

November 21, 2007

## **POS 3713: Research Methods**

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Will H. Moore

Fall 2007

Tue & Thu 2:00-3:15, Bellamy 004

Office Hours: Tue 10:30-11:30 am, Thu 1:00-1:55 pm <http://garnet.acns.fsu.edu/~whmoore/>

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Office: Bellamy 561

voice: 850.644.6924

[will.moore@fsu.edu](mailto:will.moore@fsu.edu)

### **Course Description**

This is a course about how to use the scientific method to study politics. It demands that you think precisely. Indeed, science is about precision and humility. The humility is needed to protect us against our hubris and the seductiveness of our own ideas. The method forces us to be both precise and humble. We will learn the method by both reading about it and doing it. Class time will be spent doing science. We will discuss the readings in class as the issues arise as we learn about politics by doing science as a group.

### **Requirements & Evaluation**

There will be 4 mechanisms for evaluation:

- Class participation (40%)
- Three exams (30%; 10% each for the best three scores on four exams)
- Cumulative final exam (30%)

### **Class Participation**

You are required to participate in class. This is a 'hands-on' course: we will spend class time doing research. If you are looking for a lecture course, then this is not the right section for you. If you own a laptop, please bring it to class with you.

Class participation will be graded based on your contributions to class discussion. You begin the semester with a 100%. I will call on people at random and as long as you participate when called upon, you will retain your 100% score. If you are called upon and do not participate I will deduct 3% from your score.

Students need not wait to be called upon to participate. Anyone wishing to add to the discussion may do so by raising her/his hand. Of course, not everyone will be called on every day, so you might be able to show up ill-prepared and still not lose any participation points (if you are not called upon, you cannot lose points). Students cannot earn participation points—points can only be lost by failure to participate or attend class when called upon.

If you miss class for any reason other than a religious observance or a university mandated reason, and are called upon you will lose points. There are no exceptions.

## Four Exams

There will be four ‘midterm’ exams. Your best three scores on these exams will count (10% each) toward your course grade. The exams will have multiple choice and true false questions, and you will mark your answers on a scantron (bubble) sheet. *You must bring a pencil to the exam.* They will be open notes, open book, and open Internet (you may bring a laptop to the exam). All work must be your own—you may not confer with anyone in or outside of the class.

The exams will be given in class on the following dates:

Thu 27 Sept

Tue 23 Oct

Thu 15 Nov

Thu 6 Dec

The questions on the exam will cover the material in the reading, but many questions will be inspired by the classroom meetings. I will post a study sheet on the BB site at least 24 hours prior to each exam.

## Cumulative Final Exam

The final exam will cover the material on the four ‘midterm’ exams. The exam will have multiple choice and true false questions, and you will mark your answers on a scantron (bubble) sheet. *You must bring a pencil to the exam.* It will be open notes, open book, and open Internet (you may bring a laptop to the exam). All work must be your own—you may not confer with anyone in or outside of the class.

We received a lousy draw from FSU on the exam schedule for this course: the final exam will be given from 3:00-5:00 pm on Friday 14 December. If I could change it I would, but the university forbids changing the date of a final exam. Make your travel plans accordingly.

# The Fine Print

Information on the following administrative issues is available under the Syllabus link on the course BB site.

- Students with Challenges
- Classroom Comportment: Civility
- Grading Scale

## Reading

Much of the reading comes from a textbook; the rest will be available for download at the course BB site. You may choose any **one** of the following textbooks. Flip through them and decide which you like best. **Please Note:** Textbooks have become remarkably expensive, so I have ordered used copies of the next to last edition of Babbie and Manheim, Rich & Wilnat texts (the Coolican is more reasonably priced). You are welcome to buy the current edition, but it will cost you a good deal more money.

They should be available at Bill's Bookstore. If you cannot find a copy there, try this website: [used.addall.com](http://used.addall.com).

Babbie, Earl. *The Practice of Social Research*, 8th edition, Wadsworth.

Coolican, Hugh. *Research Methods and Statistics in Psychology*, 4th edition, Hodder & Stoughton.

Manheim, Joel B., Richard C. Rich & Lars Wilnat. *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science*, 5th edition, Longman.

Why would I let students select among three textbooks? Some of you may enjoy this course so much that you decide that you want to pursue research in a PhD program. One learns best by reading multiple discussions of the same topic. Most of the students who take this course are interested in passing the course and earning a good grade. But there are some students who are genuinely interested in learning the material. If you are in the second group then I encourage you to either buy more than one text or make copies of relevant chapters from one of your classmates copies.

One of the texts will sometimes discuss a topic better than the others. I have noted those discussions with the ‡ symbol.

# Class Meeting Schedule

## **Tue 28 Aug:**

Pass out syllabus and take roll.

## **Thu 30 Aug:**

No class meeting.

## Science

### **Tue 4 Sept:**

Building a model of wins and losses.

Reading: Souva, Mark. 2007. "Fostering Theoretical Thinking in Undergraduate Education." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 40(3):557-561, available on course BB site ([campus.fsu.edu](http://campus.fsu.edu)) –AND– King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane & Sidney Verba. 1994. "Defining Scientific Research in the Social Sciences," in *Designing Social Inquiry*, Princeton University Press, pp. 7-12, available on course BB site.

### **Thu 6 Sept:**

Introduction to GRETTL (Gnu Regression, Econometrics and Time-series Library) and descriptive examination of Student Evaluations of Faculty Performance.

Download a copy of the free GRETTL software to your computer from:  
<http://gretl.sourceforge.net/>. If you have a laptop, bring it to class.

Reading: Blalock, Hubert M., Jr. 1970. *An Introduction to Social Research*, Prentice Hall, pp. 3-11, available on course BB site AND ‡ Babbie chap 1: "Human Science and Inquiry" ; or Coolican chap 1: "Psychology and Research"; or Manheim, Rich & Wilnat chap 1: "The Research Process."

## Theory: Concepts & Causation

### **Tue 11 Sept:**

Analysis of Student Evaluations of Faculty Performance.

Reading: Blalock, Hubert M., Jr. 1970. *An Introduction to Social Research*, Prentice Hall, pp. 62-68, 78-85, available on course BB site.

**Thu 13 Sept:**

Analysis of the Titanic's passengers.

Reading: ‡ Babbie chap 5: "Conceptualization and Measurement, pp.115- 129"; or Coolican chap 2: "Measuring People," pp. 26-30; or Manheim, Rich & Wilnat chap 4: "From Abstract to Concrete."

## Measurement

**Tue 18 Sept:**

Analysis of 9/11 and the Airline Industry

Reading: Blalock, Hubert M., Jr. 1970. *An Introduction to Social Research*, Prentice Hall, pp. 86-97 and 105-111, available on course BB site.

**Thu 20 Sept:**

Pedagogical Agent Experiment

Reading: Lagorio, Christine. 2006. "Hot for Teacher: Students Rate Profs Online and Vice Versa," *The Village Voice*, 11 January, available on course BB site, and ‡ Babbie chaps 5 & 6: "Conceptualization and Measurement," pp. 129-136, and "Operationalization," pp. 139-147; or Coolican chap 2: "Measuring People" pp. 31-34; or Manheim, Rich & Wilnat chap 4: "From Abstract to Concrete."

## Experiments

**Tue 25 Sept:**

Race and Sentencing in US Courts

Reading: Blalock, Hubert M., Jr. 1970. *An Introduction to Social Research*, Prentice Hall, pp. 12-32, available on course BB site—AND— Babbie chap 9: "Experiments"; or Coolican chap 3: "Uses of Experiments in Psychological Research"; or Manheim, Rich & Wilnat chap 5: "Working from a Plan" (pp. 85-91 only).

**Thu 27 Sept:**

Exam #1

## Quasi-Experiments

### Tue 2 Oct:

Descriptive Inquiry using the MIPT's Terrorism Knowledge Base (<http://www.tkb.org>) and the Global Terrorism Database.

Reading: King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane & Sidney Verba. 1994. "Major Components of Research Design," in *Designing Social Inquiry*, Princeton University Press, pp. 12-19, available on course BB site.

### Thu 4 Oct:

Does major religion account for varying numbers of terror events?

Reading: Babbie chap 4: "Research Design"; or Coolican chap 4: "Validity in Experiments"; or Manheim, Rich & Wilnat chap 5: "Working from a Plan" (esp. pp. 79-85, 91-99).

## Inference

### Tue 9 Oct:

Does poverty account for varying numbers of terror events?

Reading: King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane & Sidney Verba. 1994. "Descriptive Inference" and "Causality and Causal Inference," in *Designing Social Inquiry*, Princeton University Press, pp. 34-36 and 75-76, 82-85, available on course BB site AND Blalock, Hubert M., Jr. 1970. *An Introduction to Social Research*, Prentice Hall, pp. 68-78, available on course BB site.

### Thu 11 Oct:

Does democracy account for varying numbers of terror events?

Reading: Babbie "Inferential Statistics" (pp. 420-421 only).

## Sampling & Uncertainty

### Tue 16 Oct:

Do different types of terror events have different causes?

Reading: ‡ Babbie chap 8: "The Logic of Sampling"; or Coolican "Samples" pp. 34-44; or Manheim, Rich & Wilnat chap 6 "Who, What, Where, When: The Problem of Sampling."

**Thu 18 Oct:**

Is region of the world important for understanding differences in the number of terror events?

Reading: None.

**Tue 23 Oct:**

Exam #2

## Surveys

**Thu 25 Oct:**

Is party ID all we need to explain vote choice in US presidential elections?

Reading: Babbie chaps 6 & 10: “Operationalization” pp. 147-163 and “Survey Research”; or Coolican chap 7: “Questionnaires”; or ‡ Manheim, Rich & Wilnat chap 7: “Survey Research.”

**Tue 30 Oct:**

What impact do gender, race, and religion have on vote choice in US presidential elections?

Reading: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confidence\\_interval](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confidence_interval)

**Thu 1 Nov:**

Are US presidential elections really all about “the economy, stupid”?

Reading: none

## Reading Regression Output

**Tue 6 Nov:**

Forecasting US presidential elections.

Reading: Berry, William D. & Mitchell S. Sanders. 2000. *Understanding Multivariate Research*, Westview Press, chaps 1 and 2, available on the course BB site.

**Thu 8 Nov:**

Discussion of the nonsense spewed by the Talking Heads who reported on the US presidential election.

Reading: Berry, William D. & Mitchell S. Sanders. 2000. *Understanding Multivariate Research*, Westview Press, chap 3, available on the course BB site.

**Tue 13 Nov:**

The wisdom of crowds and futures markets: discussion of the Iowa Political Market.

Reading: Berry, William D. & Mitchell S. Sanders. 2000. *Understanding Multivariate Research*, Westview Press, chaps 4 and 5, available on the course BB site.

**Thu 15 Nov:**

Exam #3

## Regression

**Tue 20 Nov:**

A review of some basic facts about torture: what do the data tell us?

Reading: Neither Babbie nor Coolican cover regression. Instead, read Stockburger, David W. 1998. "Multiple Regression," available online at: <http://www.psychstat.missouristate.edu/multibook/mlt06.htm>;<sup>1</sup> or Manheim, Rich & Wilnat chaps 15 and 16: "Measures of Association and Significance for Interval Variables," pp. 264-270 and "Multiple Regression," pp. 276-283.

**Thu 22 Nov:**

Thanksgiving Holiday—class does not meet.

**Tue 27 Nov:**

Class cancelled due to travel.

**Thu 29 Nov:**

Do autocratic countries torture more than democratic ones? Is torture mostly about silencing dissidents?

Reading: none

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<sup>1</sup>We will not be covering all of the material on this page (e.g., ANOVA).

**Tue 4 Dec:**

Do international human rights agreements reduce the incidence of torture?

Reading: none

**Thu 6 Dec:**

Exam #4

**Fri 14 Dec, 3:00-5:00 pm:**

Final Exam (Bellamy 004)

The exam will be open notes, open book, open Internet. All work must be your own—communication with classmates or anyone else is forbidden.