

Research Design
STVN14
Lund University
Fall 2013
Lecture: Tuesdays 13-15
Group Seminars: Thursdays - 9-10am / 10.15-11.15am / 11.30-12.30pm

Instructor: Thomas Brambor
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Office hours: Tue 3.30-5.00pm

Credits: 15
Field of Study: Political Science
Language of Instruction: English
Level: Second cycle level, compulsory course within the Master's Program in Political Science.

Course Description

If graduate school only taught you one thing, it should be how to do scholarly research. You should be able to assess the state of the existing literature, identify interesting questions, formulate strategies on how to answer them, know the methodological tools with which to carry out the research, and be able to write up the results so they can contribute to the building of knowledge.

Using examples from comparative politics, international relations, and other sub-fields of political science, the course will introduce you to the current standards in research design. Concurrently with the course lectures, you will be tasked with formulating your own research question and develop your own research design on how to best answer that question. A research prospectus detailing your proposal on how to leverage quantitative and qualitative evidence to answer that question will be due at the end of the semester.

Requirements and Grading

Requirements

Some basic knowledge of statistics on the level of an introductory bachelor-level statistics or econometrics course is assumed. In addition, some assignments will require to collect some data and provide some summary statistics and a plot. I have no preference as to which program students use for these tasks, but recommend the following programs (in that order):

1. **Stata** - Frequently used in the social sciences. Program of choice in economics. Easy to set up and use. Not free, see here for the pricing options: <http://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/campus-gradplan/>
2. **R** - Excellent open-source (free!) solution, commonly used by academic statisticians. Fairly steep learning curve. Find an integrated user interface here: <http://www.rstudio.com/>, the program R itself can be downloaded at <http://cran.r-project.org/>. A good resource to start learning the language is here: <http://www.codeschool.com/courses/try-r>.
3. **SPSS, Excel**, Others: Feel free to use other software options that can do the things asked in the assignments. To my information, SPSS is installed and available on the computers at the computer labs.

Grading

1. Research prospectus (40%): A research prospectus of 5-7 page length (excluding bibliography, graphs, and tables) is due at the end of exam week. The research prospectus sums up the work done throughout the semester. It will be evaluated on the basis of the appropriateness of the research design and tools for answering your research question, and the quality of the rationale you provide for the use of the suggested quantitative and qualitative evidence and the inferences that could be drawn from their use. You will *not* be evaluated on the implementation or on the outcomes of the preliminary or exploratory theoretical and empirical research.
2. Assignments (30%): There will be 3 individual assignments. The individual assignments will develop specific parts of the overall research design, including (i) question and mechanism, (ii) qualitative evidence, and (iii) quantitative evidence. Details are provided in the syllabus below and during lecture. Members of your student group will be required to read them and comment on them on the course site.
3. Class participation (30%): This class will combine lectures and seminars. Participants are expected to have done the readings before class and be prepared to take part in the discussion during the session. Participation includes the comments on other student's projects posted on the blackboard website. Attendance is mandatory to lectures and seminars, but one absence per term will be excused without notice.

Policies

Academic Integrity

This course is based on the principles of academic integrity established by Lund University and agreed to by each student. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. All submitted work must be your own work and properly cited.

The full guidelines on academic integrity as well as a review of how or what to cite, can be found here: <http://www.lub.lu.se/en/student/academic-conduct.html/>

If you are bored (or really unsure) take a little quiz about plagiarism here: http://nile.lub.lu.se/loDownload/123/is_it_plagiarism.htm

Late Assignment Policy

Late assignments are detrimental to progress in the course, because earlier assignments build on later ones. In addition, the group work part is not helpful without completing the assignments on an ongoing basis. If assignments are not handed in, the university's policies on re-tests will be used (I strongly prefer not to do this!).

Formatting and Submission of Assignments

All assignments are to be submitted typed (double spaced, typeface Times New Roman, font size 12pt, 2.5cm margins, pages numbered). Reference sections do not count for the page limit. All submissions are to be submitted as PDF through the course website, with filenames consisting of:

LastName_FirstName_AssignmentNo.pdf, e.g. Jordan_Michael_01.pdf

Writing Center

The Academic Support Center provides help for students who need assistance with a particular writing assignment or anyone who just wants to improve his or her writing.

Academic Support Centre

+46 (0)46 222 3695

English.support@stu.lu.se

<http://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/current-students/academic-support-centre>

Other

Turn off or silence your cell phones prior to the beginning of class. I reserve the right to answer all calls (your's, not mine) received during class time and let your friends know what you are learning that day.

Feel free to use laptops in class. Respecting your classmates and myself, please refrain from using Facebook, shopping, sites or other random distractions during class.

Lecture slides will not be made available on the course website. I believe that learning and understanding is better served when you need to aggregate and structure your notes yourself.

I am most easily reached via email under thomas.brambor@svet.lu.se. I will try to respond within 24h of the email, however, may take up to 48h. Please consider these response times when asking about assignments etc.

Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

Books

There is only one required book for the class, which will be available at the Lund Bookstore or from other online vendors of your choosing:

G. King, R. O. Keohane, and S. Verba. *Designing social inquiry: scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton University Press, 1994 [hereafter KKV]

If you prefer an introduction to research design written in Swedish, a book by Jan Teorell and Torsten Svensson comes highly recommended. Note, however, that the course readings are based on KKV:

Jan Teorell and Torsten Svensson. *Att fråga och att svara: samhällsvetenskaplig metod*. Liber, 2007

Additional readings are listed below. All course readings (except full books due to copyright restrictions) will be provided on the course website. Throughout the course, additional readings, recommended material, information on assignments etc. will be posted on the class website as well.

You are expected to do all reading in advance, as assigned on the reading list and class website. Failure to do so will hamper your ability to understand the lectures, perform well on assignments, and may reflect negatively on your participation grade.

NOTE: Readings marked with a star (*) are recommended and can serve as additional reading for students interested in the topic.

Week 1: Course Introduction, Vocabulary, Basics. The Science of Political Science (Nov 5)

KKV, Chapter 1 (31p)

B. Geddes. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. University of Michigan Press, 2003 - Chapter 1

Background on the Philosophy of Science: Paul Diesing. *How Does Social Science Work?: Reflections on Practice*. University of Pittsburgh Pre, 1992 - p.3-74 (71p)

* Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune. *The logic of comparative social inquiry*. Wiley-Interscience, 1970

On your own: Before the Thursday seminar, think about some substantive topics that are of interest to you. If you have not done so in the past, start to familiarize yourself and examine the state of the literature in the field. Generate a few questions that you could imagine asking in a research project.

Meet with your group. Meet with your assigned group to discuss the potential research questions you have thought about. Give each other critical feedback!

Week 2: Question Selection and Research Design (Nov 12)

KKV, Chapter 2 (41p)

Joshua D. Angrist and Jorn-Steffen Pischke. *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion*. Princeton University Press, December 2008 - chapter 1 (7p)

B. Geddes. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. University of Michigan Press, 2003 - p. 27 - 35, chapter 2

D. Laitin. Comparative politics: The state of the subdiscipline. In *State of the Discipline*, pages 630–659. Norton, New York, 2002 (44p)

T. S Kuhn. *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press Chicago, 1970 - pp. 1-51, 111-135. (75p)

On your own: Review the initial questions you formulated last week and choose the most promising and interesting one. Abstract from the original question and begin to formulate a causal theoretical claim. Apply the standards of evaluating causality discussed in lecture.

Meet with your group. Convince your group that your proposed theory is a "good theory". Address the doubts of your peers.

Week 3: Tutorial with Instructors on Developing Student Research Questions

Important : There will be no formal class meeting in Week 3. Students will sign up for 20min one-on-one consultations in which instructors will be present to help develop student research questions. You should come to the meeting with one or more proposed research question(s) that you think could satisfy Assignment 1 (see below). In preparation for that meeting, students should consult the memo distributed in class providing research proposal guidelines. In addition, students should read the short guides on how to write as well the sample research proposals listed below.

Assignment 1 (Due Saturday, Nov 23, at 2pm.): Choose a research question from a theory that (a) you read in another political science course or are interested to pursue in your master's thesis; (b) you think is important; (c) you think is inadequate in explaining variance; and (d) you believe there are (or it is possible to create) quantitative data in which to explore the theory and your intuition for its improvement. Prepare a brief (1-2 pages) written memo of the research question. Post it to the class discussion board on the course website (by the due date of the assignment) AND hand it in through the assignment function on the course website.

Assignment - Online comment (Due Monday, Nov 25, at 2pm): On the online discussion board for your group, comment on the memos your group members have posted. These comments should be constructive and concise.

Meet with your group. Meet with your group to discuss each other's research questions in turn and review the comments you each posted online.

How to write:

George Orwell. *Politics and the english language*. 1945 (6p)

Barry Weingast. *Structuring your papers (caltech rules)*. 1995 (2p)

Adam Przeworski and Frank Salomon. The art of writing proposals: Some candid suggestions for applicants to social science research council competitions. *Social Science Research Council*, 1995 (4p)

Sample Research Proposals

Bäck, Hanna and Davidson, Johan. Ideological Positions of Government Ministers (7p)

Björkdahl, Annika. Gender-Just Peace and Transitional Justice (8p)

Knotz, Carlo and Nelson, Moira. Quantifying Workfare: Constructing a Dataset on Social Benefit Conditionality (5p)

Lindvall, Johannes. ERC Starting Grant - The reform capacity of governments (5p)

Teorell, Jan. Swedish Electoral Corruption in Historical-Comparative Perspective (8p)

Additional Readings: This week is kept intentionally light on reading in order to allow you to formulate an appropriate research question. The extra time should be used to familiarize yourself with the literature related to your chosen question.

Week 4: Causation and Causal Inference (Nov 26)

This week has a substantial amount of reading. For parts B to C don't get bogged down by the methodological challenge but instead focus on understanding the conceptual advances (rather than the substantive points) the author's present. The examples will be used as examples in the lecture. Think about whether your research question would allow for similar investigations.

A. Theory

KKV, Chapters 3–4 (75p)

Stephen L. Morgan and Christopher Winship. *Counterfactuals and Causal Inference: Methods and Principles for Social Research*. Cambridge University Press, July 2007 - chapters 1 & 2

* John Stuart Mill. *John Stuart Mill's philosophy of scientific method*. Hafner, 1950 - chapters V-VIII

* Paul W. Holland. Statistics and causal inference. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 81(396):945–960, 1986

B. Design and methods

Leonard Wantchekon. Clientelism and voting behavior: Evidence from a field experiment in benin. *World Politics*, 55(3):399–422, April 2003 (24p)

B. A. Olken. Monitoring corruption: Evidence from a field experiment in indonesia. *Journal of Political Economy*, 115(2), 2007

* J. Habyarimana, M. Humphreys, D. Posner, and J. Weinstein. Why does ethnic diversity undermine public goods provision? *American Political Science Review*, 101(04):709–725, 2007

C. Observational data and methods

Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson. The colonial origins of comparative development: An empirical investigation. *The American Economic Review*, 91(5):1369–1401, December 2001 (33p)

* Kenneth Scheve and David Stasavage. The conscription of wealth: Mass warfare and the demand for progressive taxation. *International Organization*, 64(04):529–561, 2010

D. Natural Experiments

Arindrajit Dube, Oeindrila Dube, and Omar García-Ponce. Cross-border spillover: U.S. gun laws and violence in Mexico. *American Political Science Review*, 107(03):397–417, 2013

Daniel N. Posner. The political salience of cultural difference: Why chews and tum-bukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi. *American Political Science Review*, 98(04):529–545, 2004

* Claudio Ferraz and Frederico Finan. Exposing corrupt politicians: The effects of Brazil's publicly released audits on electoral outcomes. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 123(2):703–745, May 2008 (43p)

* Andrew C. Eggers and Jens Hainmueller. MPs for sale? Returns to office in postwar British politics. *The American Political Science Review*, 103(4):513–533, November 2009

Week 5: Case study research (Dec 3)

Assignment 2 - (Due Saturday, Dec 7, at 2pm.):

Read about a particular case (or a small set of cases) that is (or are) an instantiation (or are instantiations) of your motivating intuition. Drawing on books, articles, archives, newspapers, biographies, etc., write an up to three-page narrative (conscious of the narrative style in Weingast's chapter) in a way that reveals your conjecture about the mechanism at work and demonstrates to the reader the inadequacy of previous theorizing about the phenomenon that you have highlighted.

Post your case study to the class discussion board on the course website (by the due date of the assignment) AND hand it in through the assignment function on the course website.

Assignment - Online comment (Due Monday, Dec 9, at 2pm): On the online discussion board for your group, comment on the case studies your group members have posted. These comments should be constructive and concise.

Meet with your group. In your group, your narrative will be presented by a partner, who will emphasize the following features of your narrative: Who are the key actors? What are their goals? Which strategies are available to them? What are their beliefs about the state of the world? Especially, what mechanism structures their interactions?

A. Doing Case Studies

John Gerring. What is a case study and what is it good for? *American Political Science Review*, 98(02):341–354, 2004 (14p)

R. H. Bates, A. Greif, M. Levi, J. L. Rosenthal, and B. R. Weingast. *Analytic Narratives*. Princeton University Press, 1998 - Introduction (pp. 10-22) (p13) and Weingast's "Political Stability and Civil War: Institutions, Commitment, and American Democracy" (pp. 148-193). (p59)

Barbara Geddes. How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics. *Political Analysis*, 2(1):131–150, January 1990

Miriam Golden. Single country studies: What can we learn? 2005

* Robert D. Putnam, C. Randall Henning, and Richard N. Cooper. The bonn summit of 1978: A case study in coordination. *Can Nations Cooperate?*, 1989

* Robert H. Bates. *Markets and states in tropical Africa : the political basis of agricultural policies*. California series on social choice and political economy. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1981 - Excellent example of case-study research examining agrarian policies in Africa.

B. Additional Examples of Case Studies [Choose at least one to read]

Peter Alexis Gourevitch. The reemergence of "Peripheral nationalisms": Some comparative speculations on the spatial distribution of political leadership and economic growth. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 21(3):303–322, July 1979

Ellis Goldberg, Erik Wibbels, and Eric Mvukiyehe. Lessons from strange cases. *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(4/5):477–514, 2008

Robert Henry Cox. The social construction of an imperative. *World politics*, 53(3):463–98, 2001

Barbara Geddes. A game theoretic model of reform in latin american democracies. *The American Political Science Review*, 85(2):371–392, June 1991

Week 6: Mapping Theory to Data: Measurement and Identification (Dec 10)

Assignment 3 - Part 1: Build a data set that would produce some statistical test of the theory or an observable implication of your own theory.

Meet with your group. Consider the challenges of establishing a causal relationship in your research. To your group, present an identification strategy based on a plausible field or natural experiment. You do not need to report details of specific cases (i.e., the proper nouns), but should outline a plausible scenario in which you could evaluate the implications of your motivating intuition.

KKV, Chapter 5–6. (80p)

Robert Adcock and David Collier. Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research. *The American Political Science Review*, 95(3):529–546, September 2001

P. F. Lazarsfeld and A. H. Barton. Qualitative measurement in the social sciences: classification, typologies, and indices. In *The Policy Sciences: Recent Developments in Scope and Method*, pages 155–192. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1951 (38p)

Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi. *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Material Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2000 - chapter 1 (pp.13-76)

Week 7: Statistical Examination of Student Hypotheses (Dec 17)

Sandra Halperin. *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012 - chapter 14 & 15

Assignment 3 - Part 2 (Due Saturday, Dec 21, at 2pm): Use the data for your project collected last week. Do some descriptive statistics that show the plausibility of your amendment to the reigning theory. Your analysis should focus on statistical and graphical descriptions of the dependent, and principal independent variables; and an analysis of basic correlations. Presentation of regression results is optional, and will only be allowed once these basic descriptive statistics have been fully explored. Prepare a brief (up to 3 pages) written memo of your findings. Post the memo to the group discussion board on the course website AND send the memo to the instructor through the course website.

Assignment - Online comment (Due Friday, Dec 27, at 5pm): On the online discussion board for your group, comment on the memos your group members have posted. These comments should be constructive and concise.

Meet with your group. Prepare a 10-minute presentation describing your statistical exploits to present to your group. Discuss the comments posted on the discussion forum.

Winter Break

Week 8: Qualitative meets Quantitative (Jan 7)

Michael Coppedge. Thickening thin concepts and theories: Combining large n and small in comparative politics. *Comparative Politics*, 31(4):465–476, July 1999

James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin. Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods. In Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier, editors, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford University Press, January 2008 (30p)

James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin. Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war. *The American Political Science Review*, 97(1):75–90, February 2003

Final research proposal due on Jan 13 at noon.

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