

POLI 199AS: Experimental Analysis of the 2008 Election

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Class: WF 11:40–12:55 Perkins LL #4
Office hours: By appt., Old Chem 408A

Course overview

This class is a lab-style seminar in which we will design, field, and analyze an experimental study of vote choice or political reasoning during the fall campaign. Our goal is to publish a scholarly article about our findings in a peer-reviewed journal of political science—an ambitious project that will require a substantial commitment from all fifteen students. Flexibility will also be essential since the course will evolve during the semester based on the needs of the project.

Plan for the semester

We will begin by discussing the goals of science and the value of experiments. We will then learn about experimental design, statistics, and the use of statistical software. To make these concepts more real, students will design, administer, and analyze their own mini-experiments in small groups.

In the second phase of the course, we will determine the focus of our research. With my help, students will survey recent articles in political science and psychology, identify a promising theory or unresolved question, and write a short paper proposing an experiment that we could carry out. After these proposals have been presented, the class will decide which question to pursue.

We will then break into groups to design different portions of the experiment, which will be revised and combined. We will pre-test our design on a small convenience sample, analyze our results, and revise the experiment as needed. After finalizing the design, we will gather experimental data from subjects at campus locations and/or public settings in the community.¹

During the last part of the semester, we will work together to analyze the data and outline an article reporting our findings. Each student will draft one part of the article. I will combine those components into a draft that we will revise collaboratively. The class will culminate with each student developing a critique of the paper's writing, argument, and quantitative analysis and proposing revisions designed to improve it. These changes will be integrated into a manuscript that will be submitted to a scholarly journal in early 2009.

Learning objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Explain the value of experiments to science

¹We will be able to compensate subjects using funds provided by the Undergraduate Research Support Office. All research will be approved by Duke's Institutional Review Board.

- Analyze previous experimental findings in political science and psychology
- Design and conduct an experiment
- Perform a statistical analysis of experimental data
- Write a scholarly article reporting the results of an experiment

Class location

The class will be held in Classroom 4 in the new Teaching and Learning Center in Perkins Library, which has numerous features that will facilitate collaboration on our research project (adjacent breakout rooms for small group work, flexible seating, digital projectors, etc.). However, we will occasionally have class in the political science computer lab in Perkins 214, which has numerous computers equipped with Stata, the statistical software we will use in the class.

Course materials

The following books are required and can be purchased at the bookstore:

- Annabel Ness Evans and Bryan J. Rooney. 2008. *Methods in Psychological Research*. Sage Publications.
- Irwin P. Levin. 1999. *Relating Statistics and Experimental Design*. Sage Publications.

Communication

The class will be run through Blackboard. I will use it to email announcements to you, to provide links and PDFs of assigned reading, and to facilitate collaboration via the wiki tool. Please submit your work to me through its assignments page rather than by email. However, if you have questions, feel free to email me to set up a time to meet in person.

Assignments and grading

Grading in this class will be based on participation and the written assignments described below. Late work will not be accepted without prior permission.

Participation (includes one-page assignments)—30%

By necessity, our collaboration will largely take place in the classroom. As such, it is essential that each student make thoughtful and consistent contributions in class discussion and group work. At a minimum, however, you should attend class on time with your readings and assignments completed and be respectful of others during class discussion.

Paper/presentation on research topic (due 9/13)—20%

Students will work with me to select a contemporary topic in experimental political science or psychology. They will then write a 1000–1500 word paper summarizing recent research in that area and proposing an experiment that the class could execute that would make an important contribution to that literature. They will then present their findings to the class. (Note: Before starting your literature review, read Ch. 2 of the Evans and Rooney text.)

Contribution to article (due 11/16)—25%

After outlining our article, each student will be assigned to draft one component of the article, which could include part or all of the introduction, literature review, theory section, experimental design, results section, or conclusion. The exact assignments will depend on both the composition of the class and the structure of the article that we plan to write and thus will not be made until late October/early November. I will do my best to balance the difficulty of the assignments and to match them to students' interests.

Revision/critique of article—25%

Once we assemble the components of the article, each student will develop two 500–750 word papers critiquing a specific aspect of the draft article's writing, argument, and quantitative analysis and proposing revisions to address the problems they have identified (5% each, due 11/23 and 12/4). Students will then write a 1500–2000 word critique of the article as a whole for their final paper. It should propose further revisions and suggest future research projects that build on our current results (15%, due 12/11).

Course schedule

Experiments: Why and how

The rationale for experimental research (8/26 8:30–9:45 AM)

- Evans and Rooney pp. 1–22, 133–137
- Levin pp. 1–9
- Rose McDermott. 2002. “Experimental Methods in Political Science.” *Annual Review of Political Science*. pp. 31–40 (link).

Causality and experimental design (8/27)

- Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Ch. 3 (PDF).
- Levin pp. 9–15
- Evans and Rooney ch. 7
- Small group: Design your own mini-experiment

Measurement and ethical issues in experiments (9/3)

- Evans and Rooney chs. 3, 5, 6
- Small group: Create instrument for mini-experiment

Hypothesis testing, t and F tests, and χ^2 (9/5)

- Evans and Rooney ch. 4, pp. 270–294, 309–313
- Levin pp. 16–33, 38–51, 55–61
- Small group: Conduct mini-experiments

Two-way ANOVA and multiple regression (9/10)

- Evans and Rooney pp. 300–309, 313–321
- Levin pp. 33–37, 51–55, 61–73

Stata tutorial in Perkins 214 (9/12)

- *Getting Started With Stata*, ch. 3 (PDF)
- Small group: Analyze mini-experiment data

Choosing a topic

Research topics I (9/17)

- Student research summaries (first group)
 - Mortality salience
 - Implicit associations
 - Emotional responses to perceived threats
 - Self-affirmation
 - Televised discourse
 - Motivated reasoning
- Assignment: Propose one modification to/critique of a proposed experiment for each topic (1–2 pages)
- Assignment: Stata analysis of sleep data

Research topics II (9/19)

- Student research summaries (second group)
 - Competitive framing
 - Source credibility
 - Correcting rumors and misperceptions
 - Polls and voter choice
- Assignment: Propose one modification to/critique of a proposed experiment for each topic (1 page)
- Goal: Choose top 3 areas or experiments

Pre-test design and analysis (correcting rumors and misperceptions)

Study design I (9/24)

- James H. Kuklinski et al. 2000, “Misinformation and the Currency of Democratic Citizenship.” *Journal of Politics* Vol. 62, No. 3: 790-816.
- Ruth Mayo, Yaacov Schul, and Eugene Burnstein. 2004. “‘I am not guilty’ vs ‘I am innocent’: Successful negation may depend on the schema used for its encoding.” *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 40: 433-449.
- Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler. 2008. “When Corrections Fail: The persistence of political misperceptions.” Unpublished manuscript.
- Assignment: Propose design of experiment and outline of independent and dependent variables in instrument (one page list/bullet format).

Study design II (9/26)

- Review preliminary experimental design
- Devote significant effort to revising design on class Wiki using previous assignment as a starting point – this can include some combination of the following:
 - Proposing different experimental designs or changes to our design
 - Adding liberal misperception ideas -
 - Offering suggestions for words to use in the IAT
 - Offering suggestions for the stimulus and manipulations
 - Proposing additional questions or types of questions that we should ask
- Assignment: Summary of changes to Wiki and other thoughts, critiques, etc. (1 page)

Pretest construction (10/1)

- Assignment: Further Wiki review/comments
- Assignment: Media Lab tutorial

Pretest construction II (10/3)

- Assignment: Further Wiki review/comments
- Assignment: Pretest construction

Pretest construction III (10/8)

- Scheduling the experiment
- Assignment: Pretest construction

Pre-test analysis (10/10)

- Changes to experiment
- Assignment: Gather pre-test data

Experimental data collection (10/15–11/4)

- Assignment: Gather data at Duke Hospital (10 hours per week)

Writing the article

Initial analysis of results I (11/5)

- Coding decisions
- Organization for paper-writing

Initial analysis of results II / paper outlining (11/7)

- Evans and Rooney Ch. 14
- Gary King. 2006. "Publication, publication." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 121–125.
- Kuklinski, James H., Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit, David Schweider, and Robert F. Rich. 2000. "Misinformation and the Currency of Democratic Citizenship." *The Journal of Politics*, 62(3):790-816. [read with attention to article style, structure, and presentation]

Group feedback on article drafts I (11/12)

- Other students' article drafts
- Small group: Feedback on drafts

Group feedback on article drafts II (11/14)

- Other students' article drafts
- Small group: Feedback on drafts

Revising the article

Article discussion I (11/19)

- Small groups: Identify problems in draft

Article discussion II (11/21)

- Other students' article critiques
- Small groups: Feedback on critique I

Final discussion I (12/3)

- Other students' article critiques
- Small groups: Feedback on critique II

Final discussion II (12/5)

- Logistics of paper revision
- Small groups: Identify problems in draft