

University of Washington
Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs

Research Design

PBAF 502

Fall 2009

Professor Craig Thomas

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Office hours: Tues 2-4pm (and by appointment)

Introduction

This course introduces graduate students to basic research issues in the applied social sciences, and develops practical skills for conducting research. The goal is to provide solid grounding in the logic of research design, not to achieve proficiency in any one methodology. As an introductory course, you need not have any prior background in research methods. The course is, nonetheless, rigorous. By the end of the semester, you will be able to (1) recognize the types of methods appropriate for addressing particular research questions; (2) design your own research project in a dissertation prospectus or grant proposal; and (3) identify methodological strengths and weaknesses in published research in your field.

Readings

Required book (available at the University Book Store):

Gerring, John. 2001. *Social Science Methodology: A Criterial Framework*.
Cambridge University Press.

Optional textbook (available at the University Book Store):

Neuman, W. Lawrence. 2006. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 6th Edition. Allyn and Bacon. (You can save money by purchasing an earlier edition, but the chapters may not align with the syllabus.)

Optional on-line textbook:

William M. K. Trochim, *Research Methods Knowledge Base*,
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/contents.php>.

All other readings will be linked on the course web site. There will be no course packet.

Grades

Grade Distribution

Participation: 40% (due weekly)

Three essays: 10% each (due dates below)

Grant proposal or dissertation prospectus: 30% (due Dec 14, noon)

Grading Policy

Seminar time will be devoted to discussing the assigned readings. Lectures will be brief and rare. Therefore, weekly participation will be crucial for the seminar to be effective. To receive an “A” on the participation portion of your grade, you must attend class each week and demonstrate through discussion that you have carefully considered the assigned readings. Weekly readings will include descriptions and justifications of specific methods, along with examples of their application. The optional readings (from textbooks) will provide a baseline understanding for the required readings. We will not discuss the optional readings in class, but you should understand what’s in them. Class discussion will focus on how each method can and should be used to address particular research questions, and whether scholars have applied the methods appropriately in published research. If you have to miss a class meeting for any reason, you must submit typed answers to that week’s discussion questions, or your participation grade will be lowered.

The remaining portion (60%) of your grade is based on your development of a research project, and is divided into two components. The first component includes three short essays (30% of your grade), in which you will apply the assigned readings by designing your own research project, step-by-step, throughout the semester. (See the essay topics below.) The second component, which will build on your essays, is a grant proposal or dissertation prospectus (30% of your grade). Grant proposals must be submitted on the actual forms required by a private foundation, public agency, or other granting organization, and in the format they specify. You may submit a dissertation prospectus in lieu of a grant proposal, provided that your prospectus clearly specifies (1) your research design, (2) potential funding sources, and (3) a detailed budget and timeline. If you have difficulties writing the proposal or prospectus, you should review Howard Becker, *Writing for Social Scientists*; and Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman, *Proposals That Work*.

Essay assignments

You must submit all three essay assignments below. Your essays should be no more than 5 pages long, double-spaced. Due dates are noted on the weekly calendar at the end of the syllabus. Late essays will receive a .3 grade penalty for each week they are late. In grading these assignments, I will evaluate your use of the assigned readings, not your knowledge of the fields in which you are specializing. So devote most of your essays to analyzing topics in your field in light of the assigned readings, not to reviewing the literature in your field. Your literature review should never exceed one page in these

essays.

Essay 1 – Concepts Formation

In the introductory paragraph, specify a research question that interests you and describe how it fits in your primary area of interest. (It must be a question – with a question mark – not a topic.) Choose *one* concept in the question, and provide *two* definitions of that concept from the relevant literature in your field. Then use the assigned readings on concept formation to analyze how the authors have defined this concept, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of their concept formation. The latter is the heart of the assignment, so devote your time to analyzing the concept and definitions using the frameworks in the assigned readings.

Essay 2 – Measurement

Specify and discuss two alternative ways to measure a concept of interest to you. The first paragraph should either restate the research question and concept you introduced in Essay #1 or introduce a different research question and concept. You may develop your own measures or rely on previously published measures. Think carefully about measurement issues, such as scaling, coding, unit of analysis, and threats to reliability and validity. Make sure you understand the distinction between a “measure” and the “systematized concept” for which it serves as an indicator (per Adcock and Collier).

Essay 3 – Selecting and Comparing Cases

Describe *two* alternative sampling strategies for selecting one or more cases for which you would conduct case studies. Discuss the relative merits of these sampling strategies within the context of your research question and theoretical approach, and in light of the assigned readings on single case studies and comparative case studies. The first paragraph of your essay should either restate the research question and concept you introduced in Essay #1 or #2, or briefly introduce a different research question. Be sure to specify what you mean by a “case study,” and identify the population from which your case(s) will be selected.

Weekly Topics and Readings

The assigned readings for each week below typically begin with an overview piece (usually chapters from Neuman’s textbook), followed by different methodological approaches to each topic, and concluding with an example of how these methods have been used in practice. If you fall behind during some weeks, you should strive to familiarize yourself with each of the readings, rather than read a smaller number of them in great depth.

Week 1
(Oct 5) THEORY, METHOD, AND RESEARCH

Required: Gerring, Chs. 1, 2, and 10 (skim "Preface" and "Postscript").

Karl Popper. 1963. "Science: Conjectures and Refutation," in Martin Curd & Jan A. Cover (eds.), *Philosophy of Science: The Central Issues*, New York: Norton, 1998, pp. 3-10.

Karl Popper. 1959. "The Problem of Induction," in Martin Curd & Jan A. Cover (eds.), *Philosophy of Science: The Central Issues*, New York: Norton, 1998, pp. 426-432.

Imre Lakatos. 1970. "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes." In Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, (eds.). *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 91-127 (skim 128-146).

Clifford Geertz. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretive Theory of Culture*. Chapter 1, Boulder: Basic Books, pp. 3-30.

Max Weber, "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy." In Fred R. Dallmayr & Thomas A. McCarthy (eds.). *Understanding and Social Inquiry*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977, pp. 24-37.

Optional: Neuman. Chs. 1-4.

Trochim. "Foundations."
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/intres.php>.

Week 2
(Oct 12) CONCEPTS

Gerring, Chs. 3-4.

Max Weber. ND. "Ideal Types and Theory Construction." In May Brodbeck (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences*. Macmillan, 1968, pp. 496-507.

David Collier and James Mahon. 1993. "Conceptual Stretching Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 87, pp. 845-855.

Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright. 2003. "Thinking about Empowered Participatory Governance." In Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright (eds.), *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered*

Participatory Governance. Verso, pp. 3-42.

Week 3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, LIT REVIEWS, AND ADVISORS
(Oct 19)

Due: Essay #1 on Concept Formation (2 copies)

Required: Howard S. Becker. 1986. "Terrorized by the Literature." In *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 135-149.

Gerring, Chs. 5-7.

Multi-author symposium. 2001. "Advisors and the Dissertation Proposal." *PS*, pp. 841-854.

Review links to Community of Science and Grants.gov.

Optional: Craddock, et al. 1996. "Words, Words, Words." *BMJ* 313:159-11.
(Humor)

Dagobert Mantelmasche. 1999. "Otto I.Q. Besser-Wisser." *PS*, pp. 730-731.
(Humor)

Neuman. Ch. 5.

Trochim. "Problem Formulation."
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/probform.php>

Week 4 MEASUREMENT
(Oct 26)

Due: Calls for proposals, with explanatory cover memo

Required: Trochim. "Measurement."
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/measure.php>

Robert Adcock and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95, pp. 529-546.

William R. Shadish, Thomas D. Cook, and Donald T. Campbell. 2002. "Construct Validity and External Validity." In *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Houghton Mifflin, pp. 64-82.

Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman. 1999. "Data Collection Methods." In *Designing Qualitative Research*, 3rd Edition. Sage, pp. 105-145.

Symposium (essays by Gary King, Paul Herrnson, and Kenneth Meier). 1995. "Verification/Replication." *PS* 28, pp. 443-459.

Jong-Sung You and Sanjeev Khagram. 2005. "A Comparative Study of Inequality and Corruption." *American Sociological Review* 70, pp.136-157.

Optional: Neuman. Ch. 7, and pp. 331-339.

Week 5 CAUSAL INFERENCE (I): SINGLE CASE STUDIES
(Nov 2)

Due: Essay #2 on Measurement (2 copies)

Required: John Gerring. 2004. "What is a Case Study and What is it Good for?" *American Political Science Review* 98, pp. 341-354.

John Gerring. 2007. "Techniques for Choosing Cases." In *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Cambridge, pp. 86-122.

Andrew Bennett. 2008. "Process Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective." In, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, pp. 702-721.

Paul Pierson. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review* 94, pp. 251-267.

Sarah Pralle. 2006. "The 'Mouse that Roared': Agenda Setting in Canadian Pesticides Politics." *Policy Studies Journal* 34, pp. 171-194.

Optional: Trochim. "Sampling."
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/sampling.php>.

Week 6 CAUSAL INFERENCE (II): COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES
(Nov 9)

Guest: Travis Reynolds, Evans School doctoral candidate.

Required: Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers. 1980. "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, pp. 174-97.

Gerring, Chs. 8-10 and "Postscript".

Barbara Geddes. 2003. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get." In *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. University of Michigan Press, pp. 89-129.

James Mahoney and Gary Goertz. 2004. "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 98, pp. 653-669.

Travis Reynolds. 2009. "Institutional Determinants of Success Among Forestry-Based Carbon Sequestration Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa." Submitted to *World Development*.

Optional: Neuman. Ch. 14, and pp. 331-339.

Week 7 CAUSAL INFERENCE (III): STATISTICAL METHODS
(Nov 16)

Due: Essay #3 on Selecting and Comparing Cases (2 copies)

Required: William R. Shadish, Thomas D. Cook, and Donald T. Campbell. 2002. "Statistical Conclusion Validity and Internal Validity." In *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Houghton Mifflin, pp. 33-53.

Henry Brady & David Collier. 2004. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*. Lanham, MD: Rowman Littlefield. Chs. 1-2.

Evan Lieberman. 2005. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99, pp. 435-452.

Rachel Kleit and Lynne Manzo. 2006. "To Move or not to Move: Relationships to Place and Relocation Choices in HOPE VI." *Housing Policy Debate* 17, pp. 271-308.

Optional: Neuman. Chs. 6 & 12, and Appendices C & D.

Trochim. "Analysis."
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/analysis.php>

Week 8 CAUSAL INFERENCE (IV): EXPERIMENTAL METHODS
(Nov 23)

Required: William R. Shadish, Thomas D. Cook, and Donald T. Campbell. 2002.

“Experiments and Generalized Causal Inference.” In *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Houghton Mifflin, pp. 1-32.

William R. Shadish, Thomas D. Cook, and Donald T. Campbell. 2002. “Quasi-Experiments: Interrupted Time-Series Designs.” In *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Houghton Mifflin, pp. 171-206.

Campbell, Donald T., and H. Laurence Ross. 1969. “The Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding: Time-Series Data in Quasi-Experimental Analysis.” *Law & Society Review* 3, pp. 33-54.

Mary Kay Gugerty and Micheal Kremer. 2008. “Outside Funding and the Dynamics of Participation in Community Associations.” *American Journal of Political Science* 52, pp. 585-602.

Optional: Neuman. Ch. 9.

Trochim. “Design.” <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/design.php>.

Week 9
(Nov 30) FIELD RESEARCH (I): ACCESS, OBSERVATION, AND CONTENT

Required: Gretchen Rossman and Sharon Rallis. 1998. “Issues that Arise in the Field.” In, *Learning in the Field: An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 149-167.

Biernacki, Patrick, and Dan Waldorf. 1981. “Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling.” *Sociological Research and Methods* 10, pp. 141-163.

Patricia Siplon. 1999. “Scholar, Witness, or Activist? The Lessons and Dilemmas of an AIDS Activist.” *PS*, 577-581.

Review UW Human Subjects Division web site
(<http://www.washington.edu/research/hsd>)

Multi-Author Symposium. 2004. “Discourse and Content Analysis.” *Qualitative Methods*, Spring, pp. 15-38.

Optional: Neuman. Chs. 11, 13

Week 10
(Dec 7) FIELD RESEARCH (II): ASKING QUESTIONS

Required: Multi-Author Symposium. 2002. "Interview Methods in Political Science." *PS*, pp. 663-688.

Shannon Orr. 2005. "New Technology and Research: An Analysis of Internet Survey Methodology in Political Science." *PS*, pp. 263-267.

Gretchen Rossman and Sharon Rallis. 1998. "Gathering Data in the Field." In, *Learning in the Field: An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 113-148.

Soss, Joe. 2006. "Talking Our Way to Meaningful Explanations: A Practice-Centered View of Interviewing for Interpretive Research." In *Interpretation and Method*. Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (editors). M.E. Sharpe, pp. 127-149.

Gareth Enticott, George Boyne, and Richard Walker. 2008. "The Use of Multiple Informants in Public Administration Research: Data Aggregation and Using Organizational Echelons." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 19: 229-253.

Optional: Neuman. Ch. 8, 12

Dec 14 Grant proposal or dissertation prospectus due at noon
(in my box in the Dean's Suite)