

**Fundamentals of Political and Social Research**  
Universitat Pompeu Fabra  
Fall Quarter 2018

**Instructor:** Enrique Hernández ([enrique.hernandez@uab.cat](mailto:enrique.hernandez@uab.cat))

### **1. Course overview**

This course covers basic issues in epistemology, research design, and research methods. We will ask the broader question of how one can generate useful knowledge in the social sciences. The first part of the course will focus on theory construction and the generation of causal arguments. The second part of the course will examine topics in empirical research design and hypothesis testing. Throughout the course, the students will work on the step-by-step formulation of their own research designs.

### **2. Objectives of the course**

The aims of the course are the following:

- To become acquainted with some basic debates in the history of social research
- To learn about the key issues in methodology and research design
- To learn to critically evaluate scientific research in the fields of political science and sociology
- To write an initial research proposal
- To empower post-graduate students to choose their own approach to research

### **3. Evaluation**

The evaluation will consist of five elements:

- Two short written assignments (1-2 pages). Due in weeks 4 and 6 (15%).
- In class active participation (10%).
- Student-led discussions: Each class, two students will help the professor conduct the discussion. A sign-up sheet will be circulated in the first day of class (10%).
- Presentations: Each student will deliver two short presentations, in weeks 5 and 9/10 (15%).
- Final assignment: Students will write a short research proposal (8-10 pages) at the end of the course (50%). **Due on January 10<sup>th</sup>.**

### **4. General guidelines to write a research proposal**

Przeworski, Adam and Frank Salomon (1988/1995). "The Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Suggestions for Applicants to Social Science Research Council Competitions." Memo published by the Social Science Research Council. [Link](#)

Guidelines for writing a research proposal for a PhD in the Department of Political and Social Sciences. European University Institute. [Link](#)

### **5. Course organization**

The course is divided into two groups:

- Group 1 (Tuesdays from 9 to 12 at room 13.005): For those of you with limited prior experience with research design and research methods.

- Group 2 (Fridays from 9 to 12 at room 13.003): For those of you who have already taken courses on research design either at the undergraduate or post-graduate level

While the contents covered in each of the groups will be very similar and the assignments will be exactly the same, some of the readings will differ between the two groups.

Students are expected to read the readings assigned to each session. When different readings are assigned to each of the groups this is clearly specified in the syllabus. In any case, all students are encouraged to read all the readings.

## **6. Office hours**

Send me an email ([enrique.hernandez@uab.cat](mailto:enrique.hernandez@uab.cat)) to make an appointment. Office hours will generally take place on Tuesdays and Fridays between 8 and 9 at room 20.1E28 (please note that the room might change)

## PART I: BUILDING THEORIES

### 1. On science: Paradigms, advance, and vocation.

Hay, C., 2002. Political analysis. A critical introduction. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke. Pp. 1-66

Bernardi, Fabrizio (2007) "The Four Sociologies and Social Stratification." Sociologica.

Geddes, Barbara (2003). *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Pp. 1-23

Schwartz, M.A., 2008. The importance of stupidity in scientific research. *Journal of Cell Science* 121, 1771–1771.

### 2. Selecting research questions.

Group 1: Toshkov, Dimiter. (2016). Research design in political science. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 2

Group 2: Geddes, Barbara (2003). *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapter 2

Everyone: Firebaugh, Glenn. (2007), *Seven Rules for Social Research*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1

**Assignment 1:** Formulate your own original research question. It must be related to a topic you have read about in political science or sociology. Write one page presenting a puzzle and making a convincing claim about why you think it is important. It is not necessary, but you can very briefly explain what is the main current view in the literature about this topic and discuss why this view may be wrong, incomplete or might need further development. **Due on: 21/10/2018**

### 3. Building theories.

Group 1: Toshkov, Dimiter. (2016). Research design in political science. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 3

Group 2: Lave, Charles and James March (1975). *An Introduction to Models in the Social Sciences*, New York: Harper & Row. Chapters 1, 2, 3.

Everyone: Swedberg, Richard 2016. Before theory comes theorizing or how to make social science more interesting. *The British Journal of Sociology* 67, 5–22

Additional readings:

Kohli, A., Evans, P., Katzenstein, P.J., Przeworski, A., Rudolph, S.H., Scott, J.C., Skocpol, T., (1995). "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics: A Symposium." *World Politics* 48, 1–49.

#### 4. Causality and the experimental benchmark.

Group 1: Toshkov, Dimiter. (2016). Research design in political science. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. [Chapters 6-7](#)

Group 2: Angrist, Joshua and Jorn-Steffen Pischke (2009). *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [Chapters 1-2](#).

Everyone: Kocher, M.A., Monteiro, N.P., (2016). Lines of Demarcation: Causation, Design-Based Inference, and Historical Research. *Perspectives on Politics* 14, 952–975

Everyone: Stokes, Susan C. (2014). “A Defense of Observational Research”, in: Teele, Dawn L. (Editor), *Field Experiments and Their Critics: Essays on the Uses and Abuses of Experimentation in the Social Sciences*. New Haven: Yale University Press

Everyone: OMFG Exogenous Variation! Or, Can You Find God Nails When You Find An Indonesian Politics Hammer [\[Link to blogpost\]](#)

Everyone: Is theory getting lost in the “identification revolution”? [\[Link to blogpost\]](#)

**Assignment 2:** Propose a hypothesis related to your research question. Specify what is the dependent variable, what is the main independent variable, what is the process linking the two and discuss alternative explanations for your outcome. The assignment should be no longer than one page. **Due on: 4/11/2018**

#### PART II: TESTING THEORIES

#### 5. Conceptualization, operationalization and measurement.

Group 1: Toshkov, Dimiter. (2016). Research design in political science. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. [Pp. 83-122](#)

Group 2: Goertz, G., Mahoney, J., (2012). A tale of two cultures: qualitative and quantitative research in the social sciences. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [Pp. 127-177](#)

Everyone: Adcock, R. (2001). “Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research.” *American Political Science Review*, 95(3): 529-546.

#### Additional readings:

Gerring, J., (1999). What Makes a Concept Good? A Criterial Framework for Understanding Concept Formation in the Social Sciences. *Polity* 31, 357–393.

**Students presentations 1:** In pairs, pick one of the experimental articles of the list available in the Campus Global. Prepare a short (5-10) minutes presentation addressing the following questions: (i) what is the research question; (ii) why did the authors use an experiment?; (iii) which hypotheses did the authors test?; (iv) which type of experiment did the authors use (field, natural, lab, survey)?; (v) what was the treatment(s)?; What was the control group?; (vi) assess the internal and external validity of the experiment. Please send me an email indicating the article that you will present **by week 3**

## **6. The logic of large-N designs: Strengths and pitfalls.**

Group 1: Toshkov, Dimiter. (2016). Research design in political science. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 8

Group 2: Keele, L., (2015). "The Statistics of Causal Inference: A View from Political Methodology". Political Analysis 23, 313–335.

Everyone: Freedman, D.A., (1991). "Statistical Models and Shoe Leather." Sociological Methodology 21, 291–313.

### Additional readings:

Bernardi, F., Chakhaia, L., Leopold, L., (2017). "Sing Me a Song with Social Significance: The (Mis)Use of Statistical Significance Testing in European Sociological Research." European Sociological Review 33, 1–15.

## **7. The logic of small-N and single-case designs: Strengths and pitfalls.**

Toshkov, Dimiter. (2016). Research design in political science. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapters 9-10

Gerring, J., (2004). "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?" American Political Science Review 98, 341–354

Collier, D., (2011). "Understanding Process Tracing". PS: Political Science & Politics 44, 823–830

## **8. Selection of cases.**

1. Traditional case-based approach
  - a. Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, Sidney Verba (1994). *Designing Social Enquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 4.
  - b. Seawright, J., & Gerring, J. (2008). Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research. A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2), 294–308.
  - c. Seawright, J. (2016). *Multi-method social science: combining qualitative and quantitative tools*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6
2. Causal inference design-based approach:
  - a. Dunning, T. (2014). *Natural Experiments in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-2

## **9. Caveats, mixed methods and implication analysis.**

Seawright, J., (2016). Multi-method social science: combining qualitative and quantitative tools, Strategies for social inquiry. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1

Lieberson, S., Horwich, J., (2008). "Implication Analysis: A Pragmatic Proposal for Linking Theory and Data in the Social Sciences." Sociological Methodology 38, 1–50.

Additional readings:

Gambetta, D., Hertog, S., (2007), "Engineers of jihad." Sociology Working Papers. Department of Sociology University of Oxford. Paper Number 2007-10

**Start of student presentations:** Students can:

- a) Present their own research design
- b) Select one excellent research article and prepare a presentation about the research design. Please send a proposal of your article of choice **by week 7**. I recommend choosing either a "classical" article or a very recent article published in a flagship journal (*American Journal of Political Science*, *American Political Science Review*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *World Politics*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*). First, you will describe the research design applying the main concepts learned in the course. Second, you will criticize two shortcomings of the work.

**10. Presentations of research designs.**

*Continuation of student presentations*

### Schedule GROUP-1 (TUESDAYS)

Week	Tuesday (Group 1)	Important deadlines and tasks
1	25/09/2018: S1 On science: Paradigms...	
2	02/10/2018: S2 Selecting RQ	
3	9/10/2018: S3 Building theories	14/10/2018: Select and email experimental article for 5th week presentation.
4	16/10/2018: S4 Causality and experimental benchmark	21/10/2018: (i) Research question assignment (assignment-1)
5	23/10/2018: S5 Conceptualization, operationalization...	In class: Experimental articles presentations
6	30/10/2018: S6 Large-N designs	4/11/2018: Hypothesis assignment (assignment- 2)
7	06/11/2018: S7 Small-N designs	12/11/2018: Email paper for final presentation (not necessary if you present your own research design)
8	13/11/2018: S8 Selection of cases	
9	20/11/2018: S9 Caveats, mixed methods and implication analysis	In class: Design (final) presentations
10	27/11/2018: Presentation of research designs	In class: Design (final) presentations

Classroom: 13.005

### Schedule GROUP-2 (FRIDAYS)

Week	Friday (Group 2)	Deadlines and tasks
1	28/09/2018: S1 On Science: Paradigms...	
2	05/10/2018: S2 Selecting RQ	
	12/10/2018: Holiday	14/10/2018: Select and email experimental article for 5th week presentation.
3	19/10/2018: S3 Building theories	21/10/2018: Research question assignment (assignment-1);
4	26/10/2018: S4 Causality and experimental benchmark	
5	2/11/2018: S5 Conceptualization, operationalization...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4/11/2018: Hypothesis assignment (assignment-2).</li> <li>- In class: Experimental articles presentations</li> </ul>
6	9/11/20018: S6 Large-N designs	12/11/2018: Email paper for final presentation (not necessary if you present your own research design)
7	16/11/2018: S7 Small-N designs	
8	23/11/2018: S8 Selection of cases	
9	30/11/2018: S9 Caveats, mixed methods and implication analysis	In class: Design (final) presentations
10	4/12/2018 (Tuesday): Presentation of research designs. <b>Classroom 13.005</b>	In class: Design (final) presentations

Classroom: 13.003