Political Science 290F:  
Political Behavior in the Developing World

Instructor: Lauren Young  
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Seminar Time: Thursday 3:10-6pm  
Seminar Location: Kerr 593  
Office: Kerr 665  
Office Hours: Tues 1:45-3:45pm or by appointment. You’ll get the best feedback if you email me your question or memo 24 hours in advance of the meeting, or 72 hours in advance for longer drafts.

Overview

This course is designed to prepare advanced graduate students to do research on political behavior in the developing world. The primary goal of the course is to provide a sampling of the literature on a handful of areas of active research on violence, protest, identity and cooperation, and political participation. Class discussions are organized around questions such as, Why do individuals participate in violence? When do citizens mobilize to demand public services from politicians? and How do historical events shape current behavior? For each research area, we will read a mix of foundational texts and recent research that attempts to use new research designs to shed light on substantively important questions.

In addition to this overview, this course aims to provide insights on how to launch new empirical research projects in comparative politics. To this end, we will 1) have guest speaker(s) who will discuss how they designed and implemented research projects as graduate students on 1-2 of the topics covered, 2) replicate and extend the analysis of a research paper, and 3) write and workshop a short research proposal. The goal of these exercises and one focus of the class discussions will be to go “behind the scenes” of research on the topics covered.

This course is designed for graduate students who have already taken an overview comparative politics seminar and have basic training in research design and methods. The replication assignment in particular assumes an ability to read and write code in a program like Stata or R. If you want to take the course but have not already taken the methods sequence POL 211-213, please come talk to me.

Assignments

The assignments in this class are designed with two goals in mind:

1. To support mastery of the material – both theoretical and empirical – in the course.
2. To prepare students to be members of an academic community.

Particularly with #2 in mind, these assignments are structured around things that most academic social scientists do regularly throughout their careers.

Assignments should be posted on the course website by the start of class on the day that they are due. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for each 24 hours that they are late.

Assignment #1A: Critical reviews.

**Deadline: by midnight on Wednesday before the class session when the articles will be discussed.**

The first assignment for the course is a 5-page written critical review of one week of assigned readings. During the first day of class students will sign up for a week to review. You can also use a portion of this review to raise a new research idea and propose a methodology that would fill a gap that you identify in the assigned readings. These reviews do not need to cover all of the material assigned during the week, but they must provide a critical analysis of the literature and advance an argument. You will do this assignment twice during the quarter, covering two different weeks of readings. You will turn this assignment in by uploading it to the week’s discussion prompt on Canvas.

Assignment #1B: Methods presentation. **OPTIONAL**

**Deadline: by midnight on Wednesday before the class session when the method will be discussed.**

Students can substitute one of the two critical reviews with a short presentation on an applied method that complements the substantive readings for the week. If you choose this option, you will sign up to write one critical review (assignment 1A) and will also sign up for a methods presentation in a particular week (assignment 1B). You will give a 20-30 minute presentation on the method in class based on the recommended readings on that method and additional readings that you find relevant. The presentation should address the following questions:

1. What are the main methodological challenges in this area of research design?
2. What are some of the current solutions to those challenges?
3. How do those solutions work, conceptually and practically?

Great presentations will include examples of applied work that touch on this area of methods and go beyond simply summarizing the literature to raise critiques or make new suggestions for applications. You will turn this assignment in by uploading your presentation to the week’s discussion prompt on Canvas. You can do this assignment in a team of two.
Assignment #2: Replication and Extension Exercise

*Deadline: by midnight on 5/6.*

Replication is part of the scientific process, a great way to build familiarity with data analysis, and a potential path to a new research project. In this course, you will work in pairs to replicate and extend a published article or working paper that uses quantitative data. The replication should cover an assessment of the basic replicability of the paper with reproduced results, as well as a section extending the analysis. This extension may apply new specifications or methods, test additional observable implications, merge in additional data to test robustness or generalizability, etc.

Your replications are not only an educational exercise. They will be part of the Institute for Replication efforts to replicate research in leading social science journals. To this end, you will choose a study (ideally but not necessarily related to the topics covered in the course) from the list of political science studies currently in need of replicators. You will write a replication report following the standards and template from the Institute for Replication and the Social Science Reproducibility Platform. You can register your replication publicly with the SSRP when you are done.

*I expect all students in the class to be able to use a data analysis tool like Stata or R. If you anticipate that you might have problems completing this assignment, come speak to me after the first class session.*

Assignment #3: Research Proposal


Your final project is a 10-15 page proposal for a research project on a topic related to the course material. This should include: a literature review, short theoretical discussion that generates observable implications, and a proposed methodology (or methodologies if you are proposing a multi-methods project). If time permits, you can also include a draft data collection instrument or coding protocol and preliminary analysis of actual or simulated data, but these are not required.

Before you submit this final proposal, you’ll have an opportunity to get feedback on a rough draft and in-class presentation. In order to get feedback, you will post a rough draft of your proposal to Canvas. This can be in outline form, but it must contain all the sections for the final paper (literature review, theoretical framework with observable implications, and proposed methodology). During the class presentation you’ll give a short overview of your proposal, and receive comments from the group.
Assignment #4: Participation

**Deadline for comments/questions: by midnight on Wednesday before the class session when the article will be discussed.**

Critical discussion of research is an integral part of what we do as academics (as well as many non-academic roles related to political science). Practicing this skill is thus an important part of professional development as well as a great way to master the material. To reflect this, 20% of grades will be based on participation in class.

Preparing for class is a good way to ensure a good participation grade. Outlining material and coming to class with a list of questions and comments are both great ways to prepare, and these notes will continue to be useful as you study for comps and do your own later research and teaching.

To this end, to kick off the discussion in class, each participant will submit at least two questions or comments on the assigned readings to Canvas. Please take a few minutes to review the questions/comments that your classmates submit before class. You do not need to post separate discussion questions/comments during weeks when you write response papers.

If you need to miss a session for whatever reason, you can still get participation credit by writing an extra response paper for the session that you missed. This extra response paper is due by midnight before the start of the class that you miss, or another date agreed upon with the instructor.

**Grading**

Final grades will be calculated based on:

- Critical reviews and/or Methods presentation – 30%
- Replication – 20%
- Research proposal – 30%
- Participation – 20%

Good writing is important for publishing, so please make sure to edit and proof read carefully. Written assignments should have a clear structure and language should be precise. Please include page numbers.

If you are having any problems with the course, please come talk to me. If you need to turn in something late, let me know in advance. My goal is to organize and incentivize you to learn and practice new skills and I am happy to figure out an alternative way to enable you to do that if you have a personal challenge during the quarter.
Sessions

3/31 – Introduction: Thinking about thinking

Required:
Kertzer, Joshua. 2017. “Microfoundations in international relations.” CMPS 34(1): pp 81-86. (You can stop at the section on resolve.)
Humphreys, Macartan. “How to critique.” http://www.macartan.nyc/teaching/discuss/

4/7 – Behavioral models

What theoretical frameworks can we apply to understand political behavior? What are their assumptions? What are their implications for important political phenomena?

Required:

Recommended:
4/14 – Intragroup cooperation / Experiments on identity
What is identity? How might identity shape cooperation within groups?

Required:

Methods:

Recommended:

4/21 – **Intergroup conflict / Standard natural experiments**
*When do groups come into conflict? How do people respond to demographic changes?*

**Required:**


**SPECIAL GUEST: DANNY DONGHYUN CHOI**

**Methods:**

**Recommended:**

4/28 – **Violence / Regression discontinuity designs**
*Why do people participate in violence?*

**Required:**


**Methods:**


**Recommended:**


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**5/5 – Electoral participation / Measurement**

*Why do citizens participate in elections? How can participation be increased?*

**Required:**

Kasara, Kimuli and Pavithra Suryanarayan. 2015. “When do the rich vote less than the poor and why?: Explaining turnout inequality across the world.” *AJPS* 59(3): pp. 613-627. [14pp]


Methods:

Recommended:

REPLICATION EXERCISES DUE BY MIDNIGHT ON FRIDAY 5/6

5/12 – Accountability / External validity


Methods:
Green, Donald. “10 Things to Know about Conducting a Meta-Analysis.” EGAP Methods Guides. [6pp]

Recommended:

5/19 – Dissent / Research ethics
Why do citizens participate in protest or other forms of dissent? When is protest likely to
occur?

Required:

Methods:
Baron, Hannah, and Lauren E. Young. 2021. "From principles to practice: Methods to increase the transparency of research ethics in violent contexts." Political Science Research and Methods: 1-8. [8pp]

Recommended:

5/26 – Historical legacies / Mediation analysis

*How does the past shape current behavior?*

**Required:**

**Methods:**

**Recommended:**
DRAFT/OUTLINE RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE 5/27 BY MIDNIGHT

6/2 – Research proposal presentations

FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE 6/9 BY MIDNIGHT