

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL

POLI 195-004
EXPERIMENTAL METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
FALL 2009

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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10.45am-12.15pm.

MEETING TIMES AND VENUE Class meets twice per week on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 75 minutes in Peabody Hall, room 218. Each class starts at 9.30am.

OVERVIEW This course is designed to provide an introduction to experimental methods in political science for undergraduate students. No prerequisite is required.
The emphasis of the course will be on several different styles of laboratory experiments, but field experiments (and briefly, survey experiments) will also be discussed. Experimental methods have become an increasingly important tool for political scientists. What are the potential strengths and weaknesses of different kinds of experiments relative to other research methods, such as surveys or statistical analysis of real-world data? What sorts of things can we

hope to learn from experiments? And what are some of the important methodological issues that must be considered in designing effective experimental tests of theories? During the course of the semester, we will address all of these questions. By the end of the semester, students should not only have read a broad selection from the experimental literatures in political science, but also gained specific insights into experimental design.

While the purpose of the course is primarily methodological, there is no better way to get a feel for how experiments work than to read experimental literatures from different fields. The experiments that we will discuss during the course of the semester will fall into three main categories: political economy (tests of theories of institutional structure, voting rules, and related topics); political psychology (exploring topics such as persuasion, political attitudes, and the processing of political information); and foundational issues (tests of the decision- and game-theoretic foundations that underlie most rational choice and formal work in political science). We will also engage in some in-class experiments as we read through the literature.

TEXTBOOKS

The textbooks for this class are:

- Morton, Rebecca and Kenneth Williams (2009) “From Nature to the Lab: Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality”, electronic access available on Blackboard.
- Kinder, Donald and Thomas Palfrey (1993) “Experimental Foundations of Political Science”, University of Michigan Press
- Friedman, Daniel and Shyam Sunder (1994) “Experimental Methods: A Primer for Economists”, Cambridge University Press
- Guala, Francesco (2005) “The methodology of Experimental Economics”, Cambridge University Press.

Papers and extra readings used in class will be posted on Blackboard.

GRADES

You will be graded in this course on the basis of several factors.

- o First, there will be three short exams which will constitute 60% of your grade (20% each). These are cumulative and will test concepts you should have learned from the assigned

readings and the lectures.

- In addition, you will be responsible for writing a paper (due the class before Thanksgiving) which will typically run about 10-15 pages in length and it will count for 30% of your grade. The paper consists of an original experimental design which must provide a detailed, and plausible, scheme for an experiment that address a research question of the student's choosing. Instead of writing an experimental design, you have the option to write a survey paper of at least 3 papers in a field of your choice. The survey paper should be both descriptive and evaluative of the papers you read.
- You will also be graded on class participation and evidence of reading material assigned in advance.

Summing up, grades will be computed on the following basis:

- Midterm exams 40% (20% each)
- Paper 30%
- Final Exam 20%
- Class Participation 10%

**CLASSROOM
CIVILITY**

Your behavior should respect your classmates desire to learn. Each lecture begins exactly on time. Coming late is disruptive no matter how quiet you are. Do not engage in side conversations during the lecture. Eating and drinking in class should be reduced to a minimum. It is not forbidden, but please make sure that you are not disturbing others with noise and enticing aromas. Dozing off in an early morning class is not a cardinal sin, but be sure not to make a spectacle of yourself. It is extremely disrespectful to do this in an ostentatious manner. Turn off all cell phones. If you have to leave a class early, inform your instructor in advance. It is very rude to simply walk out in the middle of a lecture. Repeated occurrence of such disruptions will be reflected in the final grade.

**CLASSROOM
ATTENDANCE**

Class attendance is mandatory and part of a student's grade. Absences may be excused only in the case of documented serious illness, family emergency, religious observance, or civic obligation. If you will miss class for religious observance or civic obligation, you must inform your instructor no later than the first week of class.

MAKEUPS

Make-up exams will not be available for students who fail to notify your instructor in advance of missing an examination, nor for students without an acceptable explanation. If you have a valid reason for a makeup exam, inform your instructor a.s.a.p. A valid reason is a medical emergency, a death or serious illness in the family, and, quite frankly, very little else. In all cases, you will be expected to bring in proof.

**STUDENT
ATHLETES**

If you are a student athlete, inform me a.s.a.p. of interferences with your commitments as an athlete (especially conflicts with exam dates). You will be expected to bring in a letter from the athletics department. The sooner you notify us, the better that we will be able to accommodate you.

**STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES**

Inform your instructor a.s.a.p. of special needs that you may have like larger printouts of quizzes and exams or extra time on an exam. You will be expected to bring in a letter from the center for students with disabilities. The sooner you notify us, the better that we will be able to accommodate you.

**ACADEMIC
INTEGRITY**

A fundamental tenet of all educational institutions is academic honesty; academic work depends upon respect for and acknowledgment of the work and ideas of others. Misrepresenting someone else's work as one's own is a serious offense in any academic setting and it will not be condoned.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for academic evaluation (e.g. papers, projects, examinations and assessments - whether online or in class); presenting, as one's own, the ideas, words or calculations of another for academic evaluation; doing unauthorized academic work for which another person will receive credit or be evaluated; using unauthorized aids in preparing work for evaluation (e.g. unauthorized formula sheets, unauthorized calculators, unauthorized programs or formulas loaded into your calculator, etc.); and presenting the same or substantially the same papers or projects in two or more courses without the explicit permission of the instructors involved.

A student who knowingly assists another student in committing an act of academic misconduct shall be equally accountable for the violation, and shall be subject to the sanctions and other remedies

described in The Student Code. Sanctions shall include, but are not limited to, a letter sent to the Dean of Students of the University; a grade of 0 on the assignment or exam; a grade of F for the course.

COURSE OUTLINE Topic 1: What is experimentation? What is not experimentation?

CLASS 1-2 (8/25, 27)

We will discuss the fundamentals of experimentation: manipulation, control, and random assignment and the variation in the use of these fundamentals across the discipline. Discussion of the difference between experiments and simulations. Importance of the design process in an experiment. Discussion of the concept of a “natural experiment” and the history of experimentation.

Reading Assignments:

- Druckman et al, 2006. “The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science” American Political Science Review, 100: 627-635.
- Morton, chapter 1
- Friedman, chapter 1
- Kinder, preface

CLASS 3-4 (9/1, 3)

Reading Assignments:

- Kinder, chapter 1 (43-96)
- Eldersveld: "Experimental Propaganda Techniques and Voting Behavior"
- Gerber and Green: "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout. A Field Experiment"

CLASS 5 (9/8)

We will discuss the differences between laboratory, field, and survey experiments and the different audiences for different types of experiments.

Reading Assignments:

- Morton, chapter 2-3
- McDermott, 2002. “Experimental Methodology in Political Science,” Political Analysis, 10(4): 325-342.
- Gerber and Green, 2003. “The underprovision of experiments in political science” in Annals of the American Academy of

Political and Social Science, 589: 94-112

Optional Readings:

- McDermott, 2002. "Experimental Methods in Political Science," Annual Review of Political Science, 5: 31-61.

Topic 2: Theory and Experiments

CLASS 6-7-8 (9/10, 15, 17)

Discussion of the differences between formal theory testing and psychological theory testing. Advantages of experiments over using naturally occurring data. Discussion of analogy to "structural estimation".

Reading Assignments:

- Morton, chapter 6, 7
- Guala, chapter 3, 4, 5
- Friedman, chapter 2,3
- Kinder, chapter 2

CLASS 9 (9/22)

Discussion of external validity.

Reading Assignments:

- Morton, chapter 4, 5
- Guala, chapter 7
- Lucas, 2003, "Theory-testing, generalization, and the problem of external validity" Sociological Theory, 21(3): 236-253
- Levitt and List, 2007, "Viewpoint: On the Generalizability of Lab Behaviour to the Field," Canadian Journal of Economics, 40(2): 347-370.
- Blanton and Jaccard, 2008. "Representing Versus Generalizing: Two Approaches to External Validity and Their Implications for the Study of Prejudice." Psychological Inquiry, 19(2): 99-105.

Topic 2: Experiments on Collective Action

CLASS 10 (9/24)

Reading Assignments:

- Kinder, chapter 3

CLASS 11 (9/29)

-IN CLASS EXPERIMENT-

CLASS 12 (10/1): 1ST MIDTERM EXAM

Topic 3: Theory Testing and Experiments in Political Science**CLASS 13-14 (10/6 ,8)**

First generation of formal theory in political science focused on predictions that came from cooperative game theory and social choice theory. Experimental analysis of these models helped lead to more applied formal theory using noncooperative game theory.

Reading Assignments:

- Kinder, chapter 4
- Manski, 1993. "Identification Problems in the Social Sciences", *Sociological Methodology*, 23: 1-56

CLASS 15-16 (10/13, 15)

Second generation of formal theory in political science focuses on predictions that come from more applied, noncooperative game theoretic models. Of particular interest are experiments on turnout and voting games.

Reading Assignments:

- Kinder, chapter 5
- Duffy and Tavits, 2008. "Beliefs and voting decisions: A test of the pivotal voter model", *American Journal of Political Science*, 52 (3): 603-618
- Morton and Williams, 1999. "Information Asymmetries and Simultaneous versus Sequential Voting." *American Political Science Review*, 93(1).
- Morton, 1993. "Incomplete Information and Ideological Explanations of Platform Divergence." *American Political Science Review*, 87: 382-392.

CLASS 17 (10/20)*Reading Assignments:*

- Eckel and Holt, 1989. "Strategic Voting in agenda controlled committee experiments" *American Economic Review*, 79: 763-773
- Plott and Levine, 1978, "A model of Agenda Influence on Committee decisions" *American Economic Review*, 68: 146-170

CLASS 18 (10/27)
-IN CLASS EXPERIMENT-

Topic 4: Running an experiment

CLASS 19-20-21 (10/29 -11/3, 5)

Reading Assignments:

- Guala, chapter 2
- Friedman, chapter 4, 5, 6

<p>CLASS 22 (11/10): 2ND MIDTERM EXAM</p>

Topic 5: Analyzing Experimental Data

CLASS 23-24 (11/12, 17)

Reading Assignments:

- Friedman, chapters 7-8

Topic 6: Political Psychology and Experiments

CLASS 25-26 (11/19, 24)

Discussion of experiments designed to evaluate theories arising out of political psychology and differences between these and those testing formal models.

Reading Assignments:

- Kinder, chapter 1 (97-116), chapter 2 (159-184), chapter 4 (313-332),
- Mutz, 2002. "Cross-Cutting Social Networks: Testing Democratic Theory in Practice." *American Political Science Review*, 96(1): 111-126.
- Redlawsk, 2002. "Hot Cognition or Cool Consideration? Testing the Effects on Motivated Reasoning on Political Decision Making." *Journal of Politics*, 64(4): 1021-1044.
- Quattrone and Tversky, 1988. "Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice," *American Political Science Review*, 82(3): 720-36.
- Huddy and Terkildsen, "Gender Stereotypes and the

Perception of Male and Female Candidates,” American Journal of Political Science, 37(1): 119-147.

PAPERS ARE DUE!!!

CLASS 27-28 (12/1, 3)

Discussion of experiments on framing.

Reading Assignments:

- Druckman, 2001. “On the Limits of Framing Effects: Who can Frame?” Journal of Politics, 63(4): 1041-1066.
- Nelson and Oxley, 1999. “Issue Framing Effects on Belief Importance and Opinion.” Journal of Politics 61(4): 1040-1067.
- Nelson and Kinder, 1996. “Issue Frames and Group-Centrism in American Public Opinion.” Journal of Politics 58(4): 1055-1078.
- Valentino, Hutchings, and White, 2002. “Cues that Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns.” American Political Science Review 96: 75-90.
- Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, and Valentino. 1994. “Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?” American Political Science Review 88: 829-838.

CLASS 29 (12/8):

Conclusive remarks. When We should engage in experimental research? What is the role of Experimental Political Science?

Reading Assignments:

- Guala, chapter 10.

12/17: FINAL EXAM