

POLS 7010: Research Methods in Political Science

Fall 2021

Dr. Shane P. Singh
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Course Webpage: UGA eLearning Commons

Class Meeting Time: Tuesdays, 3:55-6:40PM

Class Location: 101D Baldwin Hall

Goal of the Course: The goal of this course is to help you understand how we study politics and to provide guidance on conducting original political science research. The course will provide you with a general understanding of what science is and a foundation in the logic and practice of systematic political inquiry. In addition to discussing general questions about the philosophy of science, we will cover fundamental issues such as arriving at a research question, theory building, hypothesis development, variable measurement, identifying and dealing with confounding factors, and causality. The topics covered in this course are crucial to any research project, but they will not provide you with all the tools needed to conduct your own research. The other courses in the research methods sequence are thus an essential companion to this course. Having a solid understanding the issues discussed in this course is necessary (but not sufficient) for writing original research.

Required Readings:

Brady, Henry E., and David Collier. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. 2nd ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. (BC)

Kellstedt, Paul M., and Guy D. Whitten. 2018. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (KW)

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (KKV)

Putnam, Robert D. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Putnam)

Several journal articles, all of which are available online for free

Student Responsibilities and Grade Breakdown:

Readings: Students are required to do the readings for each class period ahead of time. Each week, students should write a short memo summarizing the readings for each class ahead of time. They should then refer to the memo during discussion.

Participation: As this is a graduate seminar, your participation is crucial and will count for 20% of your grade. Your involvement toward the end of the semester, when we will critique the research designs of students in the class, is particularly important.

Research Design and Presentation: The primary assignment of the course is a research design, which includes a research question, theory and literature review, hypotheses, variable operationalization and measurement, dependent and independent variables, and what your expected findings would be if you were to actually conduct the research. You will present your design toward the end of the semester. Each presenter will be assigned a discussant, who will be responsible for constructively critiquing the research design. Papers should be made available to the discussant ahead of time. Your role as a discussant will count towards your participation grade. Presenters may wish to incorporate the suggestions of the discussant and the rest of the audience into their final research design. The research design will count for 45% of your grade. Note that a one-page summary of your research design is due in class midway through the semester.

Exam: There will be one exam during the middle of the semester, which will count for 35% of your grade.

Grade Scale:

>=93%:	A
90-92.99%:	A-
87-89.99%:	B+
83-86.99%:	B
80-82.99%:	B-
77-79.99%:	C+
73-76.99%:	C
70-72.99%:	C-
60-69.99%:	D
<60%:	F

Late/Missed Assignments: Missed assignments will result in a zero without a university-approved medical excuse or family emergency. Students will be penalized for late assignments; 20% of the grade for each day late without a university-approved medical excuse or family emergency. Make-up exams can be arranged with the instructor with a university-approved medical excuse or family emergency.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources: If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services. UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>). If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>)

for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center. Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Academic Integrity: The academic honesty policy of the university is supplemented (not replaced) by an Honor Code which was adopted by the Student Government Association and approved by the University Council May 1, 1997, and provides: “I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others.” All students agree to abide by this code by signing the UGA Admissions Application.

Readings and Course Schedule: *The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

Readings with a “*” in front are optional

WEEK 1

August 24: Welcome and Introduction

The Edicts of Candler Hall

*Keohane, Robert O. 2009. Political Science as a Vocation. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42 (2): 359-363. (discusses the goals of political science, some difficulties associated with scientific political inquiry, and why one might want to be a political scientist)

*<http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/science-isnt-broken/> (an article on the scientific process that illustrates the dangers of doing it wrong and the great value of doing it right)

WEEK 2

August 31: The Scientific Study of Politics

KW, Chapter 1

KKV, Chapter 1

Putnam, Chapter 1 (an example of selecting and formulating a research agenda)

WEEK 3

September 7: Theory, Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables

KW, Chapter 2

Skim: Burlacu, Diana. 2020. Corruption and Ideological Voting. *British Journal of Political Science* 50 (2): 435-56. (a good comparative politics example with clear hypotheses and variables)

Skim: Cassese, Erin C. 2020. Straying from the Flock? A Look at How Americans' Gender and Religious Identities Cross-Pressure Partisanship. *Political Research Quarterly* 73 (1): 169-83. (a good American politics example with clear hypotheses and variables)

Skim: Fuhrmann, Matthew. 2009. Spreading Temptation: Proliferation and Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation Agreements. *International Security* 34 (1): 7-41. (a good international relations example with clear hypotheses and variables)

WEEK 4

September 14: Operationalization and Measurement

KW, Chapter 5 and pages 125-130 of Chapter 6

KKV, Chapter 5, pgs. 150-168 (a good discussion of measurement error)

Putnam, Chapter 3 (an example of operationalization and measurement)

*McDonald, Michael P., and Samuel L. Popkin. 2001. The Myth of the Vanishing Voter. *American Political Science Review* 95 (4): 963-974. (an example of how measurement decisions can affect substantive conclusions)

WEEK 5

September 21: Causality and Relationships between Variables

KW, Chapter 3

KKV, Chapter 3 (a good discussion of causality and the assumptions underlying the estimation of causal effects)

*BC, Chapters 10-14, start on page 201

*Keele, Luke. 2015. The Statistics of Causal Inference: A View from Political Methodology. *Political Analysis* 23 (3): 313-35. (an overview of the assumptions needed to give statistical estimates a causal interpretation)

*Muller, Edward N., and Mitchell A. Seligson. 1994. Civic Culture and Democracy: The Question of Causal Relationships. *American Political Science Review* 88 (3): 635-652. (the authors examine whether democracy causes attitudes, or vice versa)

WEEK 6

September 28: No Class (APSA Meetings in Seattle)

WEEK 7

October 5: Experimental and Observational Designs

KW, all of Chapter 4 but Section 4.4

Putnam, Chapter 4 (Putnam's theory testing chapter)

Skim: Gerber, Alan S, and Donald P. Green. 2000. The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment. *American Political Science Review* 94 (3): 653-663. (an example that will inform our discussion of internal validity)

WEEK 8

October 12: More on Bias in Causal Inferences

KKV, Chapter 4, pgs. 128-149 and Chapter 5, pgs. 168-182 (discusses bias potentially introduced by the selection of observations and the omission of variables).

Geddes, Barbara. 1990. How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics. *Political Analysis* 2 (1): 131-150. (illustrates the perils of selecting on the dependent variable)

Jacobsmeier, Matthew L., and Daniel C. Lewis. 2013. Barking up the Wrong Tree: Why Bo Didn't Fetch Many Votes for Barack Obama in 2012. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46 (1): 49-59. (illustrates the potential perils of omitting relevant variables)

WEEK 9

October 19: Sampling and Surveys

KW, Chapter 7

Franzen, Axel, and Dominikus Vogl. 2013. Acquiescence and the Willingness to Pay for Environmental Protection: A Comparison of the ISSP, WVS, and EVS. *Social Science Quarterly* 94 (3): 637-659. (an example of how the survey(s) you use can affect the answers you get)

*<https://www.economist.com/international/2018/05/26/plunging-response-rates-to-household-surveys-worry-policymakers> (an article on the perils of declining survey response rates)

WEEK 10

October 26: Exam

Upload one-page research design summaries to eLC

WEEK 11

November 2: Rethinking Social Inquiry

Sign up for research design presentation days; assign discussants

BC, Chapters 1-8 and Chapter 14

Wuffle, A. 2015. Uncle Wuffle's Reflections on Political Science Methodology. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 48 (1): 176-82. (a somewhat humorous list of comments on many of the debates in political science methodology)

WEEK 12

November 9: Doing Your Own Research and Journal Submissions

Form groups for next week's class.

Zigerell, L. J. 2013. Rookie Mistakes: Preemptive Comments on Graduate Student Empirical Research Manuscripts. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46 (1): 142-146. (advice on basic dos and don'ts to consider when writing a research paper)

*Weale, Albert. 2010. The Journal as a System of Norms. *British Journal of Political Science* 30 (3): 477-485. (an in depth discussion of the journal submission, review, and publication process)

WEEK 13

November 16: Dissecting and Critiquing Published Work

In today's class your group should come prepared to dissect and critique a published scholarly journal article that includes an empirical test of a theoretical prediction. You pick the article. It must be in political science, and the author(s) cannot be anyone currently employed by UGA unless you get his/her/their permission. You should do the following:

- Summarize the argument and findings of the article.
- Describe its sampling technique, data, measurement, variables, etc.
- Tell the class, based on everything we've learned to this point, what is wrong with this article? Be harsh.
- Tell the class, based on everything we've learned to this point, what is right with this article?

WEEK 14

November 23: Presentation and Discussion of Research Designs

WEEK 15

November 30: Presentation and Discussion of Research Designs

FINALS WEEK

December 15: Research design papers due by 5:00PM, uploaded to eLC