

**INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL RESEARCH: MEASUREMENT ISSUES  
AND DATA-GATHERING  
2015-16, 1<sup>st</sup> Semester**

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Lesson Hours: Monday 4PM-6PM – Room Seminario (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)

Student Hours: Wednesday and Thursday 12PM-1PM; on appointment

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***Course description***

The course has two main aims in mind: 1) it is an introduction to empirical political research methods; 2) it is an opportunity to develop skills in the analysis, interpretation and presentation of research findings, including standards for written research reports. Besides the regular classes, on October 28-29, 2015, Linda Basile holds a “Crash course on STATA for Data Analysis” to introduce you to one of the most widely used statistical software in social science. It is an integral part of the course. Attendance is mandatory (and very useful!).

This course covers an assortment of subjects and authors. The course will stress both qualitative and quantitative research design and “how to do” empirical analysis. The class will take you up where Federico Russo left you off. It will focus on different issues related to hypothesis testing under different research designs. For this purpose, the course zeroes in on issues such as data collection, measurement issues and elementary data analysis. Other issues, e.g. content analysis, field work and participatory observation will not be covered here because they are offered by other courses in the program. For assignments, we will use examples and data sets from different sources.

Through lectures and readings, discussions, individual and group exercises, statistical lab and out-of-class activities, this course want to foster your skills in using conceptual and analytical tools that enable the student to form critical judgments on how to address empirical issues in political science as well as on the main methodological problems you might meet in addressing what is of interest to you as a political scientist. This is an *Introductory* course. It is intended to be preparatory for other, more formal, statistical courses held the next semester.

Some of the assignments will require the use of computer. For this reason, you are advised to have a laptop. Students are required to use an e-mail account. In fact, course data and especially documentation will be made available either through electronic mail or using Google drive on the UNISI 2.0 web site (<http://20.unisi.it/>). There will be instruction on this in class.

***Method of Evaluation***

Your grade will be determined by the following:

1. **Participation in class discussion and presentations** to warm up the discussion of specific research results. [10% total]

2. **A number of assignments throughout the semester:** some of these will involve the short presentation of a research method to be discussed in class. A number of them will imply the use of computer programs such as spreadsheets and STATA statistics package to analyze data provided by the instructor. You will be able to do these in the week following the class where the methods were presented. All computations you produce *must* be included in the assignment, including computer programming and procedure commands that were executed. Note that these assignments are due the day of class and will be used in class discussion: you will need to complete them in advance based on the readings. **IMPORTANT!!** All assignments sent through files have to use the following filename: *AssignN[umber of assignment]\_LastName.doc*. NEVER use my last name to label files sent to me. [40% total]

3. **A Research paper:** This is the major requirement of the course and will be developed in several stages throughout the semester. The paper should use a fairly simple statistical analysis of a piece of research. The topic must be agreed upon with the instructor among a set of issues that will be referred to in class. These issues all imply survey data and they include the following topics: (a) what the Americans think of the European Union, (b) comparative attitudes toward Globalization, (c) support for the use of military force and war, (d) attitudes toward the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, (e) Transatlantic attitudes toward China and (f) legitimacy and the use of force. I suggest you start thinking (and discussing with me) about your possible topics well in advance. You are expect to go through the entire process of paper preparation: literature review, hypothesis, data preparation, analysis and discussion of results. You will work at the paper in pairs. This will foster discussion and mutual thinking among each pair of authors as well as it will start to make you used to a style of collective work that is now pretty common in political science, given the complexity of many research projects. A final decision about your topics shall be taken no later than December 1, 2015, when you will be submitting a one-page outline of your paper with a short list of references (between 10 and 20 references). You will hand in a full-fledged version of the paper by January 15, 2016. All of the intermediate steps in this assignment are required and failure to complete them on time will have a detrimental impact on your grade. [50% total] [50% total]

### ***Readings***

Readings for the sessions, homework assignments, data sets, overhead projector slides used during the lectures, and an assortment of links to other political science research sites will be made available by the instructor via Google drive.

*Main Texts* (this is an handy approach to research methods for Grad students. It must be supplemented by readings and reference texts)

Philip H. Pollock (2012<sup>4</sup>). *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. CQ Press. [hereinafter PP]  
Philip H. III Pollock (2011). *Stata Companion to Political Analysis*. CQ Press. [hereinafter PPSTATA]

*Reference Texts* (The ones listed below are reference books you should use in the discussion throughout the course)

Earl Babbie and Fred Halliday (1989), *Adventures in Social Research. Data Analysis using SPSS for Windows*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge press.

Kenneth Hoover and Todd Donovan (1995), *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking*. New York, NY: St. Martin' Press.

Michael S. Lewis-Beck (1995), *Data Analysis. An Introduction*, Sage University Paper series on Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, 07-103. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

W. Phillip Shively (1990), *The Craft of Political Research*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Donald J. Treiman (2009). *Quantitative Data Analysis. Doing Social Research to Test Ideas*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

### *Tips for writing papers*

Janet Buttolph Johnson and Richard A. Joslyn (1995). "The Research Report: An Annotated Example." in *Political Science Research Methods*. Washington, DC: CQ Press, pp.403-432.

Laurence F. Jones and Edward C. Olson (1996). "Appendix I: Sample Research Studies." In *Political Science Research. A Handbook of Scope and Method*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, pp.365-379.

Stephen Van Evera (1997). "Appendix: How to Write a Paper." In *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp.123-128.

### **Course schedule**

- October 19, 2015: The Logic of Inference: Problems, Theories and Hypotheses

Readings:

PP: Introduction, pp.1-6.

Arthur L. Stinchcombe (1968), *Constructing Social Theories*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Ch.2 ("The Logic of Scientific Inference", pp.15-54).

Further Readings (starred readings are recommended):

Howard S. Becker (1998). *Tricks of the Trade. How to Think about Your research While You're Doing it*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press (Ch.2 "Imagery," pp.10-66).

\* Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams (1995). *The Craft of Research*. Chicago University Press (Section II "Asking Questions, Finding Answers," pp.29-84).

\* Charles A. Lave and James G. March (1993), *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*. Lanham, ML: University Press of America. (Ch.2 "An introduction to speculation", pp.9-49)

\* James Jaccard and Jacob Jacoby (2010). *Theory Construction and Model-Building Skills: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*. New York (NY), Guilford Press (Ch. 4 "Creativity and the Generation of Ideas," pp.39-74; Ch.7 "Causal Models," pp.137-176).

- October 26, 2015: Concept Analysis

Readings:

Sartori, Giovanni (1970) 'Concept misformation in comparative politics', *American Political Science Review* 64: 1033-1053.

Collier, David and James E. Mahon Jr. (1993). "Conceptual 'stretching' revisited: adapting categories in comparative analysis." *American Political Science Review*. 87 (3): 845-855.

Further Readings:

W. Phillip Shively (1990), *The Craft of Political Research*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Ch.3 ("The Importance of Dimensional Thinking", pp.30-44).

- *November 2, 2015: Measurement Issues*

Readings:

PP: Ch.1, pp.7-26;

Further Readings:

W. Phillip Shively (1990), *The Craft of Political Research*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Ch.3 ("The Importance of Dimensional Thinking", pp.30-44), Ch.4 ("Problems of Measurement: Accuracy", pp.44-60) and Ch.5 ("Problems of Measurement: Precision", pp.61-78).

John P. McIver and Edward G. Carmines (1981). *Unidimensional Scaling*. Sage University Paper Series on Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, 07-024. Beverly Hills and London: Sage Pubns.

- *November 9, 2015: Surveys I - Sampling*

Readings:

David S. Moore (). *The Basic Practice of Statistics*. New York, NY: W.H. Freeman [Ch. 8: Producing Data: Sampling." pp. 201-222; Ch.11: Sampling Distributions, pp.291-314]

Further Readings:

Sharon L. Lohr (2008). "Coverage and Sampling." In Edith D. de Leeuw, Joop J. Hox and Don A. Dillman (editors). *International Handbook of Survey Methodology*. New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp.97-112.

- *November 16, 2015: Surveys II - Questionnaire Design*

Readings:

Jean M. Converse and Stanley Presser (1986). *Survey Questions. Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire*. Sage University Paper Series on Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, 07-063. Beverly Hills and London: Sage Pubns.

Further Readings:

Floyd J. Fowler (1993<sup>2</sup>). *Survey Research Methods*. Newbury Park and London: Sage. (Ch.5 “Designing Questions to be Good Measures”, pp.69-93).

Joop J. Hox (1997). “From Theoretical Concepts to Survey Question.” In Lars Lyberg et al. (editors). *Survey Measurement and Process Quality*. New York: NY, John Wiley & Sons, pp.47-70.

Norbert Schwartz, Robert M. Groves and Howard Schuman (1998), “Survey Methods”, in *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, edited by Daniel T. Gilbert, Susan T. Fiske and Gardner Lindzey. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, pp.143-178.

Krosnick, J. A. (1999). “Survey research.” *Annual Review of Psychology*, 50, 537-567.

- *November 23, 2015: Experiments and Simulations*

James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia (2006). “The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science.” *American Political Science Review*. 100 (4): 627-635.

Further Readings:

Donald T. Campbell and Julian C. Stanley (1963). *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Chicago, IL. Rand McNally.

\*Rose McDermott (2002). “Experimental Methods In Political Science.” *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol. 5: 31-61.

\*Paul M. Sniderman and Douglas B. Grob (1996). “Innovations in Experimental Design in Attitude Surveys.” *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol. 22: 377-399.

- *November 30, 2015: Describe your data*

Readings:

PP: Ch.3, pp.51-76;

Edward R. Tufte (1974). *Data Analysis for Politics and Policy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall. Ch.1

Further Readings:

Hans Zeisel (1968), *Say It With Figures*. New York, NY: Harper & Row Publs. Ch.1 to Ch.4 (pp.3-58).

Earl Babbie and Fred Halliday (1959), *Adventures in Social Research. Data Analysis using SPSS for Windows*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge press. Part II (“Univariate Analysis”, pp.41-100).

- *December 7, 2015: How to read a two-way table and what to do out of it*

Readings:

PP: Ch.1, pp.7-26;

Treiman (2009): Ch.2

Further Readings:

Hans Zeisel (1968), *Say It With Figures*. New York, NY: Harper & Row Publs. Ch.5 (“Tables of more than two dimensions”, pp.59-75).

Morris Rosenberg (1968), *The Logic of Survey Analysis*. New York, NY: Basic Books. Ch.1 (“The meaning of relationships”, pp.3-22).

- December 14, 2015: What happens controlling for a third variable: Spurious, Intervening, Antecedent and Conditional variables

Readings:

PP: Ch.4, pp.77-101;  
Treiman (2009). *Ch. 3*

Further Readings:

- Morris Rosenberg (1968). *The Logic of Survey Analysis*. New York, NY: Basic Books. Ch.2 (“Extraneous and Component Variables”, pp.23-53), Ch.3 (“Intervening and Antecedent Variables”, pp.54-83); Ch.5 (“Conditional Relations: aids to interpretation”, pp.105-130).