

**Research Design and Methods
Fordham University**

Draft Syllabus

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Course Description

Aim of the Course

This course provides an overview of qualitative and quantitative research methods employed in social science research. Students will acquire methodological skills and data collection strategies that have broad application to academic, policy, and applied research as well as international program evaluation. The course covers a range of research methods, including ethnography, interviews, focus groups, surveys, and field experiments, as well as the theoretical, logistical, and ethical aspects of conducting social science research.

Basic Rules

In-Class: You are expected to be present every session and to participate in class discussions and partner/group activities. You should make sure that you come to class having read all the readings for each day, and you should participate actively in our conversation about those readings. To help you digest the readings, I provide a reading worksheet at the end of this syllabus. I encourage you to copy and fill in this worksheet for each of the 1-2 main readings assigned each class. While taking notes on laptops is fine, I will ask you to refrain from using your phones or using your computers for anything other unrelated to note taking or class activities (e.g., social media, messaging, etc.).

To create an atmosphere in which all students feel comfortable participating and have the ability to achieve their full potential, civility during the discussions is vital. During our conversations we will inevitably come to talk about day-to-day politics as it related to course themes, and it is very much possible that you will find yourself disagreeing with points put forward by your fellow students (and, they with you!). While you should absolutely feel free to challenge other students, it is crucial that you do so in a respectful way (and, of course, you can expect the same of your fellow students towards you). We also are a course on political science, which means that our discussions should focus on concepts, methods, and theory rather than current events for their own sake. Disciplining ourselves in this way can elevate discussions in a rigorous and insightful way.

Absences: If for some reason you cannot be present for understandable reasons (illness, personal circumstances clearly beyond your control, etc.) you should contact me as soon as you can (if at all possible, before the start of class). In line with Fordham's attendance policy you should report any excused absences with documentation by filling out the Excused Absence

Form. I keep attendance and unexcused absences result in a lowering of your participation grade.

Note that Fordham's official attendance policy is that for courses that meet twice a week it is not allowed to have more than four absences in total across the course – while having more than four unexcused absences does not automatically result in failing this course, excessive absences make it very difficult to receive a passing grade.

Covid Policies: As of right now there are no specific Covid policies in place in this course. However, if conditions were to change we may have to adjust. That being said, if you are sick – Covid or otherwise – stay home, let me know, fill out the excused absence form, and get medical care if necessary. If you have any concerns or questions about any of this, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Office Hours

If you have any questions or want to chat about the course, you can come to my office hours on Tuesdays between 1:30 and 2:30 PM (unless otherwise noted). My office is in 667 Faber Hall. You do not need to make an appointment for this time slot - so if you want to chat feel free to drop by! Also, it's fine to stop by if you want to talk about the course more broadly and you don't really have specific questions. Office hours are also a really helpful way to get feedback and questions answered about upcoming exams or assignments, so make sure you use them! If you want to meet but cannot make it during my office hours, send me an e-mail and we will schedule a meeting.

AI and Academic Ethics

AI Use, Plagiarism and Other Violations of Code of Conduct: All assignments in this course fall under Fordham University's code of conduct. Generative AI tools are not permitted in this course for any written assignments. Students must rely on their own originality, creativity and critical thinking skills to complete assignments, complete take-home exams, write papers, and engage with course material. Any violation (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams, relying on AI, and plagiarism) will result in the student being held accountable to the full extent of university guidelines. This includes self-plagiarism – meaning, cases where students re-use material they wrote themselves for other courses.

The research proposal will exist of a 10-to-12-page double-spaced paper engaging a specific puzzle regarding political science in relation to the readings you will read in this course. The goal of this paper is for you to come up with an original research question, a set of hypotheses derived from this question, and a research design that – if executed – would allow us to test these hypotheses and answer your question. You will not actually execute the proposal, but the goal is to think critically about what methodological approach would allow you to do so if you would – that is, what data you'd have to collect, how you would do so, etc. I will provide more details on this assignment in class in week 3.

On March 4 we will use our class time to begin workshopping your paper ideas. On November 1 you will submit a one-page description of your research proposal on Blackboard: this assignment is not graded but you will receive feedback from me on it. On March 28 you will share a three-page double spaced outline of your planned research proposal with other students – you will read the papers shared with you and will discuss them with the other students in class on April 1. On December April 21 you will share a full draft of your final paper with your group members and you will read and discuss each other’s papers in class on December 23. You will submit your final paper on Blackboard on May 1.

Notes

Fordham generally provides me with a class list that includes your legal name. If you prefer to be addressed by an alternate name and/or gender pronoun, please do not hesitate to let me know. You can do so in class, by email, or during an office hour appointment – whichever you prefer. Also, please correct me if I ever mispronounce your name or use an incorrect gender pronoun!

Fordham’s Writing Center (in Walsh Library at Rose Hill and in Quinn Library at Lincoln Center) provides individualized assistance to students for writing assignments. You can make an appointment – free of charge! – to meet with someone who will read your paper and discuss it in detail with you. I strongly recommend using this system for your paper in this class and in other classes. You can sign up for an appointment at https://www.fordham.edu/info/20126/writing_center.

As a faculty member, I am – by law – a mandatory reporter and I am required to contact and provide information to Public Safety, the Dean of Students, or Fordham’s Title IX Coordinator if I am provided with any information indicating that a Fordham student has been sexually harassed (verbally or physically), sexually assaulted, stalked, had domestic violence or dating violence occur in a relationship, or been a victim / survivor of any behavior that is prohibited by Fordham’s Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures. Once reported, Fordham will seek to support any student and make efforts to stop the negative behavior, prevent it from recurring, and remedy its effects. It is important for you to be aware that there are three confidential places on campus where you can seek support or guidance from Fordham staff members who are not mandatory reporters: clinical counselors in Counseling & Psychological Services, pastoral counselors in Campus Ministry, and medical service providers in University Health Services. You can read more about this in the Student CARE brochure or visit www.fordham.edu/care or www.fordham.edu/sexualmisconduct for more information.

If you or someone you know is struggling with emotional or mental health concerns, and/or gender, sexual, or domestic violence, Fordham’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) can provide free assistance. The Rose Hill office of CPS is open Monday through Friday and can be reached by phone at 718-817-3725. If you, or a student you know, is experiencing a mental health crisis or emergency that requires immediate attention contact Fordham’s office of Public Safety at Rose Hill at 718-817-2222 (available 24/7). If you prefer to access mental

health services outside of Fordham, New York City provides free mental health support through NYC Well (<https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/>).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

15% - Class Participation. Since this is a seminar course, attendance is obligatory. An active role in discussions and class activities by everyone enrolled in the course is expected, as is the completion of required readings before the class session for which they are assigned. Each student is permitted one unexcused absence (i.e. without a written note from a doctor or a dean). Additional unexcused absences will affect the participation grade.

35% - Practicums. There will be five practicums. The purpose of the practicums is to gain experience with specific research methods. In the first assignment, students will conduct ethnographic-style fieldwork and write a descriptive narrative of based on their observations. For the second assignment, students will design and conduct an interview and then transcribe that interview. For the third assignment, students will develop a survey sampling protocol. In the fourth assignment, students will design a survey questionnaire including a survey experiment. For the fifth assignment, students will design a field experiment.

25% - Take-Home Midterm. Students will be required to write a take-home mid-term exam consisting of a short answer section and longer essay (8 pages) section.

25% - Research Proposal. You will be asked to develop a research proposal on a topic of your choice. The proposal will include a substantively motivated research question, literature review and testable hypotheses, detailed research design (including a discussion of why you chose one method over its alternatives), and analysis plan. It will be graded for its feasibility and the thought that you show in selecting your method and explaining how you will use the selected method(s).

Required Readings:

Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren MacLean, and Benjamin Read. 2015. *Field Research in Political Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Van Maanen, John. 2011. *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Course Schedule

1/14: Introduction (No Assigned Reading)

1/17: Research Ethnics

Curran, Sara. 2006. "Research Ethics are Essential." Handbook for Social Science Field Research (Sarah Curran and Ellen Perelman, editors). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Zimbardo, Philip G., Craig Haney, W. Curtis Banks, and David Jaffe. 1971. *The Stanford Prison Experiment*.

1/21: From Concept to Measurement I

Kellstedt, Paul and Guy Whitten. 2018. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Read Chapter 5.

Gerring, John. 1999. "What Makes a Concept Good?" *Polity*, 31 (3) 357-93.

1/24: From Concepts to Measurement II

Schneider, Mark. 2019. "Do Local Leaders Know Their Voters? A test of guessability in India." *Electoral Studies* 61.

Auerbach, Adam, Shikhar Singh, and Tariq Thachil. 2025. "Who Knows How to Govern? Procedural Knowledge in India's Small Town Councils." *American Political Science Review*.

1/28: Case Selection

Seawright, Jason and John Gerring. 2008. "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Quantitative and Qualitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly*, 61 (2) 294-308.

Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis*, 2 (1) 131-50.

Recommended: King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 2021. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton University Press: 125-47.

1/31: Case Study Research

Heller, Patrick. 2001. "Moving the state: the politics of democratic decentralization in Kerala, South Africa, and Porto Alegre." *Politics and Society*, 29 (1) 131-163.

Varshney, Ashutosh. 2003. *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. Yale University Press. Chapter 5.

2/4: Participant Observation and Ethnography

Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren MacLean, and Benjamin Read. 2015. *Field Research in Political Science*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 7.

Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, Linda Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pages 169-182.

2/7: Research Using Ethnography and Participant Observation

Guest Lecture: Adam Auerbach, Johns Hopkins University

Geertz, Clifford. 1977. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 1.

Fenno Jr, Richard. 1977. "US House Members in Their Constituencies: An exploration." *American Political Science Review* 71(3) 883-917.

2/11: Digital Ethnography

Coleman, E. Gabriella. 2010. "Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39: 487–505.

Käihkö, Ilmari. 2020. "Conflict Chatnography: Instant messaging apps, social media and conflict ethnography in Ukraine." *Ethnography*, 21 (1) 71-91.

2/14: Qualitative Interviews

Rubin, Herbert and Irene Rubin. 2005. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (Second Edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage. Chapter 8.

Leech, Beth. 2002. "Asking Questions: Techniques for Semi-Structured Interviews." *Political Science and Politics* 35 (4) 665-68.

Listen: This American Life episode TBA.

Assignment for Next Class: Create a 10 question discussion guide of semi-structured interviews on students' news consumption habits. Practice it on one person before class.

2/18: In-Class Activity: We will review discussion guides, conduct interviews in class, and discuss.

2/21: Focus Groups

Cyr, Jennifer. 2016. "The Pitfalls and Promise of Focus Groups as a Data Collection Method." *Sociological Methods and Research*, 45 (2) 231-59.

Stewart, David and Prem Shamdasani. 2014. *Focus Groups*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. Chapters 3 and 6.

2/25: In-Class Activity: Practice Focus Group Exercise

Healy, Patrick. 2024. "[Our 61 Focus Groups Make Me Think Trump Has a Good Chance of Winning](#)." NYT.

Recommended:

Farnsworth, John and Bronwyn Boon. 2010. "Analyzing Group Dynamics within the Focus Group." *Qualitative Research*, 10: 605-24.

2/28: Surveys: Introduction

Groves, Robert. 2009. *Survey Methodology* (Second Edition). New York: Wiley. Chapter 1.

Pew Research Center. 12 February 2025. "[5 Years Later: America Looks Back at the Impact of COVID-19](#)."

3/4: Survey Sampling

Groves, Robert. 2009. *Survey Methodology* (Second Edition). New York: Wiley. Read 39-64; 69-77.

Chakravorty, Sanjoy, and Neelanjan Sircar, eds. 2021. *Colossus: The Anatomy of Delhi*. Vol. 15. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

3/7: Designing Survey Questionnaires I

Groves, Robert. 2009. *Survey Methodology* (Second Edition). New York: Wiley. Chapter 7.

Bradburn, Norman, Seymour Sudman, and Brian Wansink. 2004. *Asking Questions*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons. Chapters 4 and 5.

3/11: Designing Survey Questionnaires II: Sensitive Questions

Tourangeau, Roger and Ting Yan. 2005. "Sensitive Questions in Surveys." *Psychological Bulletin*, 133 (5) 859-83.

Glynn, Adam. 2013. "What Can We Learn from Statistical Truth Serum? Design and Analysis of the List Experiment." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 77 (1) 159-72.

3/14: In-Class Activity: Design a Survey for the NYC mayoral elections.

Krosnick, Jon A. 1991. "Response strategies for coping with the cognitive demands of attitude measures in surveys." *Applied cognitive psychology* 5 (3) 213-236.

3/18 to 3/21: No Class. Spring Break.

3/25: Survey Experiments I

Hainmueller, Jens, Daniel Hopkins, and Teppei Yamamoto. 2014. "Causal Inference in Conjoint Analysis." *Political Analysis*, 22(1) 1–30.

Auerbach, Adam Michael, and Tariq Thachil. 2018. "How Clients Select Brokers." *American Political Science Review* 112 (4) 775–91.

Recommended: McDermott, Rose. "Experimental Methods in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 5, no. 1 (2002): 31-61.

3/28: Survey Experiments II: Priming

Valenzuela, Ali A., and Tyler Reny. "Evolution of experiments on racial priming." *Advances in experimental political science* (2020): 447-467.

4/1: Research Design Assignment Workshop I

No Assigned Readings.

4/4: Behavioral Measurement

Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel Posner, and Jeremy Weinstein. 2007. "Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?" *American Political Science Review* 101(4): 709–25.

Schneider, Mark and Neelanjan Sircar. 2024. "Do Local Leaders Prioritize the Poor? Identifying the distributive preference of village politicians in India." *Electoral Studies*, 88.

Recommended: Berge, Lars Ivar Oppedal, Kjetil Bjorvatn, Simon Galle, Edward Miguel, Daniel N. Posner, Bertil Tungodden, and Kelly Zhang. 2020. "Ethnically biased? Experimental evidence from Kenya." *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 18 (1) 134-164.

4/8: Field Experiments I: Overview

Glennerster, Rachel and Kudzai Takavarasha. 2013. *Running Randomized Evaluations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Duflo, Esther. 2020. "Field Experiments and the Practice of Policy." *The American Economic Review*, 110 (7) 1952-73.

4/11: Field Experiments II: Applications

Wantchekon, Leonard. 2003. "Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a field experiment in Benin." *World Politics*, 55 (3) 399-422.

Gerber, Alan, Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment. *American Political Science Review* 102 (1) 33-48.

Recommended: Baldwin, Kate. 2013. Why Vote With the Chief? Political connections and public goods provision in Zambia. *American Journal of Political Science* 57(4) 794-809.

4/14: Field Experiments and Impact Evaluation

Gertler, Paul, Patrick Premand, Laura Rawlings, and Christel Vermeersch. 2016. *Impact Evaluation in Practice*. Washington DC: World Bank. Chapter 1

Rao, Vijayendra, Kripa Ananthpur, and Kabir Malik. 2017. “The Anatomy of Failure.” *World Development* 99: 481-97.

4/18: No Class. Easter.

4/22: Research Design Workshop

No Readings. Read your classmates' proposals

4/25: Make-up Class or Topic TBD.

4/29: Workshop III: Present Your Research Designs

Reading Skills

As you manage the reading for this and other courses, you are likely to find, if you have not already, that there is no correlation between effort and outcome. It is entirely possible to spend several hours reading something without “getting it.” And it is equally possible to spend less than a half-hour reading something else and getting to the heart of the argument. You will have to devise for yourselves ways to read efficiently. These are some devices that may help:

1. Figure out what the heart of an argument is before you read deeply: skim, read the abstracts, the jacket blurbs, often short reviews published elsewhere. When you know where the center of gravity is, you read more efficiently.
2. Read actively: do not simply soak up the reading for what the author wants to tell you, but approach it with questions, and try to answer them for yourself as you make your way through.
3. Use other peoples’ skills: you do not have to do all the work yourself. It is not “cheating” if you talk through the argument with someone else before or after you delve in, or look at reviews for explication, or form reading groups where you can discuss the argument with each other.
4. Write in order to read. The response papers for this class and the (non-graded) worksheet attached should help.
5. Use diagrams if necessary: often, the structure of an argument can be most clearly expressed if you “draw” it, using arrows and lines, than by trying to understand it in words.
6. Organize your notes in a way that makes retention and information retrieval possible: you could use index cards, annotated bibliographies, database programs like Filemaker Pro etc. These rules may be obvious to some and not to others. Basically, do whatever works for you. But be self-conscious about the reading process as a skill that has to be learned and not necessarily as an ability that either comes naturally or does not.

Reading Worksheet

For each book, chapter, or article assigned in this course, you should fill out the following (non-graded) worksheet. Many of these points can be addressed in a sentence or two (e.g. Questions 1 and 2; in some cases, answers will not need even to be full sentences (e.g., Question)); and in some cases, the answers may overlap. These worksheets should be retained: they will be useful for future reference.

1. State the central question that the reading addresses.
2. State the central argument(s) defended in the paper in response to this question.
3. What type of reasoning or evidence is used to support these arguments? If it is an analytical paper, what is the logic that undergirds the argument? If an empirical paper, what type of data is employed? Are there other data sources that you think might be more appropriate?
4. Do you find the claims of the reading convincing? What do you see as the main gaps that need to be filled?
5. Why (if at all) is the reading interesting?
6. Do you agree with the main claims? What are your hesitations? (This may simply involve restatement of previous points.)
7. Identify one or two implicit premises or background assumptions in the paper that you think are especially controversial or objectionable.
8. Considering your answers to the previous questions, write an abstract for the article of no more than 100 words. (Feel free to repeat formulations given in response to earlier questions.)
9. When you have done this for individual readings, take some time to think about the various readings you have been assigned in relation to each other. See if you can write or imagine a summary table for all the readings taken together which compares and contrasts them.