

POL290A – Fall 2020
Thursdays 3:10-6:00
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Description

The purpose of this course is for students to produce a piece of empirical research that could serve as the basis for a conference paper and/or journal article. The substantive focus will be mass American politics, broadly defined.

The course is suitable for graduate students in their 2nd year (or later) of the graduate program. 1st year students who are interested should discuss those interests with Ben before the academic quarter gets underway.

Requirements & Grades

Students are expected to attend and participate in seminar meetings by thoroughly preparing in advance of class. Final grades will be based on the following:

1. Seminar participation (15%)
2. Replication assignments (5%)
3. Hypothesis notes (10%)
4. Project proposals (10%)
5. Results memo (15%)
6. Research presentation (10%)
7. Final paper (35%)

Tentative Schedule

Week 1 (October 1)

This class will be devoted to introducing the course, discussing how it will be taught, and answering students' questions. Among other things we will discuss remote teaching and learning in a graduate seminar. By **Wednesday, September 30 at 3:00 p.m.** please complete and email Ben the "student questionnaire," which is available on Canvas.

Week 2 (October 8)

- Read:
 1. Nagler (1995)
 2. King (2006)
 3. Brennan (2020, "Picking a Research Topic and Finding Ideas," pp. 94-96)
- Start acquainting yourself with the *American National Election Studies*:
 1. Spend some time perusing the [website](#).
 2. Create an account for yourself [here](#).
 3. Take a look at the "[Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior](#)."
 4. Check out the "[Continuity Guide](#)."
 5. [Download](#) the Time Series Cumulative Data File (1948-2016) and with the statistical software of your choice report the distribution of the 7-category party identification variable (VCF0301).
 6. [Download](#) the 2016 Time Series Study and report the distribution of the 7-category party identification variable.

7. Using the Cumulative Data File, select for the 2016 study and report the distribution of the 7-category party identification variable. Do your results here match those from Q6?
8. Read Collins and Block (2020)
9. Read DeSante and Watts Smith (2020)

Week 3 (October 15)

- Attempt to replicate Table 3 in Desante and Watts Smith (2020).
- Read:
 1. Achen (2000)
 2. Achen (2002, especially the sections on “Toward Reliable Empirical Generalizations” and “A Rule of Three”)
- Start familiarizing yourself with *Cooperative Congressional Election Study*:
 1. Spend some time perusing the [website](#).
 2. Skim the [FAQ](#).
 3. Find and read Parts I & II of the “Guide to the 2018 Cooperative Congressional Election Survey.”
 4. Find and skim the “Guide to the CCES Cumulative Common Content (2006 - 2018).”
 5. Download the CCES Cumulative Common Content report the distribution of the 7-category party identification variable by year.
 6. Download the 2018 CCES and report the distribution of the 7-category party identification variable.
 7. Read: Carnes and Lupu (2020) and attempt to replicate Figure 4.
- **Look ahead to your assignments for next week and consider getting started on your Hypothesis Notes.**

Week 4 (October 22)

- Read:
 1. Guinness (2020)
 2. Wolfinger (1993)
 3. Stimson (nd, especially Section 2.5)
- Start familiarizing yourself with the *General Social Survey*:
 1. Read Baldassarri and Park (2020)
 2. Spend some time perusing the [website](#).
 3. Find the GSS Data Explorer and familiarize yourself with it.
 - a. Click the tab “Search GSS Variables.”
 - b. Filter for the subject “Political”
 - c. Click on the variable “partyid” and take a screenshot.
 - d. Click on the tab “Key Trends” and learn about the [tool](#).
 4. Get the data and make a table showing the distribution of party identification by year to match 3c. You may want to download the entire dataset or you may want to use the [extraction tool](#) to get only the variables you want.

- Pick an ANES dataset and write an “Hypothesis Note.” The note should include the following sections:
 1. Introduction – one paragraph that clearly and succinctly states the research question
 2. Hypothesis – one paragraph that includes a statement of your hypothesis and clearly identifies your independent and dependent variables.
 3. Rationale – one paragraph that provides the rationale/theory for your hypothesis
 4. Data and Measurement – 1-3 paragraphs where you describe the data and how you measure your independent and dependent variables.
 5. Results – one paragraph and one table or figure where you show and describe the bivariate relationship between independent and dependent variables.
- Pick a CCES dataset and write a “Hypothesis Note” in the same format as your ANES Hypothesis Note.
- Hypothesis Notes are due **Wednesday, October 21 at 9:00 a.m.** They should be uploaded and shared with all class members by this time. Read and be prepared to discuss all the Notes in class.

Week 5 (October 29)

- Write a 2-3 page project proposal that specifies a research question and describes a general approach to answer it, including a description of the data you could use.
- Write a second, distinct project proposal.
- Proposals are due **Wednesday October 28 at 9:00 a.m.**
- We will not meet as a class this week. All students will schedule individual meetings to discuss their proposals with Ben.

Week 6 (November 5)

Write a 5-6 page research prospectus. The general goal is to be as clear and complete as you can both about what you intend to research, the limitations you see, questions you have about how to proceed, etc. The prospectus should have the following sections:

1. Introduction: What is the research question and why is it interesting and important (1-2 paragraphs)?
2. Theory and hypotheses: What are your most important hypotheses and what is the rationale/theory from which they derive (3-5 paragraphs)?
3. Approach: What statistical methods will be the basis of the most persuasive evidence to assess your hypotheses (3-5 paragraphs)?
4. Data and Measures: What data will you use and how will you measure your variables (3-5 paragraphs).
5. *Preliminary* results: Describe a useful result you have already found and produce a table or figure to help convey it (1-3 paragraphs).
6. Next, *not final*, steps: How do you plan to proceed next? What directions do you plan to take in your analysis? What questions do you have about how you might proceed? (2-4 paragraphs).
7. Prospectuses are due **Wednesday November 4 by 9:00 a.m.** They should be uploaded and shared with all class members by this time. Read and be prepared to discuss all the prospectuses in class.

Week 7 (November 12)

Write a short (2-3 page) memo describing some preliminary analyses that go beyond what you did for last week. Memos are due by **Wednesday November 11 at 9:00 a.m.** They should be uploaded and shared with all class members by this time. Read and be prepared to discuss all the memos in class.

Week 8 (November 19)

Write a 1-3 page status update memo describing:

1. The current status of your project
2. A timeline to completion of your project
3. Any questions or concerns you have about finishing your project.
4. Memos are due by **Wednesday November 18 at 9:00 a.m.**

We will not meet as a class this week. All students will schedule individual meetings to discuss their memos with Ben.

Week 9 (November 26)

No class – Thanksgiving

Week 10 (December 3)

Write a draft of the results section of your final paper. Drafts are due by **Wednesday December 2 at 9:00 a.m.** They should be uploaded and shared with all class members by this time. Read and be prepared to discuss all the drafts in class.

Week 11 (December 10)

Prepare a 10-minute presentation (with slides) on your research project and be prepared for an additional 10 minutes of Q&A.

Monday, December 14 at 9:00 a.m. Final papers due.

Full Citations to Assigned Readings

- Achen, Christopher H. 2000. "Warren Miller and the Future of Political Data Analysis." *Political Analysis* 8 (2):142-6.
- . 2002. "Toward a New Political Methodology: Microfoundations and ART." *Annual Review of Political Science* 5:423-50.
- Baldassarri, Delia, and Barum Park. 2020. "Was There a Culture War? Partisan Polarization and Secular Trends in US Public Opinion." *The Journal of Politics* 82 (3):809-27.
- Brennan, Jason. 2020. *Good Work if You Can Get It: How to Succeed in Academia*. Baltimor, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Carnes, Nicholas, and Noam Lupu. 2020. "The White Working Class and the 2016 Election." *Perspectives on Politics*:1-18.
- Collins, Jonathan, and Ray Block. 2020. "Fired Up, Ready to Go: The Impact of Age, Campaign Enthusiasm, and Civic Duty on African American Voting." *Political Behavior* 42 (1):107-42.
- DeSante, Christopher D., and Candis Watts Smith. 2020. "Less Is More: A Cross-Generational Analysis of the Nature and Role of Racial Attitudes in the Twenty-First Century." *The Journal of Politics* 82 (3):967-80.
- Guinness, Harry. 2020. "Tear it Up and Start Again: Don't Be Afraid to Start Over and Learn from the First Take, Especially When Doing Something Important." *New York Times*, April 9.
- King, Gary. 2006. "Publication, Publication." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39 (1):119-25.
- Nagler, Jonathan. 1995. "Coding Style and Good Computing Practices." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 28 (3):488-92.
- Stimson, James A. nd. "Professional Writing in Political Science: A Highly Opinionated Essay." ed. C. H. University of North Carolina.
- Wolfinger, Raymond E. 1993. "Tips for Writing Papers." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 26 (1):87-8.