructor so that its quality improves. Grading will be based on the extent to which the proposal makes a compelling case for the research question and the designs, is an improvement upon the first version, is well written, and meets those additional criteria described in the Proposal Writing Guidelines.

All written work should be carefully structured and grammatically correct. Computers can be used to check spelling and grammar and to search for sources, but not for other tasks, including, but not limited to, generating research questions, outline content, or text content. To avoid plagiarism of both published and classmates' work, students should review "Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Recognize and Avoid It," available on Canvas. Cases of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be investigated by university judicial bodies.

Citations should be in a standard format of the student's choosing. Either footnotes or parenthetical citations may be used.

Participation: The focus of each class will be on discussion. Students are expected to actively participate in discussion and exercises, and to thoughtfully evaluate their classmates' work. Readings should be completed by the day they are listed on the syllabus. Students are encouraged to take notes on the readings in order to be prepared to use the materials in class. Paper or electronic copies of readings should be brought to class the days they are assigned. Each student will provide written and oral comments on three or four classmates' literature reviews, experimental designs, case study designs, and large-n designs and, depending on class size, four to five classmates' first versions of proposals and presentations and oral comments on four to five additional presentations. Students will provide comments using the appropriate Feedback Guidelines on Canvas by the deadlines listed in the following Course Schedule and Readings. Grading of comments will be based on the detail provided. Because participation is critical to understanding the material, students are expected to attend all classes. Except under extraordinary circumstances—including COVID-19 illness, quarantine, or isolation—absenteeism will negatively affect students' final grades. If you must quarantine or isolate for COVID-19, please request notes from a classmate.

Class participation, attendance, and evaluation of classmates' work will constitute 15 percent of the course grade, the research topic description and research question will together count for five percent, the final proposal for 20 percent, and each of the other six assignments as 10 percent. Students will lose a half a grade on any assignment for each day it is late, except when experiencing extraordinary circumstances. Not completing an assignment will negatively affect a student's final grade.

Course Schedule and Readings

I. Introduction to Research Methods and Course—Is political science a science?

August 28

II. Question Development—What makes for an effective research question?

August 30

READ: Janet Buttolph Johnson, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. *Political Science Research Methods*. 9th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2020. Read pages 1-2, bottom of 4 to 5, two sample study summaries of your choice from pages 5-22, 49-53.

DUE: Research Topic

September 4—NO CLASS

READ: Reviews of the field, subfield, and research topics that are relevant to your own research question and that are included in the sources below. Unless otherwise noted, the following reviews are available in hardcopy on reserve at Kelvin Smith circulation desk. The instructor will suggest for each student additional reviews or places to search for them by email.

The Oxford Handbook of Politics of Development. eds. Carol Lancaster and Nicolas van de Walle (New York: Oxford, 2018).

The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior. eds. Russell J. Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (New York: Oxford, 2007).

The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics. eds. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (New York: Oxford, 2007).

The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions. eds. R.A.W. Rhodes, Sarah A. Binder, and Bert A. Rockman (New York: Oxford, 2006).

The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy. eds. Barry R. Weingast and Donald Wittman (New York: Oxford, 2006). This handbook is broader than the name implies.

The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology. Eds. Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, Jack S. Levy (New York: Oxford, 2013).

The Oxford Handbook of International Relations. eds. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (New York: Oxford, 2008).

The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Groups. eds. L. Sandy Maisel and Jeffrey M. Berry (New York: Oxford, 2010).

The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior. ed. Jan E. Leighley (New York: Oxford, 2010).

The Oxford Handbook of Law and Politics. eds. Keith E. Whittington, et al. (New York: Oxford, 2008).

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Handbook of International Relations. eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).

Handbook of Party Politics. eds. Richard S. Katz and William J. Crotty (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006).

A Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization. eds. Thomas Janoski, et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Annual Review of Political Science. Obtain through Kelvin Smith Library's e-Journal portal, connecting with VPN software if you are off campus. Search for journal title first. It is worth examining the table of contents for the last two decades.

World Politics, a comparative politics and international relations journal, most issues have a review article at the end that examines the state of research on a particular topic. Obtain through Kelvin Smith Library's e-Journal portal, connecting with VPN software if you are off campus. Search for journal title first. This journal has a search engine and reviewing the tables of contents back through the 2000s may also be helpful.

Perspectives on Politics, a disciplinary journal, most issues have a review essay that examines the state of research on a particular topic. Obtain through Kelvin Smith Library's e-Journal portal, connecting with VPN software if you are off campus. Search for journal title first. This journal has a search engine and reviewing the table of contents back through 2003, when it began, may also be helpful.

Review of International Political Economy, a journal focused on international political economy, most issues have a review essay that examines the state of research of a particular topic. Obtain through Kelvin Smith Library's e-Journal portal, connecting with VPN software if you are off campus. Search for journal title first. This journal has a search engine and reviewing the tables of contents back through the 1994, when it began, may also be helpful.

September 6

READ: Scholarly works related to your research question

DUE: Research Question

III. Literature Review—How will my research reduce weaknesses in existing knowledge?

September 11

READ: *Political Science Research Methods*, 54-70.

Kelly M. McMann and Daniel J. Tisch. “Democracies Save Lives: How Lower Levels of Corruption Prevented COVID Deaths.” article manuscript. Read the entire manuscript, skim the appendix, and then re-read the introduction and the section Existing Research.

Sophia Peterson. Literature Review. POSC 357/457: Political Science Research Methods.

September 13—NO CLASS

READ: Scholarly works related to your research question.

IV. Research Ethics—How do I protect human subjects?

September 18

READ: Cynthia McGuire Dunn and Gary Chadwick. *Protecting Study Volunteers in Research: A Manual for Investigative Sites*. Read “Historical Perspective on Human Subject Research” 1-14, “Ethics and Federal Regulations” 15-27, “Study Process” 46-55, and “Behavioral Research Issues” 73-78.

Case Western Reserve University—Faculty Handbook: University Standards for Humans Research Projection. Read pages 1-6 to determine 1) under what conditions is a project subject to IRB review? 2) what characteristics of a project make it subject to which type of review? 3) what precautions can be taken to protect human subjects?

September 20—NO CLASS

DUE: Literature Review

September 25—Literature Review Feedback Workshop

READ: Designated Classmates’ Literature Reviews

DUE: Comments on Designated Classmates’ Literature Reviews

V. Hypothesis Construction—How do I make my ideas testable?

September 27

READ: *Political Science Research Methods*, 73-85.

Kelly M. McMann and Daniel J. Tisch. “Democracies Save Lives: How Lower Levels of Corruption Prevented COVID Deaths.” Reread the introduction and the section Argument.

VI. Operationalization—How do I measure concepts?

October 2

READ: *Political Science Research Methods*, 86-96.

Kelly M. McMann and Daniel J. Tisch. “Democracies Save Lives: How Lower Levels of Corruption Prevented COVID Deaths.” Reread the fifth paragraph of Existing Research, the section Data and Methods, Note A2 in the appendix, and ten variable descriptions of your choice from Table A1 in the appendix.

Continue reading scholarly works related to your research question, giving thought to how you could explore your question in an experiment.

VII. Designs and Data Collection—How do I design a study that demonstrates causality and produces generalizable findings? How do I obtain data for my concepts?

October 4

READ: *Political Science Research Methods*, 121-132, 149-164, 101-104, 108-117, 193-207.

VIII. Research Design—Experiments

October 9

READ: *Political Science Research Methods*, 124-127 (again), 169-174.

Elizabeth Levy Paluck and Donald Green. “Deference, Dissent, and Dispute Resolution: A Field Experiment on Mass Media Intervention in Rwanda.” *American Political Science Review*, 103 (4), 622-644.

October 11 Experimental Design Writing Workshop

DUE: Full or partial draft of experimental design and questions about completing the design. The draft does not need to be posted on Canvas. Instead students should bring their laptops with an electronic copy of the draft to class.

October 16 NO CLASS

DUE: Experimental Design

October 18—Experimental Design Feedback Workshop

READ: Designated Classmates’ Experimental Designs

DUE: Comments on Designated Classmates’ Experimental Designs

October 23 NO CLASS

IX. Research Design—Case Study

October 25

READ: John Gerring. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 2017. Read 26-46, 63-88.

Kelly M. McMann and Daniel J. Tisch. “Democracies Save Lives: How Lower Levels of Corruption Prevented COVID Deaths.” article manuscript. Reread the introduction, read Note A5 in the appendix, and reread from the bottom of page 30 to 37 about the case studies.

Sophia Peterson. Case Study Design. POSC 357/457: Political Science Research Methods.

October 30 Case Study Design Writing Workshop

DUE: Full or partial draft of case study design and questions about completing the design. The draft does not need to be posted on Canvas. Instead students should bring their laptops with an electronic copy of the draft to class.

November 1 NO CLASS

DUE: Case Study Design

November 6—Case Study Design Feedback Workshop

READ: Designated Classmates’ Case Study Designs

DUE: Comments on Designated Classmates’ Case Study Designs

X. Research Design—Large-N Cross-Case Studies

November 8

READ: *Political Science Research Methods*, 182-185.

Kelly M. McMann and Daniel J. Tisch. “Democracies Save Lives: How Lower Levels of Corruption Prevented COVID Deaths.” Reread the section Analysis up until the bottom of page 30 where the text about the case studies begins.

Sophia Peterson. Large-N Cross-Case Study. POSC 357/457: Political Science Research Methods.

November 13 Large-N Cross-Case Design Writing Workshop

DUE: Full or partial draft of large-n cross-case design and questions about completing the design. The draft does not need to be posted on Canvas. Instead students should bring their laptops with an electronic copy of the draft to class.

November 15 NO CLASS

DUE: Large-N Cross-Case Design

November 20—Large-N Cross-Case Study Design Feedback Workshop

READ: Designated Classmates' Large-N Cross-Case Designs

Sophia Peterson. Final Proposal. POSC 357/457: Political Science Research Methods.

DUE: Comments on Designated Classmates' Large-N Designs

November 22 NO CLASS

XI. Proposal Completion—Workshops and Consultations

November 27 Proposal Writing Workshop

DUE: Full draft of first version of proposal with questions about completing it. The draft does not need to be posted on Canvas. Instead students should bring their laptops with an electronic copy of the draft to class.

November 29

DUE: First Version of Proposal

December 4—Proposal Feedback Workshop

READ: Designated Classmates' First Versions of Proposals

DUE: Comments on Designated Classmates' First Versions of Proposals

DUE (designated students): Presentation of Work in Progress

December 6—Proposal Feedback Workshop

READ: Designated Classmates' First Versions of Proposals

DUE: Comments on Designated Classmates' First Versions of Proposals

DUE (designated students): Presentation of Work in Progress

December 7—Consultation with Instructor

Students will select a time after their proposal is workshopped to meet with the instructor.

DUE: Final Proposal posted by 4:50 pm, Monday, December 11