

International Relations and Survey Experiments

Basics

Instructor: Tobias Heinrich (heinricht@mailbox.sc.edu – www.theinrich.net)

Time and place: POLI 391, University of South Carolina, Spring 2017.

Class: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3.55–5.10pm, Gambrell 152.

Office hour: Wednesdays, 2.00–3.00pm. I will usually be available for a bit right before and after class as well. You can also schedule alternative times with me through email.

Who else? Trish Boyd (paboyd@email.sc.edu). Tuesdays, 10.00-11.00am are office hours (Gambrell 426).

Outline

First, contrary to what one might encounter on CNN on a regular basis, domestic politics are central, fundamental in today's understanding of international relations. Scholars often focus on political institutions, public opinion, interest groups, and elections in order to explain onset of armed conflict, the imposition of economic sanctions, the restrictions of migration, the delivery of foreign aid, etc.

Second, undergraduate political science courses often diverge quite a bit from political science research, even within the same instructor. Survey experiments are an excellent vehicle to narrow this gap. They first let students conduct their own research so that they not only read about existing research. This is more immersive and active than traditional courses. Second, the research steps can actually be carried out by students without years of graduate training. This justifies the second part of the title of the course.

This course revolves around a small number of students in groups pitching, designing, carrying out, and analyzing their own survey experiments. Actual survey-takers will be recruited so that actual, valid data can be analyzed at the end. As the topics and research questions of the groups can be anything that connects domestic politics and international relations, students' chosen topics will determine the substantive questions discussed in class.

If you actively and meticulously participate in this course, you will learn

- how to coherently think in a structured way through political issues;
- about a broad range of how domestic politics affect international relations;
- appreciate the virtues of randomization;
- how to design, carry out, and analyze a survey experiment;
- to think more like a (social) scientist and much less like a journalist or talking head.

Date of this syllabus: January 9, 2017.

Required Materials

Everything needed in class will either be freely available online, be posted on Blackboard, or accessible via USC's subscriptions of academic journals.

Grades and Grading

Your grade will be comprised of several contributions which follow the process of research. Everything in this class will be graded on a scale of 0–100. Your final grade will simply be the weighted average of all these contributions. There are no tests per se, and no final.

- Each student writes out a crude research idea (including pitch, question, survey design, randomization). (Weight of 1; individual contribution.)
- Each student has to constructively criticize two other students' crude research idea. (Weight of 1; individual contribution.)
- After reviewing all research ideas and their respective critiques, a small number of groups should form to refine (and to ultimately conduct) the research idea. For is, the initial idea should be rewritten, extended, and subsequently presented in class. (Weight of 2; group contribution.)
- The final draft of the research proposal lays out the exact experimental design which will then be implemented. It has to address suggestions from the earlier presentation. (Weight of 4; group contribution.)
- The final paper augments the final research proposal with the analysis of the data, critique of the own work, suggestions for future research, and conclusions. (Weight of 5; group contribution.)
- There are three stages of the paper (refined research idea; final draft of research proposal; final paper). Each student comments on one of each in writing for a total of three one-page critiques. Be prepared to articulate critiques after the in-class presentations as well. Only the top two grades will count. (Weight of 2; individual contribution.)
- Survey involves human subjects and for such research, the researcher has to obey laws and university policies. Therefore, you have to pass online tests about research ethics and the treatment of human subjects. (Weight of 1; individual contribution.)
- There will be many, many quizzes. Some will cover the reading assigned for the day, some will look back at the last class session. Only the best 60% (after rounding) of all quizzes will count. (Weight of 4; individual contribution.)

Papers need to be neatly and academically written. Presentations have to be a separate format; just projecting the text of the research document on the screen is not acceptable. Use bullet points and no full sentences. Be rehearsed and concise.

I will use the following grading scale to map the final grade-points to letter grades. A 92-100, B+ 87-91, B 80-86, C+ 77-79, C 70-76, D+ 67-69, D 60-66, and F 0-59. Standard rounding rules apply. If you choose to turn in your work late, then you will lose ten points every 12 hours. If

your project is executed in a group, then *each* person in the group loses these points. Coordinate well! Unexcused no-shows for presentations get a zero for presentation *and* associated writing.

Assignments and examination work are expected to be the sole effort of the student or student group submitting the work. Students are expected to follow the University of South Carolina Honor Code and should expect that every instance of a suspected violation will be reported. Students found responsible for violations of the Code will be subject to academic penalties under the Code in addition to whatever disciplinary sanctions are applied. Cheating on a test or copying someone else's work, will result in a zero for the work, possibly a grade of F in the course, and, in accordance with University policy, be referred to the University Committee for Academic Responsibility and may result in expulsion from the University.

You are expected to be in class on time and be there every time as attending class is an integral part in learning the material. Further, missing class when your classmates carry out their presentations is simply rude. That said, no attendance will be taken so that there is no formal disadvantage from not showing up. I firmly believe that missing classes will adversely affect your learning and thereby your grade. However, if you fail to show up when you are supposed to present something, you will receive a zero for presentation *and* associated writing even if your fellow group members present well.

Reading the assigned material and attending class are crucial and not substitutable for each other. Some material in the readings are starting points for the content of class sessions; others will be dissected meticulously. There will also be classes without any previous grounding in readings. Your learning and thereby your grade will require close attention to lectures and readings.

Politics is inherently a social phenomenon, and thereby discussions about it are as well. I encourage every student to voice objections, questions, critique, and dissatisfaction with the presented material as well as with the instructor's and other students' views on the material. There are only three prerequisites: the comments have to be thought-out before voiced, be respectful, and must not aim to disrupt the course for disruption's sake.

Last, in light of debates around "micro-aggression", let me be clear: I cannot rule out that class discussions will challenge students' pre-existing beliefs. *Consider this syllabus an omnibus trigger warning for the entire semester.*

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, contact the Office of Student Disability Services: 777-6142, TDD 777-6744, email sasds@mailbox.sc.edu, or stop by LeConte College Room 112A. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Student Disability Services.

A note on data

Once the survey experiments are fielded, students will obtain actual data from respondents. I encourage students to make the data available for everyone to use eventually (in a thesis, e.g.). Data should not be proprietary in any sense. This is roughly the norm in social science.

Course Schedule

The syllabus is very likely to be changed by the instructor and perhaps quite a bit. If you are unclear about anything, just ask. Talk to the instructor early about concerns.

January 9: Howdy!

January 11: Science?

January 16: No class as it's MLK Day.

January 18: Approaching survey experiments, Day I. Surveying the wide world of survey experiments in IR. Go to <https://theinrich.net/sel>. Read 5+ articles from those listed and write a quick summary. Only pick articles that have the word "experiment" or "experimental" among their tags. What is the research question? Why does the answer to the question matter? Why are the authors using survey experiments? Who is being surveyed? Describe the survey and the experiment. Pick three articles and be prepared to present each (briefly) to the class.

January 23: Approaching survey experiments, Day II. Experimental IR.

- Alex Mintz, Yi Yang, and Rose Mc Dermott. Experimental approaches to international relations. *International Studies Quarterly*, 55(2):493–501, 2011
- Susan D Hyde. Experiments in international relations: Lab, survey, and field. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18:403–424, 2015

January 25: Approaching survey experiments, Day III. What are surveys? Why experimenting in surveys? *Crude research idea is due, and post it on Blackboard ("Crude research idea")*.

- Joshua D. Angrist and Jörn-Steffen Pischke, *Mastering 'Metrics*. Chapter 2. On Blackboard.

January 30: Approaching survey experiments, Day IV. Wording questions and measuring answers.

- Rebecca B Morton and Kenneth C Williams. *Experimental political science and the study of causality: From nature to the lab*. Cambridge University Press, 2010. Chapter 2. On Blackboard. Focus on their general points and not on their examples.

February 1: Approaching survey experiments, Day V. Confounding in survey experiments. *Critiques of two other students' crude research ideas are due. Leave critiques as replies in threads on Blackboard. Which idea, maybe not your own, interests you the most?*

February 6: "Speed-dating" for projects; forming groups.

- Brandice Canes-Wrone. From mass preferences to policy. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18:147–165, 2015

February 8: Mass public opinion and (foreign) policy.

- John H Aldrich, Christopher Gelpi, Peter Feaver, Jason Reifler, and Kristin Thompson Sharp. Foreign policy and the electoral connection. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9:477–502, 2006

February 13: Present refined research ideas and develop them, Day I. *Upload document to Blackboard (“Refined research idea”) by 10.00pm the day before. Critique is due by classtime.*

February 15: Present refined research ideas and develop them, Day II. *Upload document to Blackboard (“Refined research idea”) by 10.00pm the day before. Critique is due by classtime.*

February 20: Present refined research ideas and develop them, Day III. *Upload document to Blackboard (“Refined research idea”) by 10.00pm the day before. Critique is due by classtime.*

February 22: No class. Take CITI online certification. The course is called “Social and Behavioral Researchers.” (<http://orc.research.sc.edu/registration.shtml>). *Send proof of successfully passing the course to the TA by February 27 before class.*

February 27: In-depth presentation of IR survey experiment, Day I. *Fill out sections B, C, D, and E of the “research document” and upload it by 10.00pm the day before. Critique is due by classtime.*

March 1: In-depth presentation of IR survey experiment, Day II. *Fill out sections B, C, D, and E of the “research document” and upload it by 10.00pm the day before. Critique is due by classtime.*

March 13: In-depth presentation of IR survey experiment, Day III. *Fill out sections B, C, D, and E of the “research document” and upload it by 10.00pm the day before. Critique is due by classtime.*

March 15: No class today. Each group has to meet with instructor to discuss their project and to iron out details on March 15 or 16.

March 20: Administering a survey.

March 22: Analyzing data, Day I. *Fill out section F of the “research document” and upload it by 8.00am; create survey instrument via Google Forms.*

March 27: Analyzing data, Day II.

March 29: Buffer class.

April 3: No class. Field the surveys! Collect the data!

April 5: Analyzing survey experiments, Day I.

April 10: Analyzing survey experiments, Day II.

April 12: Analyzing survey experiments, Day III.

April 17: Present final papers, Day I. *All sections of “research document” must be filled out; upload document to Blackboard by 10.00pm the day before. Critique is due by classtime.*

April 19: Present final papers, Day II. *All sections of “research document” must be filled out; upload document to Blackboard by 10.00pm the day before. Critique is due by classtime.*

April 24: Present final papers, Day III. *All sections of “research document” must be filled out; upload document to Blackboard by 10.00pm the day before. Critique is due by classtime.*

April 26: *Any rewrites are due by 8.00am.*