

Political Science 805: Experimental Research in Political Psychology

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Thursday 3:30 – 6:18
024 Derby Hall

Objectives

This course will endeavor to provide students with: (1) exposure to the diversity of research in politics that uses experimental methods; (2) a solid theoretical background in the scientific and philosophical foundations of modern experimental methods in psychology; and (3) the practical skills and folk wisdoms essential for conducting methodologically sound experiments in political psychology. We will consider basic issues in research design, methodologies both simple and esoteric, and ethical concerns for human subjects research. In addition to standard laboratory experiments, we will explore field, quasi-experimental, and survey/experimental methods. Numerous examples will be drawn from the social psychology and political science literatures.

Student Responsibilities

In the course of one quarter students will design an experiment, collect data, and write a research report. Aside from keeping up with the reading, students' primary responsibility will be the implementation of their experiment. Students will work in groups with common interests. Significant amounts of class time will be devoted to the design of the research project; sincere and energetic group participation is a must. Evaluation will be based on the final research report and presentation (65%), class participation (10%), and weekly assignments (25%).

Part of your class participation duties will entail serving as a discussion leader for a designated piece of research. During the first week of class, we will draw up a schedule of discussion leaders. Please submit to the class, one week in advance, a copy of the research you plan to discuss.

Readings

Required Books

Donald R. Kinder and Thomas R. Palfrey. 1993. *Experimental Foundations Of Political Science*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Andy Field and Graham Hole. 2003. *How to Design and Report Experiments*. Sage.

Both are available at SBX.

The required reading also includes a number of journal articles and book excerpts, available from the instructor

Class Format

Most weeks, especially early in the quarter, we will begin with a lecture from yours truly on Monday. Wednesdays will be devoted to class discussion of the readings and research projects. As the quarter goes by we will devote increasing attention to ongoing research projects.

Week 1: Introduction (January 5)

Andy P. Field and Graham Hole. "Before You Begin." *How to Design and Report Experiments*. Chap. 1.

Peter A. White. 1990. "Ideas about Causation in Philosophy and Psychology." *Psychological Bulletin* 108, 13-18.

Assignment: Describe your research area and topical interests

Week 2: Ethical experimentation (January 12)

Stanley Milgram. 1974. *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*.

Karen Markin. "Playing It Safe With Research Risk."
<http://chronicle.com/jobs/2005/08/2005081201c.htm>

Assignment: Meet with research team; complete CITI online training in research ethics:
<http://www.orrp.ohio-state.edu/humansubjects/education.cfm>

Week 3: Causal inference; deduction and induction (January 19)

Andy P. Field and Graham Hole. "Planning an Experiment." *How to Design and Report Experiments*. Chap. 2.

Donald R. Kinder and Thomas R. Palfrey. "On Behalf of an Experimental Political Science." *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*.

Karl Raimund Popper. 2002. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*.

Milton Lodge, Marco R. Steenbergen and Shawn Brau. 1995. "The Responsive Voter: Campaign Information and the Dynamics of Candidate Evaluation." *American Political Science Review* 89, 2309.

Assignment: As a team, propose at least one formal hypothesis and two additional hypotheses or research questions

Week 4: Experimental design (January 26)

Andy P. Field and Graham Hole. "Experimental Designs." *How to Design and Report Experiments*. Chap. 3.

Myron Rothbart and William Hallmark. 1988. "In-Group-Out-Group Differences in the Perceived Efficacy of Coercion and Conciliation in Resolving Social Conflict." *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 55, 2248-257.

Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters and Donald R. Kinder. "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-so-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs." *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*.

Assignment: Describe your research design, procedures, independent variables, and dependent variables in as much detail as possible

Week 5: Manipulations & measures (February 2)

Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters and Donald R. Kinder. "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-so-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs." *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*.

John A. Ferejohn, et al. "An Experimental Examination of Auction Mechanisms for Discrete Public Goods." *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*.

George A. Quattrone and Amos Tversky. "Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice." *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*.

Paul R. Brewer and Kimberly Gross. 2005. "Values, Framing, and Citizens' Thoughts about Policy Issues: Effects on Content and Quantity." *Political Psychology* 26, 6929.

Assignment: Submit complete IRB form to me and to the Office of Research Risks Protection

Week 6: Strengths and limitations of experiments (February 9)

Thomas E. Nelson, Rosalee A. Clawson and Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and its Effect on Tolerance." *American Political Science Review* 91, 3567-583.

Janet A. Weiss. "Coping with Complexity: An Experimental Study of Public Policy Decision-Making." *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*.

Assignment: Finalize materials, subject allocation

Week 7: Experiments outside of the laboratory (February 16)

Howard Schuman and Lawrence Bobo. "Survey-Based Experiments on White Racial Attitudes Toward Residential Integration." *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*.

Albert D. Cover and Bruce S. Brumberg. "Baby Books and Ballots: The Impact of Congressional Mail on Constituent Opinion." *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*.

Donald P. Green and Alan S. Gerber. 2003. "The Underprovision of Experiments in Political Science." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 589, 94-112.

John L. Sullivan, James E. Piereson and George E. Marcus. "Ideological Constraint in the Mass Public: A Methodological Critique and some New Findings." *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*.

Assignment: Draw up lab schedule

Week 8: Practical issues (February 23)

James L. Gibson. "A Sober Second Thought: An Experiment in Persuading Russians to Tolerate." *American Journal of Political Science* 42, 3819.

Nelson, Thomas E. "The Political Science Department Human Subject Pool: A Handbook for Experimenters and Instructors." Ohio State University. <http://psweb.sbs.ohio-state.edu/faculty/tnelson/ExperHandbook.pdf>

Assignment: Data collection

Week 9: Data analysis and experimental reports (March 2)

Andy P. Field and Graham Hole. "Descriptive Statistics; Inferential Statistics." *How to Design and Report Experiments*. Chap. 4-5.

Assignment: Data collection and analysis

Week 10: Presentations (March 9)

Andy P. Field and Graham Hole. "Writing Up Your Research." *How to Design and Report Experiments*. Chap. 9-14.

Critiquing Experiments

Throughout this course we will spend a considerable amount of time evaluating the scientific integrity and theoretical significance of a number of political psychology experiments. Each week we will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of one or more studies. You should prepare to chip in your two cents during every class meeting; during your moment in the sun as designated discussion leader, your contribution should run closer to a half-dollar. Below are listed some questions you should ask of every study, including your own, which will help guide our discussions. As the course moves along, you should think of adding your own questions to this list. During your leader week, you should be prepared not only to offer answers to these questions, but to help conduct your fellow seminar members through a discussion of these issues.

- Is the scientific problem, puzzle, or question the research addresses sufficiently important and intriguing?
- Are the theoretical constructs clearly demarcated, and logically connected to the puzzle?
- Is there a truly testable hypothesis that follows directly from the puzzle?
- Are the empirical variables properly operationalized?
- Is the unit of analysis appropriate to the puzzle?
- Does the research design incorporate the relevant variables without becoming needlessly complex? Are potentially important interactions accounted for?
- Is the experimental manipulation sufficiently strong, without engendering response biases?
- If this is a laboratory study, would it be possible to conduct a field, survey, or quasi-experimental replication?
- If this is a field or quasi-experiment, how is control over extraneous sources of variance accomplished?
- How well does the experimenter isolate the theoretical independent variable from potential confounds?
- Is a manipulation check appropriate? What about the measurement of process variables?
- How well do the design and methodology minimize potential threats to internal validity?
- How well does the researcher address, or at least answer, external validity concerns?
- **Above all, is the research design and methodology suitable for the theoretical question?**

Final Paper Assignment

This paper is a report on your experiment. You should cover the theoretical background, major hypotheses, research design and procedure, findings, and implications. Pay particular attention to the following issues:

- operationalization of theoretical concepts and constructs
- conversion of abstract hypothetical relations into a specific research design
- minimization of threats to internal validity
- potential confounds
- external validity issues
- ethical concerns, if any
- measurement validity and reliability
- pragmatic limitations

To cope adequately with these issues, you should give only minimal attention to the development of the theoretical problem. Say only enough to provide appropriate context for the design and procedures. Extensive data analysis is also unnecessary – basic descriptive findings in tabular form are fine. Again, this should be appropriate to the theoretical problem; don't present findings without setting them in context. Use the conclusion/implications section to discuss how you would improve upon and/or extend your design and procedures to address further theoretical issues or cope with particular threats or limitations, assuming you had the time and resources to do so.

You may consult with your research partners in the development of your report, but I want a separate, unique document from each person. Obviously, it is in your interest to avoid too much redundancy with the other papers. 12-14 double-spaced pages (not including title page, tables, or references), due on Wednesday, March 15, by midnight. Please number the pages, and do not exceed the page limits. I prefer to receive the papers as email attachments, however a hard copy is also acceptable.