

Government 2010. Strategies of Political Inquiry, G2010

Gary King, Robert Putnam, and Sidney Verba

Thursdays 12-2pm, Littauer M-17

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Prerequisite or corequisite: Gov1000

Overview If you could learn only one thing in graduate school, it should be how to do scholarly research. You should be able to assess the state of a scholarly literature, identify interesting questions, formulate strategies for answering them, have the methodological tools with which to conduct the research, and understand how to write up the results so they can be published.

Although most graduate level courses address these issues indirectly, we provide an explicit analysis of each. We do this in the context of a variety of strategies of empirical political inquiry. Our examples cover American politics, international relations, comparative politics, and other subfields of political science that rely on empirical evidence. We do not address certain research in political theory for which empirical evidence is not central, but our methodological emphases will be as varied as our substantive examples. We take empirical evidence to be historical, quantitative, or anthropological. Specific methodologies include survey research, experiments, non-experiments, intensive interviews, statistical analyses, case studies, and participant observation.

Assignments Weekly reading assignments are listed below. Since our classes are largely participatory, be sure to complete the readings prior to the class for which they are assigned. Books are available in the Harvard Coop. All materials are also on reserve in the Littauer Library.

As you read each selection, try to accomplish the goals listed in the first paragraph of the syllabus. You should bring at least one new researchable idea to class each week. We will sporadically ask you for (oral) descriptions of these and will then very likely ask

questions such as: How would you do that? What makes that an interesting question? Is it an important question? What contributions would this question make to the scholarly literature? You should be able to provide a complete and concise answer in a minute or two.

You are also responsible for four assignments: (1) By Week 3, you should bring to class two copies of a qualitative empirical article from a political science journal (or relatively self-contained book chapter) you are willing to defend. (2) You will receive a copy of someone else's article Week 3 and, by Week 4, you should hand in two copies of a 3-5 page typed methodological critique of the article you were assigned. (3) You will receive a critique of the article you brought and should prepare a 3-5 page typed response by Week 5. (4) A qualitative research proposal (15-20 pages) is due 7 days after the last class at 4pm; turn this in to Lara Birk or at the front desk at CBRSS (34 Kirkland Street). We prefer to give no incompletes; papers turned in late will be judged according to proportionately higher standards.

Students who have coauthored a paper with a fellow student in a previous class in graduate school are encouraged to coauthor their papers in this class too. All others are required to coauthor with another member of this class, or to ask us for an exception.

Evaluation Grades will be determined by a weighted average of class participation and the assignments.

Paper Details Quantitative and qualitative research: Much of this seminar is devoted to this distinction. The general message is that these are different approaches to research for which the same logic applies. Quantitative research involves collecting information on a large number of cases. A sample survey is an example; a cross-national study of all industrialized democracies is another. This usually means in practice that the "richness" of the information about any one case is limited. Qualitative research involves focusing on a smaller number of cases, but gathering much more information. Depth interviews with a few people would be an example; a study of a particular decision in one or a very cases might be another. As we will discuss, each approach has its advantages and disadvantages in bringing information to bear on a research question.

Researchers often try to have it both ways: conducting a quantitative study supplemented by depth analysis of a few cases. (Or, if one prefers to think of it: a depth study of a few cases supplemented by a quantitative study.) An attitude survey on civic engagement and depth interviews with some respondents may be combined. Or a quantitative study of the demographics of crime may be combined by participant observation in an urban gang. Or a study of the correlates of inter-state violence may be combined with some studies of the sequence of events in smaller numbers of international crises.

The main assignment for this course is a research paper that uses two such approaches. It might be a random sample survey study you conduct on some political subject, coupled with some deeper interviews. It might be an analysis of existing survey data combined with original interviews of some depth. It might be a statistical analysis across the states of the relationship between some public policy and characteristics of the state's political and economic system, coupled with a closer analysis of a legislative decision process.

It may not be possible, within the framework of a one semester course, to do a fully realized dual-method project of the sort envisioned. But one can illustrate a good beginning, do a pilot project that makes progress on both parts, or completes both by limiting the target population to ease data collection.

Reading is due the week indicated.

Week 1 Overview of the course and the state of disciplinary warfare.

Week 2 Nature of Political Inquiry

- Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton University Press (hereinafter KKV), Chapters 1–2.
- Jack E. Oliver 1991. *The incomplete guide to the art of discovery*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- “Perestroika: For an Ecumenical Science of Politics”, by Greg Kasza.
- **Recommended:** Diesing, Paul. *How Does Social Science Work?* University of Pittsburgh Press.

Week 3 Causality and Causal Inference

- KKV, Chapters 3–4
- “The Qualitative-Quantitative Disputation,” *APSR* 89:2 (June 1995), 454–81.
- **Recommended** Thomas Cook and Donald T. Campbell. *Quasi-Experimentation*, 1979. John Stuart Mill. *Philosophy of Scientific Method*. Chapters V–VIII. Daniel Little. 1991. *Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science*. Boulder: Westview Press. Paul W. Holland. 1986. “Statistics and Causal Inference,” with comments by Donald B. Rubin, D.R. Cox, Clark Glymour, and Clive Granger, and Rejoinder by Paul W. Holland. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, Vol. 81, 396 (December): 945–70.

Week 4 . Small-n Causal Inference

- KKV, Chapter 5–6.
- Timothy J. McKeown, “Case Studies and the Statistical Worldview,” *IO* 53:1 (Winter 1999), 161–90
- Harry Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science,” *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol.7: Pp.79–138.
- **Recommended** Alexander L. George and Timothy J. McKeown. 1985. “Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making,” *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations*, Vol. 2, pp. 21–58; Alexander L. George, 1979. “Case Studies and Theory Development,” in Paul Lauren, ed., *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*, Pp.43–68.

Week 5 . Process-tracing and case studies

- Alexander L. George and Timothy J. McKeown. 1985. “Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making,” *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations*, Vol. 2, pp. 21–58.
- Robert D. Putnam and C. Randall Henning. “The Bonn Summit of 1978: A Case Study in Coordination,” in Richard Cooper et al. 1989. *Can Nations Agree*, Brookings, pp. 12–118.
- Robert Bates et al. *Analytical Narratives*, “Introduction.”

- **Recommended** Little, Daniel. 1991. *Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science*. Boulder: Westview Press, Chapter 4. Rosenau, Pauline. 1990. "Once Again into The Fray: International Relations Confronts the Humanities," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 19, 1 (Spring): 83–110. Peter Hall. "Ontologies and Methodologies in Comparative Politics"

Week 6 Measurement

- Adcock, Robert, and David Collier. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *APSR* 529, Vol. 95, September 2001.
- Donald Green and Eric Schickler, 1993. "Multiple-Measure Assessment of Party Identification," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 57, 4 (Winter): 503-535.
- Donald Green and Jack Citrin. 1994, "Measurement Error and the Structure of Attitudes: Are Positive and Negative Judgements Opposites?" *AJPS*, 38, 1 (February): 256–281.

Week 7 Combined Quantitative and Qualitative Research

- Susan Stokes. 2000. *Markets, Mandates, and Democracy: Neoliberalism by Surprise in Latin America*. Chapters 1–3.
- Jennifer Hochschild. *What's Fair*. Chapters 5–6.
- Herbert McCloskey and John Zaller, *THE AMERICAN ETHOS* Chap 6
- Sidney Verba and Gary Orren, *EQUALITY IN AMERICA* chap 10
- Sidney verba. *ELITES AND THE IDEA OF EQUALITY*, pp. 128-144 and chap 9.

Week 8 . Participant Observation and Interpretation.

- Clifford Geertz. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," Pp. 3–30 in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York, 1973).
- Joel Schwartz. 1984. "Participation and Multisubjective Understanding: An Interpretivist Approach to the Study of Political Participation," *Journal of Politics*, (November): 1117–1141.
- Verba, Sidney et al. *Voice and Equality*, Pp. 1-96.
- James Scott. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak*, Yale University Press, Pp. xv–xiv, 1–47.
- **Recommended.** Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, Chapter 4; Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cock-Fight," Pp. 412–453 in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York, 1973); Joe Soss. 2000. *Unwanted Claims: The Politics of Participation in the U.S. Welfare System*, University of Michigan Press, Pp. 1–25, 90–123, 157–185; Sidney Verba. 2000-2001. "Culture, Calculation, and Being a Pretty Good Citizen: Alternative Interpretations of Civic Engagement," Eckstein Lecture, Center for the Study of Democracy, University of California Irvine.

Week 9 Historical Institutionalism

- Theda Skocpol, "Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies in Historical Sociology," pp. 356-391 in Skocpol, ed., *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review*, 94, 2 (June, 2000): 251-267.
- Barrington Moore, Jr. 1966. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Boston, Pp.413-483.

Week 10 Experiments

- Alan S. Gerber and Donald P. Green, "The effect of canvassing, telephone calls, and direct mail on voter turnout: A field experiment," *American Political Science Review*, 94 (2000), 653-63.
- Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar, *Going Negative: how Political Advertisements Shrink and Polarize the Electorate* (Free Press, 1995), Chaps. 1,2, and 5.
- Paul Sniderman and Edward Carmines. 1997. *Reaching Beyond Race*, Harvard University Press, 1-97.
- **Recommended:** Edward L. Glaeser, David Laibson, Jose A. Scheinkman, and Christine L. Soutter. 1999. *What is Social Capital? The Determinants of Trust and Trustworthiness*.

Weeks 11-13 Discussion of Student Research Designs