Gov 2008 Experimental Political Science
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Spring 2016 Tuesdays 2-4 PM
CGIS S-153

Office hours
Enos, Wednesday 2-4PM and by appointment
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Overview

The use of experimental and quasi-experimental data in political science is increasingly common. Researchers in comparative politics, American politics and international relations, and even political theory, are incorporating laboratory, survey, field, and natural experiments into their research designs. The field of political methodology is regularly contributing to ways that experimental and quasi-experimental data may be analyzed.

This graduate level class will introduce students to experimental techniques and applications of experiments in political science. We will cover arguments about why experiments are useful, and arguments about why they are not useful. No one type of experimentation will be privileged and instead we will cover a variety of approaches.

While we will cover some statistical material, this class is not a substitute for the standard graduate methodology sequence. Students must have taken Gov 2000 and 2001 either prior to taking the class, or concurrently with 2001.

Assignments

There are three types of assignments.
1. Research Journal: Each student will maintain a page on the course website. On this page they will keep weekly notes on the readings and course materials as they relate to their research agendas. They will also be required to write down a research question at the beginning of class and in weeks 3-6 to write a brief research proposal (~500 words) using the methodology from that week to test the question.
2. Each student will be required to present to the class a summary and critique of papers from a week chosen by the instructors. This will include contributing to a course wiki and adding additional resources (readings, datasets, other sources) related to the topic.
3. Finally, students will collaborate to produce a final project that contains an original experimental design and preliminary data collection. This will include a budget justification. Class size will dictate the number of collaborative groups.

Grades
30% weekly notes and reflections (posted on course website prior to Monday at 2pm)
25% presentation
45% final project
Required Books
Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science, Eds. Druckman et al. (“Handbook”)
Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality: From Nature to the Lab
Rebecca, Morton and Kenneth Williams (“Morton/Williams”)

Collaboration
Collaboration is an important part of scholarship and is allowed in this class. You should do your
own research journal, because otherwise that’d be pretty pointless.

Part 1: Introduction to Experiments and Experimental Inference (Why experiments?)

Week 1-Introduction to Experiments in Political Science (January 26th)

Handbook Chapter 6: Laboratory Experiments in Political Science (Shanto Iyengar)

Handbook Chapter 8: The Logic and Design of the Survey Experiment: An Autobiography of a
Methodological Innovation (Paul Sniderman)

Handbook Chapter 9: Field Experiments in Political Science (Alan Gerber)

Development of Experimental Research Political Science.” American Political Science Review
100: 627-635.

Gelman, Andrew. 2014 “Experimental Reasoning in Social Science.” In Field Experiments and their

Recommended
Morton/Williams Chapter 2 “Experiments and Causal Relations” (highly recommended)

Observational Research”. In Ian Shapiro, Rogers Smith, and Tarek Massoud, eds., Problems and

Columbia Journal of Transnational Law, 52(1), 173-238.
Week 2: Causal Inference and Statistical Best Practices with Experimental Data (February 2\textsuperscript{nd})


Recommended
Morton/Williams Chapter 3 “The Causal Inference Problem and the Rubin Causal Model” and Chapter 4 “Controlling Observables and Unobservables”


Rosenbaum, Paul, 2002, Observational Studies (Springer Series in Statistics). (Order on Amazon or checkout from library)


Part 2: Types of Experiments in Political Science

Week 3: Laboratory Experiments (February 9th)

Meet in Harvard Decision Science Laboratory (http://decisionlab.harvard.edu/)

Morton and Williams Chapter 7 (Validity and Experimental Manipulations)


Recommended


Handbook chapter 4: Students as Experimental Participants: A Defense of the “Narrow Data Base” (James Druckman and Cindy D. Kam)


Rosenthal, Robert, and Donald B. Rubin. 1978 "Interpersonal expectancy effects: The first 345 studies." Behavioral and Brain Sciences 1.03: 377-386.

Week 4: Survey Experiments (February 16th)


**Recommended**


**Week 5: Field Experiments (February 23rd)**


**Recommended**


**Week 6: Natural Experiments (March 1st)**


Recommended


Week 7: No class. Meetings with Enos/Tingley to discuss research projects (March 8th)

March 15th meeting: spring break (class convenes in Ibiza)

Week 8: Ethics and Research Transparency (March 22nd)


Morton/Williams Chapter 12 (Ethics) and 13 (Deception)


Handbook chapter 5: Economics versus Psychology Experiments: Stylization, Incentives, and Deception (Eric Dickson)

Part 3: Topical Applications of Experiments in Political Science

Week 9: Voting (March 29th)


Recommended


**Week 10: Bargaining and Public Goods (April 5th)**


Rose McDermott, Dustin Tingley, Jonathan Cowden, Giovanni Frazzetto, and Dominic Johnson, 2009, “Monoamine oxidase A gene (MAOA) predicts behavioral aggression following provocation”, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 106(7), 2118-2123


**Recommended**


Dickson, Eric S. "Leadership, Followership, and Beliefs about the World: An Experiment." *British Journal of Political Science*, forthcoming


**Week 11: Development (April 12th)**

Handbook Chapter 27 "Experimental Research on Democracy and Development" (Leonard Wantchekon and Ana de la O)


**Recommended**


**Week 12: Intergroup Relations (April 19th)**


**Part 4: Research Presentations**

Week 13: Presentations (April 26th): Extended class, time TBA as appropriate for class size.