POLS529 – Methods and Scope of Political Analysis

Instructor: Mert Moral

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Office Hours: By appointment only – via Zoom.[1] W 8:00-11:00am

Lectures: Lecture videos – on YouTube.

Discussions/Labs: Online meetings – via Zoom. R 10:40am-2:30pm.

Teaching Assistant: Melike Ayşe Kocacık Şenol.[2] By appointment only – via Skype (melikeaysek). M 10:00-11:30am

Course Description

There are a myriad of ways to obtain scientific knowledge about social and political phenomena that political scientists are interested in better understanding and explaining. The main goal of this course is not to provide you with all such tools at political scientists' disposal, but with a survey of those, and necessary knowledge and basic skills to understand, evaluate, and conduct scientific research. Having been introduced to *qualitative and quantitative* reasoning, and political science methodology will help you develop the required skillset to *critically* and *constructively* evaluate other scholarly research as well as a sense of what your future research agenda, including but not limited to your M.A. thesis/Ph.D. dissertation, should look like.

Throughout the semester you will work on a number of short assignments that will eventually form your final research project. You will first familiarize yourself with the current state of the political science literature, then identify a novel research question, inform your theoretical expectations by previous research on the topic, derive a testable hypothesis, construct an appropriate research design, collect your own data, and conduct a simple hypothesis test.

Since research design constitutes the "nuts and bolts" of scientific research and, as political scientists, we should all be able to communicate "what we think we know" to our audience, this course will focus extensively on research design and communicating "how we came to know what we think we know." Following a general introduction to epistemology of science in the first part, you will therefore spend the second part of the semester thinking about how to approach puzzling social and political phenomena, conceptualize and operationalize various factors (that may or may not be) influencing them, design appropriate theoretical and empirical models, and communicate those to your audience (and write) effectively.

Albeit very limited in scope, we will cover some more technical concepts in the last and third part of the semester.[3] Starting in Week 10, using a statistical software package (Stata), we will be applying what you will have learned in the first two parts of the semester to observational data. By the end of this semester, you will thus not only be introduced to research design, measurement,

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[1] Please click on the hyperlinks indicated with blue color to set up an appointment and to connect to the virtual officehour meeting for which the login information will be (re)sent via Calendy.

[2] Melike Hoca is a Ph.D. candidate with great software, methodological, and teaching skills. Please try to benefit from her experience and skills as much as possible, especially when you have a question about the course content or requirements, and experience a software problem.

[3] This course assumes no background in econometrics or formal theory, but high school-level knowledge about linear and matrix algebra, and probability theory. In case you do not remember the simple mathematical concepts we touch upon, please let me know as soon as possible.

and causal inference as the three major topics in political methodology, but also be able to evaluate scholarly research and design your own independent research.

Course Outline and Short Assignments[4,5,6,7,8]

08.10	Introduction and overview		
15.10	Epistemology and science	O1.	Prominent political science research
22.10	Political science		
29.10	Theory and knowledge	F1.	Identifying a research topic/question
05.11	Causality and causal inference		
05.11	Lab Session – Introduction to LaTeX		
12.11	Experimental research	F2.	Literature review and puzzle
19.11	Fundamentals of research design		
19.11	Lab Session – LaTeX Lab		
26.11	Case selection and sampling	F3.	Research design
03.12	Measurement		
03.12	Lab Session – Introduction to Stata		
10.12	Variables and distributions	O2.	Introduction to Stata
10.12	Lab Session – Graphing in Stata		
17.12	Introduction to hypothesis testing	O3.	Drawing a histogram and a scatterplot
17.12	Lab Session – Hypothesis Testing in Stata		
24.12	Correlation and bivariate regression	F4.	Collecting and understanding your data
24.12	Lab Session – Stata-LaTeX Integration		
31.12	Wrap-up		
07.01	Research design presentations	O4.	Analyzing Turkish Election Study data
18.01	Final Research Paper (11:59pm)		
28.01	Final Exam (4:00-7:00pm)		

Textbooks[9]

There are two required textbooks for POLS529. You should have hard or soft copies of::

- Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2018. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research.* 3rd Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press.

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

– Assigned chapters from two other (text)books that will also be used in POLS530 in the Spring term are available online at the "Resources" section of the course page.

- Acock, Alan C. 2018. *A Gentle Introduction to Stata.* 6th Edition. College Station, TX: Stata Press.

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[4] Week 4 may be rescheduled due to the national holiday.

[5] The short assignments with the prefix "F" will eventually constitute the related parts of your final paper.

[6] Assignment F4 is now due midnight on December 27, 2020.

[7] Research design presentation is now due midnight on January 4, 2020.

[8] Assignment O4 is now due 10:40am on January 7, 2021.

[9] Older editions of three of the four textbooks are available at the Information Center. You can of course prefer cheaper, earlier editions than the most up-to-date ones. In that case, however, you will be responsible for finding out any omissions, revisions, or additions.

• Wooldridge, Jeffrey M. 2019. *Introductory Econometrics: A Modern Approach.* 7th Edition. Mason, OH: South-Western, Cengage Learning.

– All required readings for each week are listed below.[10] While you can click on the hyperlinks indicated with blue color for journal articles,[11] conference papers and book chapters are uploaded to the "Resources" section of the course page.

Required Readings

⋆ **Week 2 (15.10) - Epistemology and science**

– Kuhn, Thomas S. 1996. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* 3rd Edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. [Chapters 1-10: pp.1-110].

– Popper, Karl R. 2002. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery.* New York: Routledge Classics. [Chapters 1-4, and 10, and Appendix ∗i: pp.3-73, 248-82, 312-18].

⋆ **Week 3 (22.10) - Political science**

– Kellstedt and Whitten. [Chapters 1-2: pp.1-55].

– King, Keohane, and Verba. [Chapters 1-2: pp.3-74].

⋆ **Week 4 (29.10) - Theory and knowledge**

– Clarke, Kevin A., and David M. Primo. 2012. *A Model Discipline: Political Science and the Logic of Representations.* New York: Oxford University Press. [Chapters 1-4, and 6: pp.1-103, 134-67].

– Rundlett, Ashlea, and Milan W. Svolik. 2016. "Deliver the Vote! Micromotives and Macrobehavior in Electoral Fraud". *American Political Science Review* 110(1): 180-97.

For the first quiz:

– Best, Robin E., and Mert Moral. 2018. "Party Polarization, Electoral Polarization, and Ideological Congruence." In *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.* Boston, MA. [on SU Course+]

– Blais, Andre, and Marc Andre Bodet. 2006. "Does Proportional Representation Foster Closer Congruence Between Citizens and Policy Makers?" *Comparative Political Studies* 39(10): 1243-62.

– Huber, John D., and G. Bingham Powell. 1994. "Congruence Between Citizens and Policymakers in Two Visions of Liberal Democracy." *World Politics* 46(3): 291-326.

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[10]You should get used to reading –a lot! Because especially technical and applied readings assigned for this course will be quite different from those you have so far encountered, while doing so please keep in mind what you are trying to accomplish by reading –i.e., understanding the main argument(s) the article/book makes, why it is novel or interesting, how the author assesses empirical evidence, and what the evidence tells you. In addition to *being knowledgeable about previous literature and research methodology*, evaluating scholarly research requires thinking (thoroughly) about what the author/s *does (and does not) say/s.* It may thus require reading the same text multiple times. Sometimes, even after doing so, you may not fully understand it. It is normal and should not discourage you from (re)reading and, more importantly, from asking questions.

[11]You should be connected to the University (wireless or virtual private) network to be able to do so. Please get in touch with Melike Hoca if you experience any problems with accessing the assigned articles.

– Powell, G. Bingham. 2013. "Representation in Context: Election Laws and Ideological Congruence Between Citizens and Governments." *Perspectives on Politics* 11(1): 9-21.

★ **Week 5 (05.11) - Causality and causal inference**

– Kellstedt and Whitten. [Chapter 3: pp.51-66].

– King, Keohane, and Verba. [Chapter 3: pp.75-114].

– Fearon, James D. 1991. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science". *World Politics* 43(2): 169-95.

– King, Gary, and Langche Zeng. 2007. "When Can History Be Our Guide? The Pitfalls of Counterfactual Inference". *International Studies Quarterly* 51(1): 183-210.

★ **Week 6 (12.11) - Experimental research**

– Shadish, William R., Thomas D. Cook, and Donald T. Campbell. 2002. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin. [Chapters 1-3, 14.1: pp.1-102, 456-84].

For the second quiz:

– Gaines, Brian J., James H. Kuklinski, and Paul J. Quirk. 2007. "The Logic of the Survey Experiment Reexamined." *Political Analysis* 15(1): 1-20.

– Gerber, Alan S., Gregory A. Huber, David Doherty, Conor M. Dowling, and Seth J. Hill. 2013. "Do Perceptions of Ballot Secrecy Influence Turnout? Results from a Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (3):537-51.

– Hangartner, Dominik, Elias Dinas, Moritz Marbach, Konstantinos Matakos, and Dimitros Xefteris. 2019. "Does Exposure to the Refugee Crisis Make Natives More Hostile?" *American Political Science Review* 113 (2):442-55.

– Huff, Connor, and Joshua D. Kertzer. 2018. "How the Public Defines Terrorism." *American Journal of Political Science* 62 (1):55-71.

★ **Week 7 (19.11) - Fundamentals of research design**

– Kellstedt and Whitten. [Chapter 4: pp.77-103].

– King, Keohane, and Verba. [Chapter 4: pp.115-49].

– King, Gary. 1986. "Replication, Replication". *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28(3): 444-52.

– King, Gary. 1995. "How not to Lie with Statistics: Avoiding Common Mistakes in Quantitative Political Science". *American Journal of Political Science* 30(3): 666-87.

★ **Week 8 (26.11) - Case selection and sampling**

– Geddes, Barbara. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. 2003. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. [Chapters 3-4: pp. 89-173].

– Wooldridge. [Appendix B: pp.684-711].

For the third quiz:

– Arel-Bundock, Vincent, and Krzysztof J. Pelc. 2018. "When Can Multiple Imputation Improve Regression Estimates?" *Political Analysis* 26 (2):240-5.

– Pepinsky, Thomas B. 2018. "A Note on Listwise Deletion versus Multiple Imputation." *Political Analysis* 26 (4):480-8.

– Squire, Peverill. 1988. "Why the 1936 Literary Digest Poll Failed". *Public Opinion Quarterly* 52(1): 125-33.

⋆ **Week 9 (03.12) - Measurement**

– Kellstedt and Whitten. [Chapter 5: pp.104-24].

– King, Keohane, and Verba. [Chapter 5: pp.150-207].

– Wooldridge. [Chapter 1: pp.1-17].

⋆ **Week 10 (10.12) - Variables and distributions**

– Acock. [Chapters 5-6: pp.131-195].

– Kellstedt and Whitten. Chapter 6 [pp.125-42].

⋆ **Week 11 (17.12) - Introduction to hypothesis testing**

– Acock. [Chapters 7-8: pp. 196-276].

– Kellstedt and Whitten. [Chapter 7: pp.143-60].

– Gill, Jeff. 1999. "The Insignificance of Null Hypothesis Significance Testing". *Political Research Quarterly* 52(3): 647-74.

⋆ **Week 12 (24.12) - Correlation and bivariate regression**

– Kellstedt and Whitten. [Chapter 8: pp.161-87].

– Wooldridge. [Chapter 2: pp.19-65].

– King, Gary, Michael Tomz, and Jason Wittenberg. 2000. "Making the Most of Statistical Analyses: Improving Interpretation and Presentation". *American Journal of Political Science* 44(2): 347-61.

Course Requirements

• **Final Research Paper**

* You may study any topic/research question that falls within the (broad) boundaries of political science. However, you must meet with me at least once before November 19, 2020 to determine the research design of your study and discuss what you *will be able to do* with the knowledge you will acquire this semester.

* Your working hypothesis should take a "cause and effect" form and your final research paper should be organized as follows:

– Introduction – approximately 2 pages, where you briefly state your research question, and explain why it should be studied (i.e., relevance of your study), how and in what regards your research contributes to the main debate(s) in literature, and your main *point* (theoretical argument).

- Literature review – approx. 2-3 pages, where you discuss the state of previous research, and rival and/or conflicting explanations for your phenomenon of interest, and explain how and in what regards your study differs from previous literature (i.e., novelty of your study).

- Theoretical expectations – approx. 2 pages, where you clearly explain your *theoretical expectations* informed by the previous literature, explain the direction of the causal relationship between your outcome of interest and main explanatory variable/s, and deduct at least one testable *hypothesis*.

- Research design – approx. 2-3 pages, where you provide *conceptual and operational definitions* of your dependent and main explanatory/independent variable/s, describe how you will *look into* the problem –e.g., hypothesis testing (and/or model specification and estimator), ruling out rival explanations, decision rules, important assumptions, and potential econometric problems and their solutions.

- Empirical findings – approx. 3-4 pages, presentation and graphical illustration of (at least) a *bivariate* relationship, and careful *interpretation* of your empirical findings in statistical and substantive terms.

- Conclusion – approx. 2 pages, a short summary of what you have done and why you have done that, along with a short discussion of the significance of your findings for the related literature, strengths and limitations of your study, and how your research does and further research would improve our understanding of the topic.

- Appendix (Stata do file)

- **Research Presentation**

  – I expect you to prepare a professional presentation in Beamer, which covers the motivation, research question, hypothesis, research design, empirical findings, conclusions, and limitations of your research in about 10-12 slides.

  – Your research presentation grade will be based not only on your presentation, but also on your answers to the questions that Melike Hoca and I will ask during the Q&A session on January 7, 2020.

- **Take-Home Final Exam**

  – At the end of the semester, you will have a 3 hours-long, open-note, take-home final exam for which you will be responsible from all assigned readings and lecture slides.

  – In addition to three short essay questions, I will ask you to evaluate the research design of a recent article published at a prominent political science journal.

Grading

– To receive a passing grade from the course, you **must** complete all course requirements.

– Grades will be given on a 101-point scale. Cumulative final grades will then be converted to letter grades at the end of the semester as follows: 85-100=A, 80-84=A-, 75-79=B+, 74-70=B, 65-69=B-, 60-64=C+, 55-59=C, 50-54=C-, 45-49=D+, 40-44=D, 0-39=F.

– Assignments in turn constitute 25% (take-home final exam), 20% (final research paper), 10% (research presentation), 35% (short assignments),[12] 10% (attendance and participation) of your final grade.

Software

– In addition to the lecture videos uploaded to YouTube you must watch in a timely manner, we will have weekly discussion and recitation sessions via Zoom. In six of those synchronous sessions (see the course outline above), we may need to meet for longer than our usual 2 hour meetings since we will also have software labs [13] that are intended to introduce you to LaTeX and Stata during the lab sessions.

– After our first lab session, all remaining assignments (including your research presentation) should be compiled in LaTeX and submitted (either via email or to Turnitin) as PDF documents.

– There are many, free or paid, editors for TeX documents and compiling PDF files. I suggest using MikTeX on Windows and MacTeX on Mac, but you are free to use any other one.

– The "LaTeX Package" folder on SU Course+ provides you with templates, examples, and helpful tips. You can also find answers for most of your questions about LaTeX and other helpful tips on its online forum.

– You will quickly get to the realization of that you need to (learn how to) use a statistical software package for your graduate training, your independent research, and future academic and/or professional endeavors.

– Unless you are (quite) familiar with another statistical software, you will use Stata in both POLS529 and POLS530.[14] Learning a new *language* is not an easy task, but a crucially important one especially if you are in the Ph.D. program or would like to apply for one in the future.

– Before our first Stata session, you should have its most recent version (i.e., Stata 16 SE) installed on your personal computer. Installation instructions for Windows and MacOS[15] are available on the IT Department's website.

Course Meetings Policy and Attendance

– You must complete all assigned readings, have watched all lecture videos, and have your questions ready prior to the online meetings.

– Since most topics we will cover in this course are technical, assigned readings are likely to require further explanation and clarification. We will thus follow an asynchronous/traditional lecture format for the online lectures that will be uploaded to YouTube each week. You are, however, strongly advised and will be encouraged to ask any and all questions you might have, either as posts to the class forum on SU Course+ or during our online meetings.

– Not watching the lecture videos or missing the online meeting will have detrimental consequences later on. Nonetheless, stuff happens –especially during these turbulent times. Should scheduling conflicts arise, please inform me before they happen and note that, except for extremely rare,

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[12]The short assignment with the lowest grade will be dropped.

[13]Note that, if necessary and upon prior notice, we may need to schedule additional sessions.

[14]You are free to use R as well. Melike Hoca and I will, however, not answer your software-related questions or provide software-specific solutions for the problem sets for other statistical software.

[15]Please also ask Melike Hoca for help with remote installation and, if needed, for further assistance.

serious, and documentable instances, as graduate students, you should attend all discussion and additional sessions. Otherwise, each missed online session will result in a 5% grade penalty.

Syllabus

– This syllabus includes important information and administrative requirements about when, how, and what you should do to pass this course with a good grade. Please read it carefully and read it again before you email your teaching assistant or instructor.

– The PDF version of the syllabus on SU Course+ is the official syllabus for this course as it is updated periodically.[16] Please visit the course page to view its most recent version.

Course Page and e-mails

– After each online meeting I will post the lecture slides and weekly problem sets, if any, to the course page and the recorded Zoom videos to the shared Google Drive folder of the course.[17]

– Via SU Course+, I will also send you weekly announcements including the link/s to the lecture video/s uploaded to YouTube that you must watch before the online meetings.

– I will use your Sabanci University email to communicate administrative and other course-related issues with you. Please check your email regularly and, if necessary, reply in a timely manner.

– The fastest way to contact me is always via email. Please feel free to send me an email any time and about any **relevant** academic or non-academic issue.

Formatting, Writing, Late Submission, and Grade Appeals

– There will be a written assignment in every two weeks in the first two parts and in each week in the last part of the semester for which a tentative schedule is provided above. The exact schedule is, however, contingent on our progress and subject to change upon prior notice.

– There are no margin or font requirements for written assignments. You should, however, turn in well-organized and professional-looking papers (i.e., with your name, page numbers, proper citations, a properly formatted bibliography, and professional-looking tables and/or graphs).

– Please proofread your assignments for spelling, grammatical, and typographical errors.

– Note that I pay particular attention to writing and correct use of terminology. Melike Hoca or I will provide you with annotated copies of your written assignments to improve your writing in both form and content, and you are expected to take our comments into account in your remaining assignments.[18]

– Late submissions for all written assignments will be penalized by 1 (one) point for each hour they are late. You will receive 0 (zero) if your final research paper is late by more than 1 hour and if you do not submit your final take-home exam on time!

– If you are unsatisfied with the grade you received, you may write a formal memorandum explaining your concerns and requesting that your grade be reviewed. I will respond to your inquiry in writing

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[16]Course content, requirements, and policies are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

[17]The contents published on Google Drive and YouTube were created to be used and distributed within Sabancı University. The intellectual property rights of the content belong to Sabancı University without any limitation. It cannot be used, copied, or reproduced to third parties without the prior written permission of Sabancı University.

[18]The "How to Write Package" folder on SU Course+ includes many helpful tips on writing for social scientists.

and will not discuss your grade with you in person.

Academic Honesty

– As its Research Misconduct Policy suggests, Sabancı University expects students do their own work and acknowledge others when presenting their work.

– As a scholar-in-training, it is your responsibility to do your own work[19] and properly cite your sources using an appropriate format. Please refer to APSA's Style Manual for the preferred citation format for this class, especially if you are unsure about what to or how to cite.

– Minor penalties for citation and bibliographical errors will accumulate in the case of a consistent pattern, and any case of plagiarism and/or other sort of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

– Note that all written assignments for this course are written take-home exams according to the YÖK regulations, and, therefore, plagiarism in take-home exams will be considered cheating and pursued to the limits of University and YÖK rules.

Disability Accommodation

– Extra time for assignments and other necessary arrangements for students with disabilities will be made in conjunction with the Center of Individual and Academic Development and the instructor.

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[19]You are encouraged to study together with your classmates, especially for the short assignments that require using Stata. However, this does not mean that you can submit the same work with no or minor modifications. You must always submit your **own work** and explain your code and/or findings in your own words.