POL 611 Research Seminar in American Government:
Applied Field Research
Spring Semester 2015
Thursdays 1:30-4:20
BRNG B206

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Office hours:
Tuesdays/Thursdays 12-1 p.m.,
or by appointment

If you would not be forgotten, as soon as you are dead & rotten,
either write things worth reading or do things worth the writing.

~Benjamin Franklin

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This research seminar focuses on field research in American Politics. Field research involves doing “legwork” to collect original data at field sites. We will examine quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches to field research including small-N surveys, participant observation, interviews, focus groups, and quasi-experimental designs. We will consider theory and research design, data and measurement, validity and generalizability, ethics and IRB requirements, and more. This course will include a wide range of readings (some across disciplines), guest lecturers, and fieldwork doing interviews for an ongoing research project. All students are expected to design and execute research projects of publishable quality applying field research methods to a research question in American politics. Interested students will be invited to submit their interviews for publication in an edited volume.

OBJECTIVES
- To develop a practical, meaningful toolkit for field research in American politics
- Introduction to appropriate use of a variety of fieldwork methods
- Hands-on, applied experience with key research tools
- Management of and participation on collaborative research teams

REQUIRED TEXTS
There are five required texts for this course. Two are available, in whole or part, electronically. The others are available for individual purchase at various book sellers.
Recommended Reading:

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Special Note: As a graduate research seminar, this course is novel in its topic (field research in American politics); its approach (we will assemble ourselves into a research team); epistemological orientation (a focus on applied pragmatic research methods in the field); and its grand objective (a published account of a newly emerging social movement). Not only is this a novel course, as described, it is also quite aspirational. While novelty may indeed characterize our collective enterprise, this course is also quite typical: students earn grades and course credit by completing well-crafted, thoughtful assignments on time, contributing insightfully to class discussion, applying methods appropriately and creatively to interesting research questions, and demonstrating an intellectually-sharp grasp of course materials in written and oral presentations. Consider what follows, then, as the required directives for any graduate course with the important caveat that ours is not just “any” course and, if this works (an outcome which depends on what each of us contributes), we will have accomplished, in a single semester, something quite remarkable.

GRADING

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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mini Workshop Leader</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Statements (Reflective, Methods, Plans, Proposals, Fieldnotes)</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Projects (Participant-Observation/ Interviews/Cross-case Analysis)</td>
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CLASS ATTENDANCE. Regular and on-time attendance in class is required. Having more than two unexcused absences is grounds for failing the course. Reading and any additional assignments should be completed before class on the day assigned. Late assignments will not be accepted. Students with special needs should meet with me early in the semester so that proper accommodations can be made. In the event that class is canceled, you will be notified via email or Blackboard Learn. Please pay attention to any adjustments that may occur.

CLASS PARTICIPATION. Participation in class discussion accounts 10%, of your final grade. You will earn a participation grade during each class meeting; therefore, come to class prepared. Quality counts as well as quantity; empty discussion will be reflected in the grade.

MINI WORKSHOP LEADER. Each student will lead a mini workshop either individually or as a team on a topic that contributes to our research enterprise. Mini Workshops account for 5% of the final grade and should be approximately one hour of class time including discussion, demonstration, etc. Students may select their own topics. Some ideas include: 1) Understanding IRB, 2) Technology in Qualitative Research, 3) Video and Audio Recording Interviews. In addition to leading the workshop and discussion, workshop leaders should post a list of recommended readings or websites for future reference on Blackboard. [Leaders, dates, and topics to be assigned in class]
RESEARCH STATEMENTS. Ten research statements, combined, account for 25% of the final grade. Research Statements are short written assignments (2-5 pp.) on the appropriate use of research methods or a reflection statement on a video or reading. These statements should be useful for future research projects or preparation for qualifying exams. Each of these assignments is either described below or will be further detailed in class.

RESEARCH PROJECTS. Three applied research projects will be completed for this course, each worth 20% of the final grade or a total of 60%. As indicated in the syllabus, projects may include a short proposal for research, a research plan, "scrubbed" fieldnotes, and a polished draft. Students may wish to purchase a dedicated notebook for fieldnotes, but may keep their notes electronically. In any case, students will be expected to share "scrubbed" versions of their fieldnotes in class and/or on Blackboard Learn from time to time.

The first research project is participant-observation which will require that students visit an off-campus site selected by the professor to collect original data. Fieldnotes and a Research Memo are due the class following the observation. The second project consists of at least one in-depth interview (perhaps two, considering the availability of subjects). Working as part of a research team and individually, students will select a movement activist to interview, develop a research plan and protocol, execute the interview, transcribe, and code it. Finally, working as part of a research team, students will develop a coding scheme and cross-coding transcribed interviews. This course will provide the necessary methods and training. Students who strongly wish to engage a different project should consult with the professor early in the semester.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

(Excerpt from the Office of the Dean of Students)

Purdue University values intellectual integrity and the highest standards of academic conduct. To be prepared to meet societal needs as leaders and role models, students must be educated in an ethical learning environment that promotes a high standard of honor in scholastic work. Academic dishonesty undermines institutional integrity and threatens the academic fabric of Purdue University. Dishonesty is not an acceptable avenue to success. It diminishes the quality of a Purdue education, which is valued because of Purdue's high academic standards.

DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Purdue prohibits "dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty." [Section B-2-a, Code of Student Conduct] Furthermore, the University Senate has stipulated that "the commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal crib, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest." [University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972]

http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academicintegritybrochure.php

MAJOR CAMPUS EMERGENCIES. Per university policy: In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control.
Jan 15
No Class

Jan 22

Course Introduction
Fieldwork in American Politics: A Pragmatic, Applied Approach

Research Statement I. How does one ensure rigorous standards in fieldwork as an individual researcher and as a research team? (Monday, Feb 2)
Gerring, John. 2004. “What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?” American Political Science Review. 98(2) 341-354.

Jan 29
Practicing Reflexivity: Putting the “I” in Fieldwork

Research Statement II. Describe yourself as an individual and as a researcher. What implications does this information have for your research interests? (Due Friday, Feb 6)
Read: (On BL)

Feb 5
Research Method: Participant-Observation

Research Methods Statement: Briefly describe the important features of this method. When is this method appropriate or preferred? What are the characteristics of good research using this method? What are the challenges? How might individual researchers and research teams guard against pitfalls? (Due Monday, February 9)
Read: Fermo, Watching Politicians, pp. ix-26, 55-94, 113-128, skim pp. 91-111

Feb 12
Preparing to Do Field Research

Participant-Observation Research Plan (Due start of class, February 12)
Read: Kapiszewski, Diana, et al., (forthcoming). “Field Research in Political Science:
Principles and Practice in Field Research in Political Science. NY: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-42 (on BL)


*Participant-Observation I,* 10-Noon, February 14, Indianapolis, IN

*Bring field notebook, execute research plan, and be prepared to discuss in next class meeting*

Feb 19

**Approaches and Methods of Case Study**

**Research Methods Statement:** Briefly describe the important features of this method. When is this method appropriate or preferred? What are the characteristics of good research using this method? What are the challenges? How might individual researchers and research teams guard against pitfalls? (Due Monday, February 23)

Upload Fieldnotes and Research Memo on Participant Observation prior to start of class.

Read: Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practice.* Chapters 1, 4, 5, skim Part I


Feb 26

**Applied Case-Study Approaches: Indiana Moral Mondays**

**Research Statement:** Taking the week’s readings into account, is it reasonable to approach Indiana Moral Mondays as a social movement study? If so, what might interest political scientists about this emerging movement? What strengths and weaknesses does IMM present as a case study subject? (Due Monday, Mar 2)

**View:** Barber video (BL) **Write a brief reflective response to the video in your field notebook**

Read: Barber (ALL)


March 5

Research Method: In-Depth Interviewing

Research Methods Statement: Briefly describe the important features of this method. When is this method appropriate or preferred? What are the characteristics of good research using this method? What are the challenges? How might individual researchers and research teams guard against pitfalls? (Due Monday, March 9)

Interview Research Plan/Interview Qs (Due start of class, March 12)


March 12

Mapping an Interview Protocol and Strategy

Research team will develop a joint interview protocol in class. ) / Select IMM Interview Subjects

[Additional readings may be assigned.]

* Participant-Observation II, 10-Noon, March 14, Indianapolis, IN

Bring field notebook, execute research plan, be prepared to discuss in next class meeting

March 19

SPRING BREAK

Prepare interview research proposal (Due Monday, March 23)

March 26

Research Method: Focus Groups

Research Methods Statement: Briefly describe the important features of this method. When is this method appropriate or preferred? What are the characteristics of good research using this method? What are the challenges? How might individual researchers and research teams guard against pitfalls? (Due Monday, March 30)

Applied Research: Practice Interviews (w/invited guests from IMM in class


Apr 2
Research Method: Process Tracing
Research Methods Statement: Briefly describe the important features of this method. When is this method appropriate or preferred? What are the characteristics of good research using this method? What are the challenges? How might individual researchers and research teams guard against pitfalls? (Due Monday, Apr 6)
Collier, Ruth Berins and David Collier. 1991. “Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America.” (BL)

Apr 9
Research Method: Field Experiments
Research Methods Statement: Briefly describe the important features of this method. When is this method appropriate or preferred? What are the characteristics of good research using this method? What are the challenges? How might individual researchers and research teams guard against pitfalls? (Due Monday, Apr 13)

Apr 16
MPSA Meetings
No Class
Upload Interview Project: transcription, fieldnotes, coding scheme, paper drafts for two interviews (Due Monday, Apr 20)
Research Team Check-In
Present overview of interview and coding scheme to share with class.
Research team will develop cross-case coding plan.

Apr 30
Publishing Your Field Research
Research Team Check-In / Cross-Case Analysis Progress & Discussion

May 9
Upload polished drafts of papers/projects: Interviews and Cross-case Analysis.