

Public Policy Methods I
Fall 2006
POL 60003, 60381, 70003
Merrill Hall 118, Thursday 2:15-5:00

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Office Hours: T: 12:00-3:00, R: 12:00-2:00, and by appointment

Purpose:

Required methodology courses rarely rank highest among things graduate students most look forward to in their graduate training. This is curious since graduate students typically rank conducting their own research among the reasons they enroll in graduate programs and this course is designed expressly for that purpose. So prepare to enjoy this course more than you expected! This semester we will begin stocking our “methodological toolboxes.” Although learning each “tool” will entail reading, working through applications (problems), lectures, and discussions; the ultimate goal is to equip students with methods that are equal to challenging and innovative research questions.

I assume no prior background or experience with quantitative methods. The focus throughout will be on applying methods to research more than developing mathematical proofs for statistical theorems. We will begin with the basics of statistics and work our way up to Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis. Although the focus is applied, we will devote considerable attention to understanding the statistical models. Toward this end, some of the problem sets will need to be done without the aid of a statistical program. But most homework will involve working out research problems using STATA. STATA is a reasonably user-friendly program with great flexibility and tremendous computational power. However, learning how to use STATA (like all statistical packages) will also require a significant investment of your time. So most assignments consist of dual challenges: 1) learning and applying course concepts 2) learning how to use STATA to apply course concepts. You can expect to encounter frustration along the way, but persistence will pay off. This course will require steadfast effort, as each lesson builds upon previous lessons. The concepts we cover in this course will be concepts you return to time and time again in your careers. You will not understand everything the first time around, but the more you learn now, the further you will get in each subsequent encounter with the material.

One of the best ways to internalize this material is by explaining it to someone else. Thus I encourage collaboration (on all but a few exercises that I will indicate need to be completed

without working together). In general, feel free to work together on the technical side of exercises (e.g. sharing STATA commands with each other in lab); however, you are responsible for writing up and explaining your own results. You can also expect to get practice explaining course concepts to each other during our regularly scheduled classes. This is not a seminar, so discussion is not the core of the class meeting, but a significant portion of learning will transpire in the form of exchange and discussion of the ideas we encounter. The only way to learn this stuff is to be on the spot. It's not personal, but I will push you in class. It's okay not to know something; it's not okay not to try.

Requirements

Come to class having read the materials listed for that class entry on the syllabus and be prepared to raise questions and discuss it. Exercises are due at the beginning of the following class (unless marked otherwise). Late homework will not be accepted for credit. Please plan your schedules so that you are not doing the exercises at the last minute, as computer glitches of all sorts are possible (and when learning a new statistical package they are part of the assignment). Computing problems are not an acceptable excuse for missing the homework deadline.

Since one of the purposes of this course is preparation to pursue one's own research, two of the assignments involve conducting your own research. As described in the schedule, each student will present a hypothesis note. Hypothesis notes will stimulate thinking about researchable questions as you conduct a basic test of a narrow hypothesis inspired from the literature in a field that interests you. Notes will be 3-4 pages in length, including a brief summary of the relevant literature, a concise statement of your hypothesis and how it relates to the literature, a brief description of how you intend to test your hypothesis, and a brief description of the results of your test (plus bibliography, tables, and figures). Presentations should be prepared like conference talks and should last no more 10 minutes, followed by Q and A.

The second assignment designed to facilitate your own research is the final paper. You may continue to research the topic from your hypothesis note or you may work on a new topic. The goal is to produce the type of manuscript that you could (eventually) submit for publication in a journal. Please see the *Style Manual for Political Science*, published by the American Political Science Association, for formatting. The final paper should be 15-20 pages in length plus tables, a 150 word abstract, and title page. Each paper will consist of introductory sections identifying the scholarly literature, outlining your research question, and describing your potential contribution to the literature; a data and methods section describing your data and the algebraic representation of a multivariate statistical model designed to answer your research question; a section describing the results of your tests and presenting results in tables and figures; a conclusion; and a bibliography. (Note: There are two ways in which the course paper requirements are less daunting than typical requirements for publication. First, your review of the literature needs to be sufficient to motivate your question, but need not be comprehensive. Second, you need not be correct. Typically it is impossible to publish null findings, but null findings are fine for this paper.) Papers due in my department mailbox on the final exam day for this course, Tuesday, December 12, by 4:00 p.m.

The basic break-down of the course grade is as follows:

- Homework Exercises: 35%
- Hypothesis Note: 30%
- Final Paper: 35%

Incompletes will not be granted except in the case of extreme, documented, non-academic, emergencies.

Books

Agresti, Alan and Christine Franklin. 2007. *Statistics: The Art and Science of Learning from Data*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.

King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hamilton, Lawrence. 2006. *Statistics with STATA: Updated for Version 9*. Belmont, California: Thomson Learning.

Style Manual. 2001 (or most recent version). Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association. Purchase at www.apsanet.org.

Additional required readings for purchase as a course pack at Word Smiths (402 E. Main St., Kent).

Disability Policy

University policy 3342-3-18 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Accessibility Services (contact 330-672-3391 or visit www.kent.edu/sas for more information on registration procedures).

Class Schedule

August 31—Class Cancelled. I am giving a paper at the American Political Science Association Meeting. Please do the readings for September 7 in preparation for our first meeting on September 7.

September 7—Welcome, Overview, and Data Analysis and Causal Modeling

- Readings: Agresti, Chapters 1-2
- Readings from course pack: Tufte, Chapter 1; Stark, Chapter 6 (use for homework 1)

- Hand Out Homework 1

September 14—Experiments and Research Design

- Readings: Agresti, Chapter 4
- Readings from course pack: King Koehane and Verba, Chapter 1-4; Kinder and Palfrey, 1-37; Campbell and Stanley, Chapter 5; Mondak (article)
- In-class Video

September 21—Historical Analysis, Case Studies, and Comparative Analysis

- Readings from course pack: Eckstein, Chapter 4; Lieberman (article); Geertz, Chapter 15; George, Chapter 3; Geddes 131-150; Collier, Chapter 5; Kohli et al. (article); Przeworski and Limongi (article)
- Homework 2, Write a one page critical response to the readings in preparation for discussion today. Hand-in at end of class.

September 28—Association and Probability

- Readings: Agresti, Chapter 3, 5
- Handout Homework 3

October 5—Statistical Inference and Point Estimates

- Readings: Agresti, Chapter 6-7
- Handout Homework 4

October 12—Statistical Inference and Estimating Confidence

- Readings: Agresti, Chapter 8
- Handout Homework 5

October 19—Bivariate Relationships

- Readings: Agresti, Chapter 9-10, Tufte, Chapter 2
- Handout Homework 6
- Handout Hypothesis Note Assignment

October 26—Bivariate Regression

- Readings: Agresti, Chapter 11

- Work on hypothesis notes

November 2—More on bivariate regression

- Readings from course pack: Tufte, Chapter 3
- Work on hypothesis notes

November 9— Hypothesis Notes

- In-class presentations

November 16—Multiple Regression

- Readings: Agresti, Chapter 12
- Handout Homework 7

November 23—Thanksgiving. No Class.

November 30—More Multiple Regression

- Readings (from course pack): Tufte, Chapter 4
- Work on final papers

December 7— Informal Discussion of Student Papers and Review

Papers Due in my department mailbox on Final Exam Day for this course, Tuesday, December 12, by 4:00 p.m.

Bibliography for Course Pack Readings

Brown, Harold. 1977. *Perception, Theory and Commitment*. Chicago: Precedent Publishing.

Campbell, Donald and Julian C. Stanley. 1963. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Collier, David. 1993. "The Comparative Method." In *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*. Washington, DC: APSA.

Cook, Thomas D. and Donald T. Campbell. 1979. *Quasi-Experimentation*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

DeFlice, E. Gene 1986. "Causal Inference and Comparative Methods." *Comparative Political Science*. 19:3. 415-437.\

- Eckstein, Harry. 1975. "Case Study and Theory in Political Science." In *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol. 2., *Strategies and Inquiry*, eds. F. Greenstein and N. Polsby. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Cases." *Political Analysis*. 2: 131-50.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Deep Play: Note on the Balinese Cockfight." In C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- George, Alexander L. 1979. "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison." In *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*. ed. Paul Gordon Lauren. New York: Free Press.
- George, Alexander L. and Timothy J. McKeown. 1985. "Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making." *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations*. 2: 21-58.
- Kincaid, Harold. 1992. "Defending Laws in the Social Sciences." In *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, eds. M. Martin and L. McIntyre. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Kinder, Donald and Thomas Palfrey. 1993. "On Behalf of an Experimental Political Science." In *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*, D. Kinder and T. Palfrey, eds. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Kohli, Atul et al. "The Role of Theory in Comparative Politics." *World Politics*. 48: 1-49.
- Lieberson, Stanley. 1991. "Small N's and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases." *Social Forces*. 70: 307-20.
- Mondak, Jeffrey J. 1995. "Newspapers and Political Awareness." *American Journal of Political Science*. 39:2. 513-527.
- Owen, J. "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace." *International Security*. 19: 87-125.
- Przeworski, Adam and Fernando Limongi. 1993. "Political Regimes and Economic Growth." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 7:3. 51-69.
- Stark, Rodney. 1996. "Christianizing the Urban Empire: A Quantitative Approach." In R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tufte, Edward R. 1974. *Data Analysis for Politics and Policy*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.