Quantitative Studies of International Security

Political Science 7375

Syllabus

Course Information
Meeting Time: Tuesday, 11:00 a.m.–1:45 p.m.

Instructor Information
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Spring Semester, AY 2015-16
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Course description

There are two broad themes to this course. The first is a concerted conceptual attack against the linear model. GLMs have become the workhorse of conflict research in international relations to such an extent that scholars often theorize in linear-model terms. That’s a tragic outcome, both in that it reifies a convenient statistical construct and in that it cuts off other, potentially more fruitful avenues of explanation. As the sociologist Aage Sørensen put it,

Regression models are made additive because statisticians tell sociologists that while they will be happy to develop techniques to estimate any model the sociologist desires to estimate, sociological theory should suggest the model. Short of such theoretical models, the statistician proposes an additive model as the best. When the sociologist asks for the rationale for the additive model, the statistician suggests that the linear model is the most parsimonious model. Parsimony is here meant as statistical simplicity, both computationally and mathematically. The sociologist has nothing better to suggest and proceeds with following the statistical advice. The possible lack of [theoretical] meaning in the additive specification is rarely noted in statistics and method classes.¹

To promote more outside-the-linear-model thinking, we will explore a variety of less-utilized (in political science) but promising ways of thinking about social phenomena that could find useful application in international relations.

The remainder of the course explores recent research on current topics in international and intranational security. Each week’s seminar will examine a range of studies on the subject of the week. We will discuss both research design and execution and how each piece contributes to the larger theoretical dialogue that comprises the literature on the subject at hand.

Beginning graduate seminars often train graduate students to be intellectual piranhas—to rip apart whatever unfortunate piece of literature wanders into their path. There are advantages to such an approach, but not, in my opinion, to pursuing it exclusively: it de-emphasizes the need to think about how one might make a positive contribution to a given literature, and in so doing encourages a form of intellectual atrophy that makes writing a dissertation a long, painful experience.

filled with self-recrimination and doubt. These have their place, of course, but when they overwhelm intellectual curiosity and creativity the result is dozens of promising draft chapters that are scrapped before they have a chance to develop.

Therefore, when you read a piece of research for this class, you should structure your thinking in terms of three overarching questions:

1. What is good about this piece?
2. What is bad about this piece?
3. How might it be improved?

Requirements

There are two requirements. First, discuss the articles in class. For each article on a given day, I will randomly select a student to introduce each of the readings. Although I do not take attendance, all students without excused absences will be included in the randomized list, and being selected while absent does count against participation. Introductions should last no more than two minutes. Do not summarize the article beyond what is contained in the abstract; assume that the audience has read it and at best needs a brief reminder. Rather, focus on the substantive and methodological questions that the article raised in your mind as you read it. The goal is to get conversation going.

Second, by the end of the semester, complete a replication and reimagining of an existing study in international security. By “replication,” I mean that you should obtain the original data and replicate the results from the paper, if possible. By “reimagining,” I mean that you should conceptualize the question in a wholly different manner (no “I added an interaction term”) and re-analyze the data, augmenting or transforming them if necessary, in such a way that you end up articulating and testing a different understanding of the phenomenon in question. This exercise could involve anything from building your own agent-based model, running simulations, and deriving hypotheses to simply exploring the variance or frontier of the data rather than the central tendency. Use papers from Science and PNAS as your models: be very succinct and try not to go over 10 pages total length.

A brief (roughly two-page) prospectus for the research paper, outlining the existing paper and the proposed reimagining, is due on March 8. The final version of the paper will be due on April 22.
Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp).

All students believe that they know how not to plagiarize. Many of them are wrong. Every year, many of them find that out the hard way. Don’t be one of them.

The short version is that passing off another person’s work or ideas as your own is plagiarism. That includes the unacknowledged word-for-word use or paraphrasing of another person’s work or ideas. It is not enough, for example, simply to copy and paste a passage and then cite the source at the end. If the passage is taken word-for-word, it must be in quotes as well to indicate that fact.

There is an excellent video at http://hdl.handle.net/1811/46848, if you have any doubts. You should be crystal clear, as the University’s policies exist to ensure fairness, and violators of University regulations on academic integrity will be dealt with severely.
Disability Services

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/.
January 12: Introduction

Background reading


January 19: Emergence


January 26: Context


February 2: Swan


February 9: Predict


February 16: Explain


Recommended:

February 23: System


March 1: Issue


March 8: Rational


Review:

March 15: Break

Spring break. Classes resume next week.
March 22: Decline?


March 29: Regime


April 5: Civil


April 12: Ethnic


April 19: Terror


