

Government 715: Research Design
American University, Fall 2024
Monday, 11:20 – 2:10, Bender Library B60

Prof. Elizabeth Suhay (suhay@american.edu)
Office hours: Mon & Thurs, 5:30 – 6:30 (Kerwin Hall 212) and by appointment

Course Description

This seminar offers an introduction to the philosophy of social science and empirical research design and practice. The course begins with an introduction to the philosophy of science and social scientific inquiry. This is followed by a brief tour of common empirical research designs, including survey, interview, experimental, comparative case study, and content analysis approaches. The final portion of the course focuses on various practical dimensions of social scientific practice, ranging from finding a research question to producing replicable research to reducing value bias. Students will be asked to actively participate in class discussions and activities throughout the semester, take two exams, and complete an original research design on a topic, and using an approach, of their choosing.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- ***Understand*** various perspectives on the philosophy of science and social science
- ***Inventory*** an array of empirical approaches to social science and their strengths and weaknesses
- ***Identify*** common challenges of contemporary social science practice and ways to address them
- ***Conceive and design*** an original empirical research project
- ***Critique*** other scholars' research designs

Academic Integrity

All students are required to follow the University's Academic Integrity Code. *Plagiarism, which includes the unacknowledged submission of AI generated text in assignments, is a violation of academic integrity.* If you have not already done so, please familiarize yourself with the standards and requirements of the University's Academic Code of Conduct. Violations of the Code of Conduct will not be tolerated and will be reported appropriately. You can find more information about the University's Academic Integrity Code here: <https://www.american.edu/policies/students/upload/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

Course Assignments and Expectations

Participation 20%

The success of this seminar depends on your preparation. Please read assigned readings in their entirety before each class and record notes on authors' main points and your reflections. Consider each publication's strengths, weaknesses, implications, and any questions you have about it. Students' participation will be graded according to quantity and quality of participation, with quality reflecting preparation and constructive engagement with readings, classmates' ideas, and activities. Unexcused absences and/or repeatedly arriving late will negatively affect the participation grade.

Exams 50%

- Philosophy of science exam – October 7 (2 hours)
- Empirical approaches and practice exam – December 9 (2 hours)

Research Proposal 30%

- Research proposal topic, question, and tentative empirical approach
 - Due in class October 21
- IRB certification (CITI: Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher)
 - Due by October 21
- Research proposal draft (*pass/fail*) 5%
 - Due Thursday, November 14
- Final research proposal 25%
 - Due Friday, November 22

Core Readings

1. Peter Godfrey-Smith. 2021. *Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science, Second Edition*. University of Chicago Press.
2. Abraham Kaplan. 1998 [1964]. *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science*. Transaction Publishers.
3. Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow. 2012. *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*. Routledge.
4. Colin Elman, John Gerring, and James M. Mahoney. 2020. *The Production of Knowledge: Enhancing Progress in Social Science*. Cambridge University Press.

I recommend purchasing these books. All other assigned readings will be made available via Canvas.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Week 1 Course Introduction – August 26

UNIT 1: PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE & SOCIAL SCIENCE

Week 2 Philosophy of Science I – September 2 (*Labor Day; no class meeting*)

Peter Godfrey-Smith. 2021. *Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science, Second Edition*. Ch 1-6

1. Introduction
2. Empiricism
3. Evidence and Induction
4. Popper: Conjecture and Refutation
5. Kuhn's Revolution
6. Theories and Frameworks

Further Reading

A.J. Ayer. 1936. *Language, Truth, and Logic*.

Rudolf Carnap. 1966. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*. Basic Books.

Paul Feyerabend. 1970. Against method: Outline of an anarchist theory of knowledge. In *Analysis of Theories of Physics and Psychology*, edited by Radner and Winokur. *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science IV*: 17-92.

Paul Feyerabend. 1974. How to Defend Society Against Science. Revised version of talk given to Philosophy Society at Sussex University.

Paul Feyerabend. 1975. *Against Method*. New Left Books.

Carl Gustav Hempel. 1965. *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and other Essays in Philosophy of Science*.

Thomas Kuhn. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago.

Thomas Kuhn. 1970. Logic of Discovery or Psychology of Research? In *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, edited by Lakatos and Musgrave. Cambridge.

Thomas Kuhn. 1978. Second Thoughts on Paradigms; Objectivity, Value Judgment, and Theory Choice. In *The Essential Tension*, edited by Thomas Kuhn. Cambridge.

Imre Lakatos. 1970. Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programs. In *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, edited by Lakatos and Musgrave. Cambridge. Pp. 91-138; 173-180.

Karl Popper. 1959. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. Routledge.

Karl Popper. 1963. Science: Conjectures and Refutations. In *Conjectures and Refutations*.

Week 3 Philosophy of Science II – September 9

Peter Godfrey-Smith. 2021. *Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science, Second Edition*. Ch 7-14

7. The Challenge from Sociology of Science
8. Science is Political
9. Naturalistic Philosophy
10. Scientific Realism
11. Explanation, Laws, and Causes
12. Bayesianism and New Views of Evidence
13. Truth, Simplicity, and Other Problems
14. The Future

Further Reading

Elizabeth Anderson. 1995. Feminist Epistemology: An Interpretation and Defense. *Hypatia* 10: 50-84.

Vannevar Bush. 1945. *Science, the endless frontier*. A report to the President by Vannevar Bush, director of the Office of scientific research and development. United States Government Printing Office.

Sheila Jasanoff, ed. 2004. *States of Knowledge: The Co-Production of Science and the Social Order*. Routledge.

Philip Kitcher. 2001. *Science, Truth, and Democracy*. Oxford.

Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar. 1979. *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts*. Sage.

Bruno Latour. 1987. *Science in Action*. Harvard.

Roger A. Pielke, Jr. 2007. *The Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science in Policy and Politics*. Cambridge.

Don K. Price. 1965. *The Scientific Estate*. Harvard.

Ullica Segerstrale. 2000. *Beyond the Science Wars: The Missing Discourse about Science and Society*. SUNY.

Week 4 Social Scientific Inquiry I – September 16

Abraham Kaplan. 1998 [1964]. *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science*.

I: Methodology

II: Concepts

V: Measurement

Giovanni Sartori. 1970. Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics. *American Political Science Review* 64(4): 1033–1046 (only).

Gary Goertz. 2020. *Social Science Concepts and Measurement: New and Completely Revised Edition*. Princeton.

1. Introduction: An Ontological-Semantic Approach to Conceptualization and Measurement (ignore chapter summaries)
2. The Basic Framework for Conceptualization and Measurement

Week 5 Social Scientific Inquiry II – September 23

Abraham Kaplan. 1998 [1964]. *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science*.

III: Laws

VIII: Theories

IX: Explanation

Harold Kincaid, ed. 2012. *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Social Science*. Oxford.

5. Descriptive-Causal Generalizations: “Empirical Laws” in the Social Sciences?, by Gary Goertz.

7. Partial Explanations in Social Science, by Robert Northcott.

8. Counterfactuals, by Julian Reiss.

Further Reading

Henry E. Brady and David Collier. 2010. *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards, Second Edition*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Rudolf Carnap. 1966. The Nature of Theories. Reprinted in *Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science, Third Edition*, edited by E.D. Klemke, Robert Hollinger, and David Wýss Rudge. Prometheus Books.

Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton.

Hilary Putnam. 1977. What Theories Are Not. Reprinted in *Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science, Third Edition*, edited by E.D. Klemke, Robert Hollinger, and David Wýss Rudge. Prometheus Books.

Kristen Renwick Monroe, ed. 2005. *Perestroika! The Raucous Rebellion in Political Science*. Yale.

William H. Riker. 1982. The Two-Party System and Duverger’s Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science. *American Political Science Review* 76(4): 753-766.

Week 6 Interpretive Approaches to Social Inquiry – September 30

Clifford Geertz. 1973. Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Basic Books.

Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow. 2012. *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*.

1. Wherefore Research Design?
2. Ways of Knowing: Research Questions and Logics of Inquiry
3. Starting from Meaning: Contextuality and Its Implications

Further Reading

Mark Bevir and Jason Blakely. 2018. *Interpretive Social Science: An Anti-Naturalist Approach*. Oxford.

Kathy Charmaz. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory, 2nd Edition*. SAGE Publications.

Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Aldine Transaction.

Charles Taylor. 1971. Interpretation and the Sciences of Man. *The Review of Metaphysics* 25(1).

Dvora Yanow. 2005. In the House of "Science," There Are Many Rooms. In *Perestroika! The Raucous Rebellion in Political Science*, edited by Kristen Renwick Monroe. Yale.

Week 7 Exam 1 – October 7

Students may bring one double-sided page of notes (1-inch margins; font at least 10 pt).

UNIT 2: EMPIRICAL APPROACHES TO SOCIAL SCIENCE

Week 8 *class cancelled*

Week 9 Surveys & Interviews – October 21

Peter V. Marsden and James D. Wright. 2010. *Handbook of Survey Research, Second Edition*. Emerald.

1. Survey Research and Social Science: History, Current Practice, and Future Prospects, by James D. Wright and Peter V. Marsden.
2. Overview of Design Issues: Total Survey Error, by Paul P. Biemer.
5. Fundamentals of Applied Sampling, by Thomas Piazza.
9. Question and Questionnaire Design, by Jon A. Krosnick and Stanley Presser

Annette Lareau. 2021. *Listening to People: A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up*. Chicago.

5. How to Conduct a Good Interview

Daniel Steiman and Elizabeth Suhay. 2023. Conducting Interview Projects in the U.S. Congress: Perspectives from Experts in the Field. *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 48(4): 699-730.

Further Reading

Floyd J. Fowler, Jr. 2014. *Survey Research Methods, 5th Edition*. SAGE.

Roger Tourangeau, Lance J. Rips, and Kenneth Rasinski. 2000. *The Psychology of Survey Response*. Cambridge.

Leslie Kish. 1965. *Survey Sampling*. Wiley.

Layna Mosley, ed. 2013. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Cornell.

Stefanie Stantcheva. 2022. How to Run Surveys: A Guide to Creating Your Own, Identifying Variation, and Revealing the Invisible. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 30527.

Week 10 Experiments – October 28

Abraham Kaplan. 1998 [1964]. *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science*.

IV: Experiment

Donald T. Campbell and Julian C. Stanley. 1963. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research*. Houghton Mifflin.

- Problem and Background, pp. 1-6
- Three Pre-Experimental Designs, pp. 6-13
- Three True Experimental Designs, pp. 13-34 (SKIP the following sections: “Tests of Significance for Design 4,” “Statistical Tests for Design 5,” “The Statistics for Design 6,” “Finite, Random, Fixed, and Mixed Models”)
- Quasi-Experimental Designs, pp. 34-64 (SKIP the following sections: “Tests of Significance for the Time-Series Design,” “Tests of Significance for Design 8,” “Statistics for Design 9”)

Rocío Titiunik. 2021. Natural Experiments. In *Advances in Experimental Political Science*, edited by James N. Druckman and Donald P. Green. Cambridge.

Nancy Cartwright. 2012. RCTs, Evidence, and Predicting Policy Effectiveness. In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Social Science*, edited by Harold Kincaid. Oxford.

Further Reading

Scott Clifford, Geoffrey Sheagley, and Spencer Piston. 2021. Increasing Precision without Altering Treatment Effects: Repeated Measures Designs in Survey Experiments. *American Political Science Review* 115(3): 1048-1065.

Thomas D. Cook and Donald T. Campbell. 1979. *Quasi-Experimentation: Design & Analysis Issues for Field Settings*. Houghton Mifflin.

James N. Druckman and Donald P. Green, eds. 2021. *Advances in Experimental Political Science*. Cambridge.

2. Conjoint Survey Experiments, by Kirk Bansak, Jens Hainmueller, Daniel J. Hopkins, and Teppei Yamamoto
3. Audit Studies in Political Science, by Daniel M. Butler and Charles Crabtree
12. Improving Experimental Treatments in Political Science, by Diana Mutz

Alan S. Gerber and Donald P. Green. 2012. *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*. Norton.

Donald P. Green. 2022. *Social Science Experiments: A Hands-on Introduction*. Cambridge.

Donald R. Kinder and Thomas R. Palfrey, eds. 1993. *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*. Michigan.

Rebecca B. Morton and Kenneth C. Williams. 2010. *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality: From Nature to the Lab*. Cambridge.

Diana Mutz. 2011. *Population-Based Survey Experiments*. Princeton.

William R. Shadish, Thomas D. Cook, and Donald T. Campbell. 2001. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference, 2nd Edition*. Cengage.

Week 11 Case Studies & the Comparative Method – November 4

Arend Lijphart. 1971. Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method. *American Political Science Review* 65: 682-693.

Barbara Geddes. 1990. How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics. *Political Analysis* 2: 131-150.

John Gerring. 2008. Case Selection for Case-Study Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative Techniques. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, edited by Janet T. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier. Oxford. Pp. 645-684.

James Mahoney and Gary Goertz. 2006. A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research. *Political Analysis* 14: 227-249.

Gary Goertz and Stephan Haggard. 2023. Large-N Qualitative Analysis (LNQA): Causal Generalization in Case Study and Multimethod Research. *Perspectives on Politics* 21(4): 1221-1239.

Further Reading

Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel. 2015. Process Tracing: From Philosophical Roots to Best Practices. In *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytical Tool*, edited by Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey Checkel. Cambridge.

Donald Campbell. 1975. Degrees of Freedom and the Case Study. *Comparative Political Studies* 8: 178-85.

John Gerring. 2017. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices, Second Edition*. Cambridge.

Diana Kapiszewski, Lauren M. MacLean, and Benjamin L. Read. 2015. *Field Research in Political Science: Practices and Principles*. Cambridge.

Evan S. Lieberman. 2005. Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research. *American Political Science Review* 99(3): 435-452.

Thomas B. Pepinsky. 2019. The Return of the Single-Country Study. *Annual Review of Political Science* 22: 187-203.

Ingo Rohlfing. 2014. Comparative Hypothesis Testing Via Process Tracing. *Sociological Methods & Research* 43(4): 606-642.

David Waldner. 2012. Process Tracing and Causal Mechanisms. In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Social Science*, edited by Harold Kincaid. Oxford.

UNIT 3: IMPROVING SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC PRACTICE

Week 12 Content Analysis / Beginning & Planning Research – November 11

Content Analysis

Klaus Krippendorff. 2018. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology, Fourth Edition*. SAGE.

4. The Logic of Content Analysis Designs
5. Unitizing
6. Sampling
7. Recording/Coding

Further Reading

Kathy Charmaz. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory, 2nd Edition*. SAGE.

Klaus Krippendorff and Mary Angela Bock. 2008. *The Content Analysis Reader*. SAGE Publications.

Kimberly Neuendorf. 2017. *The Content Analysis Guidebook, Second Edition*. SAGE.

Beginning & Planning Research

John Gerring. 2012. *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework, Second Edition*. Cambridge.

2: Beginnings

Colin Elman, John Gerring, and James Mahoney, eds. 2020. *The Production of Knowledge: Enhancing Progress in Social Science*.

2. Exploratory Research, by Richard Swedberg.

3. Research Cycles, by Evan Lieberman.

Further Reading

Donald T. Campbell. 1969. Ethnocentrism of Disciplines and the Fish-Scale Model of Omniscience. In *Interdisciplinary Relationships in the Social Sciences*, edited by M. Sherif and C. Sherif. Aldine.

Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow. 2012. *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*.

4: The Rhythms of Interpretive Research I: Getting Going

5: The Rhythms of Interpretive Research II: Understanding and Generating Evidence

Week 13 Research Design Workshop – November 18

Read and prepare written comments on each of your colleague's designs. (Research design drafts due Thursday, November 14.)

Week 14 Transparency, Reproducibility, and Replication – November 25 (Zoom class)

Arthur Lupia and Colin Elman. 2014. Openness in Political Science: Data Access and Research Transparency. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47(1): 19-42.

Colin Elman, John Gerring, and James Mahoney, eds. 2020. *The Production of Knowledge: Enhancing Progress in Social Science*.

6. Transparency and Reproducibility: Conceptualizing the Problem

7. Transparency and Reproducibility: Potential Solutions

Mark Brandt, Hans IJzerman, et al. 2014. The Replication Recipe: What Makes for a Convincing Replication? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 50: 217-224.

Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow. 2012. *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*.
6: Designing for Trustworthiness: Knowledge Claims and Evaluations of Interpretive Research

Further Reading

Colin Elman and Diana Kapiszewski. 2014. Data Access and Research Transparency in the Qualitative Tradition. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47(1): 43-47.

Annie Franco, Neil Malhotra, and Gabor Simonovits. 2014. Publication Bias in the Social Sciences: Unlocking the File Drawer. *Science* 345(6203): 1502-1505.

Kristen Renwick Monroe. 2018. The Rush to Transparency: DA-RT and the Potential Dangers for Qualitative Research. *Perspectives on Politics* 16(1): 141-148.

Week 15 Values, Bias, and Ethics in Social Science – December 2

Abraham Kaplan. 1998 [1964]. *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science*.
X: Values

Philip E. Tetlock. 1994. Political Psychology or Politicized Psychology: Is the Road to Scientific Hell Paved with Good Moral Intentions? *Political Psychology* 15(3): 509-529.

David O. Sears. 1994. Ideological Bias in Political Psychology: The View from Scientific Hell. *Political Psychology* 15(3): 547-556.

Neil Gross and Christopher Robertson. 2020. Ideological Diversity. In *The Production of Knowledge: Enhancing Progress in Social Science*, edited by Colin Elman, John Gerring, and James Mahoney. Cambridge.

Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow. 2012. *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*.
7: Design in Context: From the Human Side of Research to Writing Research Manuscripts

APSA Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research. 2020.

Further Reading

Heather E. Douglas. 2009. *Science, Policy, and the Value-Free Ideal*. Pittsburgh.

Matt Grossmann. 2021. *How the Social Sciences Got Better: Overcoming Bias with More Evidence, Diversity, and Self-Reflection*. Oxford.

Carl G. Hempel. 1960. Science and Human Values. Reprinted in *Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science, Third Edition*, edited by E.D. Klemke, Robert Hollinger, and David Wyss Rudge. Prometheus Books.

Dawn Langan Teele. 2021. Virtual Consent: The Bronze Standard for Experimental Ethics. In *Advances in Experimental Political Science*, edited by James N. Druckman and Donald P. Green. Cambridge.

Trisha Phillips. 2021. Ethics of Field Experiments. *Annual Review of Political Science* 24: 277-300.

Richard Rudner. 1998. The Scientist *Qua* Scientist Makes Value Judgments. In *Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*, edited by E.D. Klemke, Robert Hollinger, and David Wyss Rudge. Prometheus Books.

Philip E. Tetlock. 1994. How Politicized Is Political Psychology and Is There Anything We Should Do about It? *Political Psychology* 15(3): 567-577.

Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. 2016. Encountering Your IRB 2.0: What Political Scientists Need to Know. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 49(2): 277-285.

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS POLICIES & SUPPORT

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- Hours: Mon – Fri, 9am – 5pm
- Website: <http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/>

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- Phone: 202-885-8080
- Email: TitleIX@american.edu for complaints and reports for sexual misconduct; and equityoffice@american.edu for complaints and reports for other discrimination.

Please keep in mind that all faculty and staff – with the exception of counselors in the Counseling Center, staff in the Office of Advocacy Services for Interpersonal and Sexual Violence, medical providers in the Student Health Center, and ordained clergy in the Kay Spiritual Life Center – who are aware of or witness this conduct are required to report this information to the university, regardless of the location of the incident.

For more information, including a list of supportive resources on and off-campus, contact contact AU's [Wellbeing Center](#).

Emergencies

In an emergency, AU will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail or Canvas, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (<http://www.american.edu/emergency/>) and the AU information line at 202-885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/college-specific information.