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Class meets: Monday, 6:00 PM to 8:45 PM in Coor 6607

Course description

This is a research intensive seminar on American Politics. It touches upon traditional topics such as the presidency, Congress, political parties, public opinion, the mass media, campaigns and elections, and representation. However, the course differs from traditional courses in American politics in that it examines these topics within the context of American foreign policy and war. It is also unique in that students will spend a considerable amount of time collaborating on a research project using the 2014 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES).

Course organization and requirements

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and participate in class discussions each week. Students that arrive late to class will be docked participation points and may be locked out of the seminar room altogether.

Each class period students should be prepared to answer each of the following questions from any assigned reading,

1. What is the research question? Specifically, what is the basic information the researchers are seeking in their project?
2. What are the key concepts - the phenomena implicitly or explicitly referenced in the research question?
3. What are the key variables? That is, what do the numerical scales that measure the concepts look like?
4. What is the theory - the logical explanation of how and why the concepts are related?
5. What are the hypotheses - the statements predicting a relationship between two or more variables?
6. How is the data collected? That is, how are cases identified and selected to be included in the study?

7. What research method or methods do the researchers use to test their hypotheses?

8. What are the key empirical findings? Do the authors present convincing evidence that supports their hypotheses? If not, why not?

Students that cannot answer these questions may lose participation points. Typically, this is one point per question. Students that miss an entire class session may lose up to ten of their semester participation points for each missed day.

This is a discussion-based seminar. Students are not allowed to use laptops, tablets, cell phones, or any other device during the class. I expect students to be engaged in the discussion.

Students are also required to attend school colloquium, e.g., invited speakers and job talks for the advanced American Politics position. For each designated colloquium, students will prepare a short one-paragraph summary of the research question, theory, and evaluation of the methodology/conclusions of the research. Designated colloquium and due dates will be announced in class.

Finally, students are required to prepare a research paper using the 2014 CCES. Students will be required to make presentations on the motivation for the study (week 1), the existing literature and theory for their topic (week 10), and a final report that walks the class through each portion of the research project, i.e., research question, conceptualization, theory, hypotheses, and proposed research design (week 16). The written paper is due at the start of the final class period (4-27).

The papers should conform to [The JOP Style Guide] except 1) all Tables and Figures should be placed in the appropriate space within the document text (not at the end of the paper), 2) 12-point font should be used at all times, 3) papers should not exceed 25 pages (excluding tables, figures, and references), and 4) you should use footnotes instead of endnotes.

Course grades: Course grades will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria,

- Seminar and colloquium participation (including week 1 and mid-term presentations): 50 points
- Final paper and presentation: 50 points

Late work will not be accepted in this course. A minute over the stated due date for an assignment is considered late and you will earn a zero for the assignment. I also do not provide feedback on late assignments.
Furthermore, taking an “incomplete” in this course is not an option. Students undergoing extenuating circumstances should contact me ASAP and we will discuss the situation.

Finally, ALL written assignments must be taken to Graduate Writing Services prior to the due date. Documentation should be submitted with each writing assignment. For more information please refer to the Graduate Writing Services website: https://tutoring.asu.edu/graduate.

Course calendar

All readings listed are required unless otherwise noted as “additional.”

Week 1 (1-12): Course introductions

Required reading: Codebook of the 2014 CCES and Stimson “writing a paper” monograph.

Assignment: Read the CCES and choose a question or series of question that will represent a concept you would like to explain in your course research paper. Prepare a short 2-3 minute presentation on what is the concept you would like to explain, what questions in the CCES represent that concept (i.e., what question will serve as your dependent variable), and why understanding this concept is important. You can discuss conceptualization and measurement issues, but you are not allowed to discuss any theory or hypotheses during your presentation, i.e., do not discuss any potential independent variables. Focus on the outcome you want to explain and why it is important.

Week 2 (1-19): MLK Holiday

No class

Week 3 (1-26): Presidency

Theoretical considerations


Presidential use of force


**Week 4 (2-2): Congress (distributed politics)**


**Week 5 (2-9): Congress and the presidency**

*Congressional constraints on presidential use of force*


• Koch, Michael T. and Patricia Sullivan. 2010. “Should I stay or should I go now? Partisanship, approval, and the duration of major democratic military interventions.” *Journal of Politics*, 72(3).

*Presidential approval and the use of force*


**Additional readings**


• Voeten, Erik and Paul R. Brewer. 2006. “Public opinion, the War in Iraq, and presidential accountability.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50(6).

**Week 6 (2-16): Public opinion of U.S. foreign policy**

Syllabus: American Politics (Pro-seminar), Spring 2014


Additional readings


Week 7 (2-23): An Elite-driven model of opinion formation


Week 8 (3-2): A rational response to war

Note: Segura and Gartner have a forthcoming book on the topic that I would highly recommend reading once it is published.


Additional readings


Week 9 (3-9): Spring break

No class meeting

Week 10 (3-16): Class presentations

Assignment: Students will make a 5-10 minute presentation consisting of a literature review of their research topic (from week 1). Students should provide an outline of the literature relevant to their research topic, i.e., explain what are the major theories that explain their outcome of interest, the empirical support for these theories, and any appropriate critiques of the literature (theory and methods). Students may also present any ideas for alternative theories they might test with the CCES data, but the emphasis should be on the past literature prior to the development of theory. However, this is a good place to discuss your preliminary theoretical ideas among your classmates.

Week 11 (3-23): A micro approach to rational responses to war


Week 12 (3-30): Civil liberties and human rights

Civil liberties


Human rights


Week 13 (4-6): Elections, issue voting, and representation


**Week 14 (4-13): Representation**

I highly recommend the following article by Kuklinski and Segura. It is a great example of how a review essay can summarize the big picture of various literature and create new insights into the study of politics. Kuklinski, James H., and Segura, Gary M. 1995. “Endogeneity, exogeneity, time, and space in political representation: A review article.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly, 20*(1): 3-21.


**Week 15 (4-20): Privatization and the U.S. Military**


**Week 16 (4-27): Presentations**

Students will give an 8-10 minute presentation on their research project. The final papers are also due at the beginning of class (4-27).

**Statement about students with disabilities**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe
you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room 126 of the Koldus Building, or call 845-1637.

Copyright statement

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Statement about plagiarism

As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the Texas A&M University website, http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu.