

**POLI 285**  
**Applied experimental research: Politics in the US and in Europe**

Spring 2020

**Instructor**

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**Meeting times**

Lecture: Tuesday/Thursday 11:00-12:15  
Lecture hall: Phillips 332  
Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday 3:00-4:00

Course website: [https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/poli285\\_sp20](https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/poli285_sp20)

**Course description and aim**

The course familiarizes students with experimental research methods in political science, including laboratory experiments, field experiments, and survey experiments. Students will design and conduct an experimental research project in small groups on a research question about US or European politics. The course consists of five parts:

- (1) Basic concepts and designs
- (2) Varieties of experimental research
- (3) Analyzing experimental data
- (4) Experimental research projects
- (5) Conclusion

The first part introduces students to basic concepts and research designs in experimental political analysis. The second part takes an in-depth look at the three basic types of experimental political research: Laboratory experiments, field experiments, and survey experiments. After an introduction to the basics of each method, we will study applied research examples to familiarize ourselves with the kinds of questions that can be answered using an experimental research design. In addition, we will study natural experiments. In the second half of the course, students will apply the theoretical insights in small research projects. To this end, part 3 of the course informs students about available resources and provides a basic refresher on the statistical analysis of experimental data. Students will then design and conduct an experimental research project in part 4 of the course and present their findings in the concluding sessions.

After attending the course, students...

- ... are familiar with the basic concepts and research designs in experimental political research.
- ... are able to interpret and critically evaluate experimental political research.
- ... are able to design and conduct experimental research projects and analyze their findings.
- ... are able to present their results from an experimental research project in a written report.
- ... have learned skills in collaborating on common research projects.

## Course requirements

Literature review 1 (Due February 27): 15%

Literature review 2 (Due March 31): 15%

Group project: Research design proposal (Due March 17): 15%

Group project: Project report (Due May 1): 30%

Group project: Presentation: 15%

Active participation: 10%

### Literature reviews (15% + 15%)

For the two short literature reviews (three pages each), you are expected to choose one experimental research paper for each review from the current experimental political science literature. A good starting point for your search might be the *Journal of Experimental Political Science* (<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-experimental-political-science>), but you are free to select experimental papers from other journals, such as the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, or *Political Science Research and Methods*. In the literature reviews, you are expected to summarize the research question and theoretical framework of the paper, the methodology, and the results. Be sure to classify/discuss the research paper using the categories that you encounter in class (e.g., type of experiment (field, laboratory, survey), internal/external validity, treatment group/control group, between-subject/within-subject designs). Where appropriate, discuss possible problems of the study.

You are expected to format the reviews as follows: Font Arial, 12 pt., double-spaced, 1-inch margins, no color. Please be sure that your name is on the cover page and that the pages are numbered. The reviews are turned in via email to nyhuis@unc.edu. The documents should be in PDF format and the document names should conform to the following format: lastname\_firstname\_experiments\_sp20\_review1.pdf (all lower case).

### Research design proposal (15%)

The first task in your experimental research project is to identify a research question and to devise an experimental research strategy to answer that question. To help you clarify your thoughts on designing your research project, you are expected to write a short paper in your projects groups (no more than five pages) that presents your research question, how that question addresses a relevant political science question, and how you intend to study the question using an experimental research design. Be sure to come see me during my office hours before handing in your research design proposal to get some feedback on your ideas. I will not grade the quality of your research design. The grade will be based on how well you elaborate your design.

You are expected to use the same formatting guidelines as before. For the document name, sort the group members alphabetically by last name and use the name of the first group member in that order to name the document as follows: lastname\_firstname\_et\_al\_experiments\_sp20\_design.pdf (all lower case). Please make sure that the names of all project group members are in the document.

### Project report (30%)

After conducting your research project, you are expected to draft a project report about your results (approximately fifteen pages). We will discuss the structure and content of the project report in class. In general, the report should contain the following elements:

- Introduction, including...
  - ... your research question
  - ... relevance of your research question
  - ... overview of the structure of the project report
- Very brief literature review
- Very brief theoretical account
- Data and methodology, including...
  - ... your research design
  - ... case selection
  - ... strategy for your data analysis
- Data analysis
- Conclusion, including...
  - ... summary of your research interest and findings
  - ... implications of your findings
  - ... shortcomings of your study
  - ... potential future research

The focus of the project report should be on your research design, as well as on the project results. The grade will not be based on the quality of your project results, but on whether your report contains all relevant features, how well you elaborate the components of your research design, findings, and potential shortcomings.

Please use the same formatting guidelines as before. The document should have the following document name: lastname\_firstname\_et\_al\_experiments\_sp20\_report.pdf (all lower case).

### Presentation (15%)

In the last sessions, you are expected to give a group presentation about your research to the class. Be sure to include all relevant features from the project report. Please send me the slides for your presentation via email no later than 48 hours before class.

### Active participation (10%)

You are expected to actively participate in class discussions. Mere physical presence will not result in a perfect participation grade.

### Grading scale

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		A	94-100	A-	90-93
B+	87-89	B	84-86	B-	80-83
C+	77-79	C	74-76	C-	70-73
D+	67-69	D	60-66		
F	<60				

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### **Course materials**

All readings are published on Sakai. I will upload any additional course materials and slides that we will be using throughout the course.

### **Important dates**

- Literature review 1: February 27
- Literature review 2: March 31
- Research design proposal: March 17
- Project report: May 1

### **Expectations**

#### Weekly readings and electronic devices

Please turn your phones to silent mode and do not use them during class. I allow the use of laptops for class purposes, but I expect to you to bring a printed copy of the readings. Engaging with a text is much easier and much more effective when you have access to a printed copy.

#### Office hours

Everyone is welcome to come see me during office hours or write me an email.

#### Honor code

The Honor Code is in effect in this class. I am committed to treating Honor Code violations seriously and urge all students to become familiar with its terms set out at

<http://instrument.unc.edu>.

If you have questions, it is your responsibility to ask about the Code's application. All written work must be submitted with a statement that you have complied with the requirements of the Honor Code in all aspects of the submitted work.

## Course schedule

Date	Topic	Readings
Jan. 9	Introduction	–
<b><u>Basic concepts and designs</u></b>		
Jan. 14	Empirical political research	(King, 2006)
Jan. 16	Experiments in political science	(Druckman et al., 2011a) (Druckman et al., 2006)
Jan. 21	Experimental design	(Druckman et al., 2011b) (McDermott, 2011)
<b><u>Varieties of experimental research</u></b>		
Jan. 23	Laboratory experiments: Basics	(Iyengar, 2011) (Palfrey, 2009)
Jan. 28	Laboratory experiments: Applications	(Blais et al., 2014) (Kanthak and Woon, 2015)
Jan. 30	Field experiments: Basics	(Gerber, 2011) (Coppock and Green, 2015)
Feb. 4	Field experiments: Applications	(Gerber and Green, 2000) (Kalla and Broockman, 2016)
Feb. 6	Survey experiments: Basics	(Sniderman, 2011) (Mullinix et al., 2015)
Feb. 11	Survey experiments: Applications	(Helfer and Van Aelst, 2016) (Öhberg and Naurin, 2016)
Feb. 13	Natural experiments: Basics	(Dunning, 2008)
Feb. 18	Natural experiments: Applications	(Carman et al., 2008) (Loewen et al., 2014)
<b><u>Analyzing experimental data</u></b>		
Feb. 20	Resources at UNC and beyond	–
Feb. 25	Analyzing experimental data I	–
Feb. 27	Analyzing experimental data II	–
Mar. 3	Analyzing experimental data III	–
Mar. 5	Analyzing experimental data IV	–

Mar. 17 Analyzing experimental data V –

**Experimental research projects**

Mar. 19 Project work –

Mar. 24 Project work –

Mar. 26 Project work –

Mar. 31 Project work –

Apr. 2 Project work –

Apr. 7 Project work –

Apr. 9 Project work –

Apr. 14 Project work –

Apr. 16 Project work –

**Conclusion**

Apr. 21 Project presentations I –

Apr. 23 Project presentations II –

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**Literature**

- Blais, A., Erisen, C., Rheault, L., 2014. Strategic voting and coordination problems in proportional systems: An experimental study. *Polit. Res. Q.* 67, 386–97.
- Carman, C., Mitchell, J., Johns, R., 2008. The unfortunate natural experiment in ballot design: The Scottish parliamentary elections of 2007. *Elect. Stud.* 27, 442–59.
- Coppock, A., Green, D.P., 2015. Assessing the correspondence between experimental results obtained in the lab and field: A review of recent social science research. *Polit. Sci. Res. Methods* 3, 113–31.
- Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H., Lupia, A., 2011a. Experimentation in political science, in: Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H., Lupia, A. (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 3–11.
- Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H., Lupia, A., 2011b. Experiments: An introduction to core concepts, in: Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H., Lupia, A. (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 15–26.
- Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H., Lupia, A., 2006. The growth and development of experimental research in political science. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 100, 627–35.

- Dunning, T., 2008. Improving causal inference: Strengths and limitations of natural experiments. *Polit. Res. Q.* 61, 282–93.
- Gerber, A.S., 2011. Field experiments in political science, in: Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H., Lupia, A. (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 115–38.
- Gerber, A.S., Green, D.P., 2000. The effects of canvassing, direct mail, and telephone contact on voter turnout: A field experiment. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 94, 653–63.
- Helfer, L., Van Aelst, P., 2016. What makes party messages fit for reporting? An experimental study of journalistic news selection. *Polit. Commun.* 33, 59–77.
- Iyengar, S., 2011. Laboratory experiments in political science, in: Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H., Lupia, A. (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 73–88.
- Kalla, J.L., Broockman, D.E., 2016. Campaign contributions facilitate access to congressional officials: A randomized field experiment. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 60, 545–58.
- Kanthak, K., Woon, J., 2015. Women don't run? Election aversion and candidate entry. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 59, 595–612.
- King, G., 2006. Publication, publication. *Polit. Sci. Polit.* 39, 119–25.
- Loewen, P.J., Koop, R., Settle, J., Fowler, J.H., 2014. A natural experiment in proposal power and electoral success. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 58, 189–96.
- McDermott, R., 2011. Internal and external validity, in: Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H., Lupia, A. (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 27–40.
- Mullinix, K.J., Leeper, T.J., Druckman, J.N., Freese, J., 2015. The generalizability of survey experiments. *J. Exp. Polit. Sci.* 2, 109–38.
- Öhberg, P., Naurin, E., 2016. Party-constrained policy responsiveness: A survey experiment and politicians' responses to citizen-initiated contacts. *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 46, 785–97.
- Palfrey, T.R., 2009. Laboratory experiments in political economy. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 12, 379–88.
- Sniderman, P.M., 2011. The logic and design of the survey experiment: An autobiography of a methodological innovation, in: Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H., Lupia, A. (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 102–14.