This course is designed to provide an introduction to a variety of empirical research methods used by political scientists. The primary aims of the course are to make you a more sophisticated consumer of diverse empirical research and to allow you to conduct sophisticated independent work in your junior and senior years. This is not a course in data analysis. Rather, it is a course on how to approach political science research.

The course will consist of three parts. The first part of the course will involve readings, research assignments, and in-class exercises. Our readings will be roughly evenly divided between methodological works and notable applications of various research methods. Because, I study American politics, many of the examples I will use will be drawn from that field. But this is not a course in American politics. I hope that you will emerge from this course better equipped to undertake research of your own and better able to evaluate the work of others. The second section of the course involves visits from guest professors. Students will be responsible for preparing questions about the professor’s research design and approach. The third part of the course will be taken up with presentations of work that students will be preparing throughout the semester.

This research project is a critical element of the course and should be taken very seriously. First, students will submit a two-page statement describing their research question and explaining why it was selected. Next, students will submit a list of at least 10 articles or three books on the topic and a brief abstract for each that presents the basic argument, findings, and relevance for the student’s question. Next, students will submit a critical literature review (15 pages). This will serve as the basis for a 15-minute in-class presentation, which will be followed by a 15-minute group discussion of research strategies. Finally, building on this discussion, students will submit a 20-page research proposal that includes a revised version of the literature review and a new five-page section that proposes an original research.

This course has been designated Communication Intensive (CIM). A CIM course is designed to help you develop your writing and speaking skills in the major. As a result, Writing Program faculty have been assigned to help with this course. The Writing Program faculty will provide you written comments on your Literature Review. In addition to the written comments that you will receive on the Literature Review, the Writing Program staff will be available to assist you with your two-page statement and your final proposal.
Grading

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Class participation: 30%
Class assignments project: 10%
Explanation/defense of research topic: 5%
Literature review: 15%
Presentation: 10%
Final research proposal: 30%

Please note that course participation is a critical part of your grade for this course. I expect that you will come to class prepared to discuss the week’s readings.

Required Reading

Most of the readings are available from the Stellar course website. I will also be making great use of the following books and I suggest you purchase them:


Course Outline

I: The Scientific Method

1. Introduction and Course Overview (September 6)

2. Models and Theories in Political Science (September 13)

II: Methods of Research

3. Introduction to Research Design and The Experimental Method (September 20)
   Donald Campbell and Julian Stanley, *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research* (read pages 1-64; play close attention to pages 6-34).
4. **Experiments in Political Science**  *(September 27)*
   Albert Cover and Bruce Brumberg, “Baby Books and Ballots: The Impact of Congressional Mail on Constituent Opinion.” *American Political Science Review*

5. **Case Studies, Comparing Cases, and Statistical Analysis**  *(October 4)*
   *Note: Statement of Research Due*

   *If you are interested in reviewing the basics of statistical analysis (not covered in class) read W. Phillips Shively, The Craft of Political Research, Chapters 7-9.*

III: Gathering Data

6. **Selecting and Sampling Cases**  *(October 11)*
   *Note: Exercise 1 due (Questions of Validity)*

7. **Observation, Measurement, and Political Implications I**  *(October 18)*
8. **Observation, Measurement, and Political Implications II (October 25)**
   → Fenno's interview notes are available on line. Visit, explore, and read interview notes at [http://nara.gov/nara/legislative/fenno1.html](http://nara.gov/nara/legislative/fenno1.html)

   **IV: Guest Lectures**

9. **David Singer (November 1)**
   *Note: Exercise 2 Due (Measurement)*
   Readings TBA.

10. **Chappell Lawson (November 8)**
   *Note: Literature Review Due*

   **IV: Student Presentations**

11. **Group 1 (November 15)**

12. **Group 2 (November 22)**

13. **Group 3 (November 29)**

   **V: Conclusions**

14. **Final Thoughts: Ethics and Political Research (December 6)**
   *Note: Final Paper Due*
   (See also Zimbardo’s description of this Prison experiment at [http://www.prisonexp.org](http://www.prisonexp.org))