

# **PSC 480: Scope of Political Science**

**Prof. Bethany Lacina  
Fridays, 9:30–12  
Fenno Room**

## **Readings**

Most of the journal articles and book chapters in the syllabus are available through links below.

Readings marked with a double dagger (‡) are available in electronic format through the University of Rochester library catalog.

You should buy one book: Daniel Little. 1991. *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Westview Press.

## **Academic honesty**



*Reading for the week:*

Daniel Little. 1991. *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Westview Press. Chapters 5, 6 and 9.

James Johnson. 2002. "How Conceptual Problems Migrate." *Annual Review of Political*

## Feb 23: Interpretation

### *Reading for the week:*

Daniel Little. 1991. *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Westview Press. Chapter 4.

Clifford Geertz. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books. Chapters 11–12. ‡

James C. Scott. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak*. Yale University Press. Chapters 2, 7.

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/m6lxau1rx4ds2su/Scott\\_Weapons.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/m6lxau1rx4ds2su/Scott_Weapons.pdf?dl=0)

Robert Bates, Rui J. P. de Figueiredo, and Barry R. Weingast. 1998. "The Politics of Interpretation." *Politics and Society* 26(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329298026004007>

### *Assignment (due at noon the day before class):*

Submit a memo of 2 to 3 pages that proposes an answer to your question and lists as many observable implications of that answer as you can generate. Be sure to think about observable implications at multiple levels. E.g., if your answer is correct, what kind of beliefs do relevant actors have? What actions do they take? What would you observe at the level of a city/firm/army/legislature, etc.? What kinds of observations would contradict your proposed answer?

## Mar 2: Cases

### *Reading for the week:*

Peter Abell. 2004. "Narrative Explanation: An Alternative to Variable-Centered Explanation?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 30.

<http://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.29.010202.100113>

James Fearon. 1991. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science." *World Politics* 43(2). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010470>

David D. Collier. 2011. "Understanding Process Tracing." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44(4). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511001429>

Sheri Berman. 1997. "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic." *World Politics* 49(3). [www.jstor.org/stable/25054008](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25054008)

Robert H. Bates, Avner Greif, Margaret Levi, and Jean-La.k15 0 -1M.7y(arif,D(What)-236(kinds)-236-21



Macartan Humphreys, Raul Sanchez de la Sierra, and Peter van der Windt. 2013. "Fishing, Commitment, and Communication: A Proposal for Comprehensive Nonbinding Research Registration." *Political Analysis* 21(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/pan/mps021>

*Assignment (due at noon the day before class):*

Write a three page outline that proposes a field research strategy that could help answer your question. The strategy should be based on one or some of the following: interviews, participant observation, focus groups, a field survey, and ethnography. Your written research strategy should make clear the kinds of information you would gather and discuss how this data would help you to evaluate the competing answers to your question.

### **Mar 30: Creating large-n observational data**

*Reading for the week:*

Yoshiko M. Herrera and Devesh Kapur. 2007. "Improving Data Quality: Actors, Incentives, and Capabilities." *Political Analysis* 15(4). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/i25791900>

Steven Wilkinson. 2010. "Data and the study of Indian politics." In *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*

## Apr 13: Laboratory, survey, and field experiments

### *Reading for the week:*

Angrist, Joshua D. and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. 2009. *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*. Chapter 2. ‡

Dawn Lagan Teele, Ed. 2014. *Field Experiments and Their Critics*. Yale University Press. Chapters 1–3. [https://www.dropbox.com/s/fqrlyna1peyo65w/Field experiments.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/fqrlyna1peyo65w/Field%20experiments.pdf?dl=0)

Rose McDermott. 2002. "Experimental Methods in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 5. <http://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.5.091001.170657>

Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2009. "Field Experiments and the Political Economy of Development." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12. <http://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.12.060107.155922>

### *Assignment (due at noon the day before class):*

Write a two page outline describing some large-n data that would help you investigate your question but which does not currently exist. What variables do you need? How might you define and collect those variables? If your data were collected, what analysis would you perform? What existing data would you need in order to perform that analysis?

## Apr 20: Experiment-inspired analysis of observational data

### *Reading for the week:*

Angrist, Joshua D. and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. 2009. *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*. Princeton University Press. Chapters 4–6. ‡

Allison J. Sovey and Donald P. Green. 2011. "Instrumental Variables Estimation in Political Science: A Readers' Guide." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(1). <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2010.00477.x>

Andrew C. Eggers, et al. 2015. "On the Validity of the Regression Discontinuity Design for Estimating Electoral Effects: New Evidence from Over 40,000 Close Races." *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(1). <http://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12127>



## Apr 27: Choosing and/or integrating tools

### *Reading for the week:*

Healy, Kiernan. 2016. "Fuck Nuance." *Sociological Theory* forthcoming.

<https://kieranhealy.org/files/papers/fuck-nuance.pdf>

Michael Coppedge. 1999. "Thickening Thin Concepts and Theories: Combining Large N and Small in Comparative Politics." *Comparative Politics* 31(4).

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/422240>

Evan S. Lieberman. 2005. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American Political Science Review* 99(3). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30038950>

Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2008. "Integrating Qualitative and Quantitative Methods." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Ed. Janet Box-Steffensmeier, et. al. Oxford University Press.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/6tfn44xmaa5q4dp/FearonLaitinOxfordHandbook.pdf?dl=0>

Amel Ahmed and Rudra Sil. 2012. "When Multi-Method Research Subverts Methodological Pluralism—or, Why We Still Need Single-Method Research." *Perspectives on Politics*. 10(4). <http://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592712002836>

Shapiro, Ian. 2002. "Problems, Methods, and Theories in the Study of Politics, or What's Wrong with Political Science and What to Do About It." *Political Theory* 30(4).

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3072623>

### *To prepare for class:*

Prepare a 15-minute presentation of your research question, preliminary findings, and research strategy for the future. This presentation should update previous iterations of your project, responding to other students' questions and criticisms. You do not need to circulate any material in advance of class.

## May 11: Final research prospectus due by 5pm by email

Turn in a research proposal of fifteen pages (not including bibliography) that draws together all of the assignments you have done through the semester. It may be helpful to think about the proposal as the type of essay you would write for a grant application. The proposal should pose a question, situate that question in the literature, and use data to illustrate the importance and non-obviousness of the question. Present the answer(s) to your question that you propose to investigate and any preliminary findings that you have. Then, describe and justify future research. In the plan for further research, you do not need to incorporate all of the methods we have discussed. Focus on the methods that appear most likely to succeed and make an argument as to why those methods are appropriate.