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Spring 2014

DIPL 6310 Research Methods for Policy Analysis

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DIPL 6310 - Spring 2014

Research Methods for Policy Analysis

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Class: Monday 17:00-19:10 in ST 123

Office Hours: Tuesday 13:00 - 15:00 & By appointment

Course Description

The objectives of this class are twofold. The first goal is to develop a critical understanding of the use of scientific research in the practice and academic study of international affairs. While we will consider issues central to all research and some unique to qualitative analysis, the emphasis in this class is quantitative research. Whether you are primarily interested in security, finance, development, trade, or social issues, much research that is likely of interest to you uses some form of quantitative analysis. This is equally true for policy reports published by the UN, World Bank, Brookings, RAND, or other relevant organizations. In order to be a productive participant in the world of international affairs, you need to be able to understand the assumptions that underlie quantitative analyses, to disentangle proper and improper uses of quantitative evidence, and to ask intelligent questions about the validity of quantitative measurement and statistical methods.

A second goal of the class is to equip you with the basic skills to actually perform quantitative analyses using a statistical software package (SPSS in this case). These skills include being able to find, download, use, and manipulate datasets published on the internet; to produce and interpret basic graphs and tables in an intelligent way; and to execute and evaluate the output of basic statistical models, especially regression analysis. Bear in mind that the emphasis in this class is on the analysis of data and the substantive interpretation of results. Of necessity, some concepts and relationships will be represented mathematically, but the class is not a mathematical statistics class. Those desiring more rigorous mathematical treatments are encouraged to take follow-up courses in statistical theory and econometrics.

Readings and Materials

Required readings are listed below for each class session. Most articles and book chapters will be posted online.

TEXTBOOK:

Phillip H. Pollock III, 2011. *The Essentials of Political Analysis, 4th edition*, CQ Press.

(NOTE: There is also a 3rd edition from 2008 that is a lot cheaper. However, there are some differences between the 3rd and 4th edition and I cannot guarantee that they are insignificant.)

Phillip H. Pollock III, 2011. *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, 4th edition*, CQ Press.

(NOTE: This book is *NOT REQUIRED*. However, we will be using SPSS and some students might find this helpful.)

We will be using a statistical software package called SPSS. Students may use university computers equipped with SPSS either in the information commons area of the library on the second floor or at one of the public computer labs. You may want to purchase the software;

it is available here: <http://www.onthefhub.com/spss/>. Alternatively, there is an open-source statistical package apparently very similar to SPSS. It is called PSPP and is available here: <http://www.gnu.org/software/pspp/> . If you choose to rent, purchase, or download software, I am not responsible for its functionality.

We will also use a free on-line course on Probability and Statistics from the Open Learning Initiative. This is analogous to an interactive reading assignment. It is essential that you complete these modules before class. I will be covering to some extent the lessons from these modules during class and illustrating them using international affairs examples but I will not repeat everything. That is: I will assume during lectures that you have completed the modules. You can learn more about the course and sign up here: <http://oli.cmu.edu/courses/free-open/statistics-course-details/>

Course Objectives

1. To familiarize students with the key principles underlying the scientific study of politics, public policy, and international affairs;
2. To enable students to undertake their own research and to thoughtfully critique the research of others;
3. To allow students to develop their skills in analyzing, and to feel comfortable working with, quantitative data;

Requirements and Grading

Homework Assignments	20%
Mid-term exam	20%
Data Analysis Paper	30%
Research Design Paper	30%

In-class activities Students should bring something to write with to each class session. This can be a laptop, a pen/pencil and paper, or something else. Also, students should only use their laptop or other electronic device for class-related purposes during active class time (this does not include any mid-class breaks). There is research which shows that, for example, using the internet for non-class-related activities like facebook or youtube not only leads to worse performance for the student doing these activities, but also *the students to either side and behind them*.

Homework Assignments - 20%

There will be a variety of homework assignments during the semester. The goal of these assignments is to give you an opportunity to work through the concepts and ideas from the class and/or practice the types of analyses that will be crucial on the midterm exam and the data analysis paper (as well as in your future lives).

Mid-term in-class exam - 20%

The questions will bear great similarity to those asked on the homework assignments, the exercises in the Pollock book, and to the questions asked in the on-line modules. The exam will be open book and notes. Materials are both the readings and the class notes.

Data Analysis Paper - 30%

Students will use data collected by others to research an international affairs topic of their

choosing. This paper will have a fixed structure: it starts with a research question and ends with a regression analysis. I will distribute more specific instructions in class. The assignment is due in week 13. I will distribute appropriate data. This project may be undertaken individually or in a small group of two or (maximum) three.

Research Design Paper - 30%

The research design paper (15 pages) should draw on all of the material from the class as well as your knowledge of an interest in researching a substantive international affairs topic. This research design can be qualitative, quantitative or both. This is preparation for your master's research project. You will:

- Develop an international relations research question
- Locate the question in the context of relevant literature (i.e. discuss the importance of the question for theory and policy)
- Review the relevant literature on the topic
- Outline a strategy for answering this question by addressing the following issues:
 - * Operationalize the dependent variable
 - * Develop a series of alternative explanations for the outcome
 - * Specify the sort of evidence that will enable you to choose between those alternative explanations

Communications Policy

The primary mode of communication between you and I is email. I will endeavour to respond to email within 48 hours, but usually I will be able to do so within 24 hours.

Accommodations Policy

Students requiring special accommodation should contact Disabilities Support Services.

Academic Integrity

Thinking about cheating? Don't do it. Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the School of Diplomacy's Standards of Academic Conduct, <http://www.shu.edu/academics/diplomacy/academic-conduct.cfm>. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Standards, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Standards. Violations of the Standards of Academic Conduct will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course.

Course Schedule

Many readings will be posted electronically. If you are unable to access a reading, please contact me in adequate time before the class session in which the reading is due. This schedule of readings may be changed with appropriate notice.

1. *January 13* Introduction

Optional These two recent blog posts, while not specifically pertaining to diplomacy/political science/international relations, are good examples of the kind of debate oriented around the scientific nature of certain disciplines:

<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/jul/13/news/la-ol-blowback-psychology-science-20120713>

<http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/the-curious-wavefunction/2013/08/13/is-psychology-a-real-science-does-it-really-matter/>

2. *January 20* Martin Luther King Jr. Day - University Closed

3. *January 27* Social Science and Asking Questions

Pollock, Introduction.

Kenneth Hoover and Todd Donovan. ‘Thinking Scientifically’ in *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking*, Wadsworth Publishing, Chapter 1.

Dahl, Robert, “The Nature of the Problem” and “Appendix B: Methods and Data” pp. 1-8 & 330-40 in *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

David M. Edelstein, “Occupational Hazards: Why Military Occupations Succeed or Fail,” *International Security* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 49-91.

ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE

4. *February 3* Causality and Causal Mechanisms

Peter Menzies, 2008. Counterfactual Theories of Causation, 1 and 2.1, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/causation-counterfactual/>

Jon Elster, 2007. *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chapter 1 and 2.

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, 2005. Process Tracing and Historical Explanation, pp. 205-232 in *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

5. *February 10* Experiments, Quasi-experiments, and Observational Studies

Pollock, Chapter 4.

John Gerring. 2011. *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework*, Cambridge University Press. pp. 256-290.

Examples

Paluck, Elizabeth Levy, and Donald P. Green. 2009. “Deference, Dissent, and Dispute Resolution: An Experimental Intervention Using Mass Media to Change Norms and Behavior in Rwanda.” *American Political Science Review* 103(4): 622-644.

Christopher Blattman and Jeannie Annan, 2011. “Reintegrating and Employing High Risk Youth in Liberia: Lessons from a randomized evaluation of a Landmine Action agricultural training program for ex-combatants”, Evidence from Randomized Evaluations of Peacebuilding in Liberia: Policy Report 2011.1

Also, see summary here: <http://www.poverty-action.org/project/0138>

James H. Fowler, 2008. “The Colbert Bump in Campaign Donations: More Truthful than Truthy”, *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 41(3): 533-539.

Campbell, Donald T., and H. Laurence Ross. 1968. “The Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding: Time-Series Data in Quasi-Experimental Analysis.” *Law & Society Review* 3(1): 33-54.

6. February 17 Measurement and Descriptive statistics

Pollock, Chapter 1 and 2.

OLI Module 1, Examining Distributions.

R.P. Cuzzort and James S. Vrettos, 1996. ‘Assessing the Unfamiliar: Deviation’, in *The Elementary Forms of Statistical Reasoning*, New York, NY: St Martin’s Press, pp. 113-122.

Joshua S. Goldstein, 2011. “Three Myths: Finding the Truth When the Conventional Wisdom is Wrong,” in *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide*, Plume.

ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE

7. February 24 Association / Correlation

OLI Module 2, Examining Relationships, p.43 to p.55 [Including Linear Relationships 7 and 8. We will be covering this material again in more detail later in the semester.]

R.P. Cuzzort and James S. Vrettos, 1996. ‘The Statistical Expression of Relations: The Quest for Patterns’, in *The Elementary Forms of Statistical Reasoning*, New York, NY: St Martin’s Press, pp. 197-216.

Putnam, Robert. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 4.

ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE

8. March 3 Foundations of Statistical Inference I

OLI Modules 8, Random Variables, and 9, Sampling Distributions.

Pollock, Chapter 6.

R.P. Cuzzort and James S. Vrettos, 1996. ‘The Normal Curve’, in *The Elementary Forms of Statistical Reasoning*, New York, NY: St Martin’s Press, pp. 123-136.

MARCH 10 NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK

9. March 17 Foundations of Statistical Inference II

OLI Modules 11, Estimation, 12, Hypothesis Testing, and 14 C-C Case.

Pollock, Chapter 7.

Roy Licklider, 1995. "The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945-1993", *American Political Science Review* 89(3):681-690.

Assignment #4 DUE

10. *March 24* Midterm Exam: Research Design and Statistical Inference

11. *March 31* Linear Regression I

Pollock, Chapter 4 (review) and Chapter 8 (up to and including Dummy Variable Regression).

12. *April 7* Linear Regression II

Pollock, Chapter 8 (the rest of it).

R.P. Cuzzort and James S. Vrettos, 1996. "Control," pp. 272-281 in *The Elementary Forms of Statistical Reasoning*, New York, NY: St Martin's Press,

Darci Kract, "Simpsons paradox in basketball statistics." <http://www.math.kent.edu/~darci/simpson/bballexamples.html>

13. *April 14* Linear Regression III

Pollock Chapter 8 (review).

ASSIGNMENT #5 DUE

NO CLASS ON APRIL 21 - EASTER MONDAY

14. *April 28* Logistic Regression

Pollock, Chapter 9.

15. *May 5* Review and Applications

Readings TBA