Gov 2008 Experimental Political Science

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Spring 2012 Tuesdays 2-4 PM
CGIS K-108

Office hours
Enos Thursday 2-4pm
Tingley, by appointment

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. And 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. While a graduate level class, undergraduates with exceptional prior training will be considered on a case by case basis.

There are three types of assignments. First, students will submit weekly typed notes on the readings. Each student will select two papers to write out notes for. For remaining papers students will submit two questions they have about the reading. We expect all students to have thoroughly done all readings. A recommended reading section contains additional readings should you wish to explore further. Second, everyone will present to the class a summary and critique of a paper chosen by the instructors. Finally, students will collaborate to produce a final project that contains an original experimental design and preliminary data collection. Class size will dictate the number of collaborative groups.

Grades
30% weekly notes (1-2 pages including summary of main points, criticisms, and discussion questions, submitted to iSites 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")

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

Week 1-Introduction to experiments in Political Science (January 24th)


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)

Recommended


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


Week 2: Causal Inference and Statistical Best Practices with Experimental data (January 31st)


Sylvain Chassang, Gerard Padro i Miquel and Erik Snowberg Selective Trials: A Principal-Agent Approach to Randomized Controlled Experiment, forthcoming, American Economic Review

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


Bowers, Jake and Ben Hansen 2008, “Covariate balance in simple, stratified and clustered comparative studies.” Statistical Science.23(2)219-236


Part 2: Types of Experiments in Political Science

Week 3: Laboratory Experiments (February 7th)

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

Morton and Williams Chapter 7 (Validity and Experimental Manipulations)


**Recommended**

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

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


**Week 4: Survey Experiments (February 14th)**


Berinsky, Adam J., Gregory A. Huber, and Gabriel S. Lenz. “Using Mechanical Turk as a Subject Recruitment Tool for Experimental Research”. Forthcoming, Political Analysis


**Recommended**


Tingley, Dustin and Tomz, Mike, 2012, Conditional Cooperation, International Organizations, and Climate Change, working paper


**Week 5: Field Experiments (February 21**


Recommended


Week 6: Natural Experiments (February 28th)

Enos, Ryan D. “What tearing down public housing projects teaches us about the effect of racial threat on political participation”. Working paper.


Recommended


*Week 7: No class. Meetings with Enos/Tingley to discuss research projects (March 6th)*

*March 13th meeting: spring break (class convenes in Ibiza)*

*Week 8: The role of ethics in experimentation (March 20th)*


http://www.columbia.edu/~mh2245/papers1/20110912Ethics.pdf

David Nickerson, 2011, “When the Client Owns the Data”

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

**Part 3: Topical Applications of Experiments in Political Science**

*Week 9: Voting (March 27th)*


**Recommended**


**Week 10: Bargaining and Public Goods (April 3rd)**


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 10th)

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


Recommended
Part 4: Research Presentations

Week 12: Presentations part 1 (April 17th)

Week 13: Presentations part 2 (April 24th)