

Syllabus for Government 2020: The Hidden Curriculum

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Fall 2024; Mondays 3–5pm, following Harvard’s regular schedule, starting 9/9/2024. For all current information about this course and an updated version of this document, see [GaryKing.org/Gov2020](https://garyking.org/Gov2020).

1 What’s it about?

Gov 2020 has two components.

1. The first component is a popular semester-long project designed to show how to write and publish an article in a scholarly journal, beginning with an article replication. This assignment, an early version of which was described in the article “[Publication, Publication](#)” and previously part of Gov 2001¹, has resulted in many students’ first publications, conference presentations, dissertations, and awards.
2. The second component is newly designed to show how science (and, by extension, the profession) works. It includes what a big idea is in our field; developing defensible answers; co-authoring; writing for impact; effective presentations; solving problems by changing the question; going beyond publication to impact; managing the transition academics undergo from private to public figure; leveraging universities, startups, industry, and government for research; and more.

A considerable body of wisdom about how to succeed in our profession accumulates informally as each PhD cohort learns, improves, and passes knowledge on to its successors. Most of this “hidden curriculum” is not taught in formal classes, but is essential to making the most of graduate school, producing high quality research, and securing the best jobs. Unfortunately, the 2020 pandemic severed the connection between cohorts, leaving individual students to try to piece together this knowledge on their own. In Gov 2020, we will formalize much of this informal wisdom to provide 20/20 vision (remember the course number yet?) into the hidden curriculum and go beyond what had been possible even before the pandemic.

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¹A new version of Gov 2001, excluding the replication exercise, is now offered by others. Materials from when I taught Gov 2001 will remain available, including the book [Unifying Political Methodology](#); my [class lectures](#); an app [2k1-in-silico: An Interactive Methods Non-Textbook](#) and related paper “[Statistical Intuition Without Coding \(or Teachers\)](#)”; and the [course website](#).

2 Is the content covered in technical statistics classes?

Unlikely. When someone visits a methodologist for advice, the biggest difference we make is usually not answering technical questions. Instead, it is providing the big picture and reorienting research directions. Many often pose what they think is a technical question (and sometimes sounds like “Someone told me I have a problem called ‘endogeneity’. Where is the button in SPSS to fix it?”), but which has no answer or isn’t even a coherent question. When we get them to tell us about their project, we may learn that they have unsolvable problems (such as impossible identification issues, 85% missing data, theory and data with little correspondence, or research questions that no one would care about even if they could be answered, etc.). When successful, we work out the bigger picture with them and reframe the research question into one that other scholars would deeply care about and which can be answered without impossible-to-defend technical problems. Completion and publication become far easier too. This is by far the most common impact good methodologists have on those around them. There’s no time to teach this in technical methods classes, but you will learn it in Gov 2020.

3 Who Can Take It?

The nature of Gov 2020 requires limited enrollment. We will give priority to graduate students in the Government Department, and then to graduate students in other departments.

4 A Collective Class Format

Expect a small, seminar-style class with occasional lectures, and with everyone expected to participate. Important parts are collective experiences — designed on the basis of social science research to help us all learn more, understand the material faster, and remember it longer. This means that other students are counting on you (and you on them), and so not meeting a deadline or not attending class hurts you *and* all those around you. Please come to class prepared and meet all assignments as listed on the class website. Not meeting one assignment can have cascading effects on everyone. If you don’t understand something, that’s perfectly fine; we’ll figure it out together and make sure no one is left behind. Your job is to try, and to stay engaged.

5 Technology

We will acquire, read, distribute, and annotate readings at [Perusall.com](https://perusall.com). You will also use Perusall to post announcements and communicate in chat channels privately with instructors, privately with other students in your group (without having to share personal information like cell numbers), one-on-one with any other student in class, or with the whole class or section.

If you have a question, comment, or suggestion, add an annotation to a document or a comment in a chat channel in Perusall. If you think you may know an answer to a query another student posted, or have a suggestion, please try to answer it. If you merely have

an interesting idea that might be of interest to others in class, please contribute that as well. It doesn't matter if you say something wrong (if you don't, you're not learning), or get the wrong answer in these discussions, but it does matter a lot that you be engaged with the material and others in class.

Perusall is a project my collaborators and I designed, on the basis of our research, to help you learn. If you have suggestions, or ideas for features, I'd love to hear them. More than 1.5M students in > 90 countries will use it this year, and so your suggestions can have a lot of impact.

6 How to Find Me

Teaching and advising are the most important professional activities I do on a regular basis. I do not have office hours (which, to me, seem designed to keep students away most of the time). Instead, I'm usually in my office at K313 CGIS with the door open; come by when it is convenient (assuming no one else is there), send me a note on Perusall, or talk to my Executive Assistant in the office next to mine. Obviously, the TF and your fellow students are also a tremendous resource.

Also, if you are (or were) registered for this course, you may join our private Facebook group designed for alumni of my courses, [j.mp/G2001fb](https://www.facebook.com/j.mp/G2001fb); you'll receive occasional private posts with job info, consulting gigs, and other information.

7 Class Grades

Final grades are a weighted average of (a) the replication assignment, (b) weekly assignments, and (c) engagement. "Engagement" includes coming to class, being prepared, joining in the discussion in class (and coming every week), out of class (through Perusall), and in assignment and paper groups. Finding other ways of helping your classmates learn more or to build class camaraderie is also helpful and appreciated.

8 Classes

Fall 2024 Classes: Mondays, 3-5pm, on these dates:

1. 9/9
2. 9/16
3. 9/23
4. 9/30
5. 10/7 (No class on 10/14; Fall recess: 10/14-20)
6. 10/21
7. 10/28
8. 11/4
9. 11/11

10. 11/18
11. 11/25 (Thanksgiving break: 11/27-12/1)
12. 12/2