Field Research Methods  
POLITSC 7888, Spring 2017  
Wed. 9am-11:45am  
Derby 2078  
https://osu.instructure.com/courses/17647

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Office: Derby Hall 2080  
Office hours: Wed. 2pm-4pm  
Or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar introduces students to various field methods for developing and testing theories in political science. The course is best suited for PhD students who are currently developing a dissertation prospectus, applying for research grants, or preparing for dissertation field research, but the course will also be helpful for those planning more preliminary field research. The course is focused on readings and discussions on different types of field research methods, as well as the development of a field research strategy over the course of the semester.

REQUIREMENTS

Active participation in the seminar is essential, and students are expected to read all of the assigned articles and chapters before the start of class each week. You are also expected to actively engage in the research projects of your classmates. Thus, in addition to the assigned readings each week, students are expected to have read the circulated memos of other students in their preassigned groups (groups will change each week). The course will be very hands-on, with students discussing components of their research plan at regular intervals in order to elicit feedback from each other.

A major goal of this course is for students to leave with a realistic field research plan. Towards that end, there will be six written assignments and one formal oral presentation over the course of the semester. For each assignment, circulate your written work to other members of your group by 12 noon on Monday, and be prepared to discuss your work in class. These regular in-class discussions will help develop your ability to speak to colleagues in a formal, yet conversational, manner about your work.

The final paper for this course will be an NSF DDIG grant application to fund field research. The final paper is due by 5pm on Friday, April 21.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIONS

1. Participation – 20%  
   Regular attendance and active participation in class discussion will constitute 20% of your final grade. You must be able to discuss assigned readings, as well as the memos of other members of your group.

2. Memos – 30%  
   The memos resulting from assignments 1-6 will constitute 30% of your final grade. These memos must be circulated on time to receive full credit.
3. Field Research Plan Presentation – 15%
Assignment 7 asks you to present your field research plan during one of the final two class meetings. Your presentation will constitute 25% of your grade, and will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of your presentation, how well you have incorporated feedback from your previous memos, and your ability to respond to questions from the audience.

4. Field Research Grant Proposal – 35%
Your final field research proposal, written as an NSF DDRO grant proposal, is due April 21st by 5pm. The research proposal will count for 35% of your final grade.

Letter grades correspond to the following percentages:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
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COURSE POLICIES

Academic and Personal Integrity:
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/csc](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/csc).

Students with Disabilities:
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. For additional information, visit [http://ods.osu.edu](http://ods.osu.edu).

COURSE MATERIALS

We will read large portions of the following books, so you may want to purchase a copy. The Laitin and Barrett/Cason books are available electronically through OSU libraries.


Additional readings include book chapters, published articles, and working papers. The latter two types of readings will be readily available online, and book chapters will be provided at least 2 weeks in advance.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1: Course Introduction, 1/11**


**Week 2: Theory and Field Research, 1/18**


**Assignment 1: Research Question**

Choose a puzzle or problem that you believe is: (a) important; (b) poorly explained by existing theories; and (c) amenable to empirical analysis using data gathered in the field. Identify at least one hypothesis/observable implication that you think might resolve this puzzle/problem/question, and state the proposition in a clear, testable, and falsifiable form. Describe the ‘ideal data’ that would allow you to most convincingly test your hypothesis (at this point, you do not have to be realistic – think big!).

A one page memo outlining the puzzle or problem that motivates your thinking, the theory you wish to test, its observable implication(s), and your ‘ideal data’ should be distributed to the rest of your group by noon on Monday.

**Week 3: Case Selection, 1/25**


**Week 4: Ethnography and Participant Observation, 2/1**

**Assignment 2: Case Selection**
Identify the case(s) that you will use to test the observable implications of your theory. Write a three-page memo describing your rationale for selecting the case(s) and provide a brief narrative about how you believe your theory applies (or does not apply) to the cases you have selected. The final section of your memo should describe the data you will need specific to these cases, and the potential sources of information you have been able to identify. Circulate by noon on Monday.


**Week 5: Interviews, 2/8**


## Assignment 3: Qualitative Methods

Choose one of the case or cases identified in Assignment 2. For that case, develop a three-page research strategy employing ethnography, participant observation, interviews, or focus group discussions to gather data to test the implications of your theory. This written research strategy should include three components: (1) a list of the “types” of individuals (and if possible, the specific respondents) you will need to observe or speak with; (2) a list of questions that you will need to have answered, either from behavioral observation or to be gathered through face-to-face interviews and; (3) a discussion of how this data will help you to accept or reject competing theories. Circulate by noon on Monday.

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## Week 7: Designing and Fielding Surveys, 2/22


Assignment 4: Quantitative Dataset
In a three page memo, outline a large dataset that would produce some statistical test of your theory and develop a research strategy for building this dataset using archival, administrative, or original survey data. Describe the hypotheses amenable to quantitative tests and how the data gathered would allow you to assess those hypotheses. Outline a strategy to collect those data in the field. Circulate by noon on Monday.


Week 9: Field and Lab-in-the-Field Experiments, 3/8

Field Experiments

Lab-in-the-Field Experiments

**Week 10: Combining Methods, Building a Design, and Funding It, 3/22**

**Assignment 5: Experiment**

Write a three-page research memo describing a survey experiment, field experiment, or lab-in-the-field experiment that could be used to put some aspect of your theory, or the mechanisms underlying it, to an empirical test. Be sure to specify your sampling procedure, how you will randomize, what you will manipulate, and how you will address external validity. Circulate by noon on Monday.


**Funding Field Research**


**Week 11: Ethical Considerations, 3/29**

**Assignment 6: Funding Proposal**

Prepare a short research grant proposal with a comprehensive budget (1,000 words or less, excluding budget and references). Proposals should briefly outline the basic rationale of the research, the question under study, and the methods and analytic approach to be employed. In addition, list five sources of field research funding for which you qualify. Circulate by noon on Monday.
Professional Ethics


Protecting Human Subjects


Week 12: Practical Considerations, 4/5


Assignment 7 (Week 1)
Students should prepare a 15-minute overview presentation (using overhead slides or printed handouts) of his or her research question, theory and observable implications, and full field research strategy.

Assignment 7 (Week 2)
Students should prepare a 15-minute overview presentation (using overhead slides or printed handouts) of his or her research question, theory and observable implications, and full field research strategy.

Final Project: Field Research Funding Proposal

Research Proposal
Write an NSF DDIG research grant proposal to fund field research. The proposal should build on the seven assignments, but improve upon them based on feedback and integrate them into a coherent research proposal. Follow the guidelines outlined by NSF (format, length, etc.) as they pertain to the Project Description and Project Budget. Be sure to include a statement of your research question, a brief review of the literature, preliminary findings (if any), field research plan, and an itemized budget up to $14,000.

Due 4/21/17 by 5pm