POL210
Winter 2021
Mondays 12:10-3pm via Zoom (link at Canvas)

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Summary:
The aim of this course is to assist third-year students in the completion of a professional, article-length manuscript, which most students defend by the end of their third academic year, in fulfillment of the requirements for Ph.D. candidacy status.

The idea here is that you prepare yourself for the qualifying exam, while giving you practice in the "art" of research – and also give you a chance to see if you like doing it!

Please note that your first aim should <u>not</u> be to do a project that produces publishable <u>results</u>. Put differently, results that support the null hypothesis are ok! **Your job is to put together a compelling research question that you address in a convincing way with a careful research design. Most important, you should focus on being** *<u>intellectually careful and honest</u>***.** You are being evaluated on your ability to compose a professional-style paper with a professional research design.

<u>Grading</u>: Your grade will mostly be determined by the overall quality of your final paper. However, this grade may be lowered if you regularly do not turn in written assignments/miss scheduled meetings.

<u>Seminar Participation</u>: Students are expected to attend all meetings as laid out in the syllabus. For in-class meetings, I expect critical, but courteous and constructive, comments and discussion about your fellow students' projects.

<u>Using the Syllabus:</u>
- Pp. 2-4 of this syllabus serve as a reference guide for the details of completing the project. Please read this at the start of the quarter and refer back to it as questions arise.
- Pp. 5-9 provide the details for each week.
- P. 11 offers suggestions for presentations.
- The final pages give details on what you should include in the final product due at the end of this quarter.

General Course Policies and Advice

General Advice
- To do well on your paper you will need to get to work on your project immediately and not fall behind on the course assignments. This is a rigorous course. Be sure to take it seriously.
- <mark>Do not take critiques personally!!!</mark> The aim of the entire faculty is to help you constantly improve your work and create the best research that you can. To this end, <u>we will repeatedly – and, at times, very bluntly – criticize your work.</u> When confronted with these critiques, some students feel hurt and, at times, angry and defensive. I urge you not to fall into that camp. Critiques are part of research projects, and are <u>designed to make you a better researcher</u>!
- In the past, I have noticed that students worry about upsetting me by turning in work late, missing meetings, or turning in subpar work. Please note that I really want to help you on your paper, but I certainly don't get upset if you are unable to take advantage of my assistance.
- Work together: <u>The 210 paper is not a competition!</u> The more you all help each other, the more everyone's work will improve.

Assignments

Meetings with faculty advisors:
- The aim of the course is to help you develop a high-quality paper. To this end, <mark>it is essential that you get regular feedback from faculty advisors</mark>.

Weekly Reading and Writing Assignments (see the assignments listed under each week below in the syllabus and in the Assignments tab at Canvas):
- **Please turn in all assignments to me via email.**

Final Paper: <u>See the end of the syllabus for details</u>
- <mark>Due by 9am on Wednesday, March 17, but due to your advisor by whatever deadline (s)he sets.</mark>
- <mark>18-30 pages (double-spaced) of text (not including tables / figures / appendices / bibliography, all of which should also be in the paper)</mark>
- Please note that the most important task here is NOT that you provide convincing evidence for your theory. Rather, your job is to put together a compelling research question that you address in a convincing way with a careful research design. You want to be intellectually careful and honest. In essence, **you are being evaluated on your ability to compose a professional-style paper with a professional research design**. So, of course null results (i.e., that don't show a clear finding one way or another) are fine!

Writing

Format:
- Unless otherwise noted, all written assignments must be double-spaced and typed, have 1-inch margins (not the MS Word default). Please proofread carefully. (I have little patience for typos/missing words/poorly constructed sentences, nouns-pronouns that don't match, etc.)
- Please include a cover page for all work, with your name, assignment description/name, date, and title of your project.
- **If you can, please make the electronic submission of the paper in Word. (That's easier for me to provide comments.)** If that is not possible, then PDF.

Structure of the paper:
- At Canvas, I post a few articles on writing professional papers in Political Science and assign them to you later in the class to read. Drawing on these articles, I post suggestions on how to structure your papers at the very end of this syllabus.
- Students' final papers absolutely, positively should use the structure laid out in the above essays.
- The exception here is for students who are working on a political theory paper. In that case, you should follow the guidance of your advisor.

Formatting issues to watch out for:
- Use page numbers whenever you submit something longer than one page. (Papers without page numbers drive me insane.)
- Include a separate cover page
  - The title page should include:
    - your name,
    - title
    - course,
    - assignment,
    - the date.
  - The cover page should not have a page number on it and does not contribute to the total number of pages in the paper.
- P. 1 of your numbering should be the same page as your introduction.
- There should be a space (extra carriage return) between sections – e.g., after the last sentence of literature review and the section heading for the Theory section.

Things to look out for in your writing:
- It is TOTALLY FINE to write in the first-person-singular (i.e., "I").
  - It's totally fine to write things like "I argue" or "I analyze."
  - (But don't say "I think" or "I believe." Who cares what you "think"? What matters is what you can convincingly argue.)
- Generally use an active voice (not passive) in your writing.
  - See https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/style/ccs_activevoice/
  - For example:

3

- **Passive (*not a great sentence*):** *It was earlier demonstrated that heart attacks can be caused by high stress.*
- **Active (*better sentence*):** *Researchers earlier showed that high stress can cause heart attacks.*

- Avoid gerund ("ing") verbs unless it's absolutely necessary to use them.
- Avoid saying that a topic or idea is "interesting." If it is important to explain that something is interesting, explain WHY or HOW it is.
- Match your nouns and pronouns. From https://ruthlesseditor.com/grammar-accord-help-your-nouns-pronouns-agree/
    - Example 1:
        - **mismatch:** *A patient* (singular) should feel comfortable with *their* (plural) physician.
        better: *Patients* should feel comfortable with *their* physician.
    - Example 2
        - **mismatch:** Most experts say that as *a baby* (singular) grows and matures, *they* (plural) start sleeping longer at night.
        better: Most experts say that as *babies* grow and mature, *they* start sleeping longer at night.
- When using "different" to make a comparison, you'll usually want to say "different FROM," NOT "different THAN."
    - This is not a universal rule, though. See the following for more information on the distinction: https://www.grammar.com/different-from-vs-different-than/

Shorthand I will use in my comments on your writing:
- Awk: Awkward phrasing. Rephrase.
- Wc: Word choice – i.e., you should pick a different word here.
- Frag: You only wrote a sentence fragment. Rephrase to make it a complete sentence.
- Runon: This is a run-on sentence. Rephrase.
- Citation: You need a citation for this statement.
- Passive: You are writing in the passive voice. It should be rephrased to active voice.
- Noun-pronoun: Your noun and pronoun are not matching.

==***Warning: The class schedule is likely to change without much notice this quarter***==
==**I may adjust the schedule as needed**==

1. January 4: Intro/Organization

Short meeting, but we will discuss:

- **Rough Drafts are due by 2/16 (T), 9am**
- On **2/22**, we will do in-class presentations.
  - How early can people begin before 12pm? How late can people go after 3pm?
- The syllabus and the general plan for the course/your paper/the relationship to your QE
- The importance of "hummable tune" in writing and oral presentation
- Cal Tech Rules' "one main point" principle
- Recall the importance of "observable implications" (from Lave & March)
- In writing and oral presentations, using "take-aways" for headings rather than "topics"
- The importance of following Stimson's/Boydstun's recommended paper structures and Stimson's "kosher principle"
- How to do a literature review

Assignments for today:
1. Read over the syllabus carefully before class. Please ask questions about the course and all assignments. Be aware of upcoming assignments – especially how soon the rough draft is due.
2. After class, sign up for meetings with me at our class Google Calendar for next week (**1/11**). One student per time slot, please.
3. After class today, will you please reach out to your advisor and set up a 30-minute meeting for the 3 of us to be held during **1/18 week** (to discuss your plan for the paper/the **writing assignment due next week** and my comments on it)? Please do not schedule the meeting for 1/18 unless absolutely necessary.
   - Prior to class today, I will email your advisors to tell them about the assignment (listed under our **second class session on 1/11**).
   - Unless I tell you otherwise, I am free T & Th 9-5 and W & F 11-5. I have shared with each of you a Google Calendar (POL210) for you to record when we will be meeting.
     - Please do not schedule a meeting time that someone else has.
     - Please notify me by email when you have scheduled the meeting for you, your advisor, and me.

2. January 11: 1-on-1 meetings with me to discuss project

- ==There is a writing assignment for this week – see below.==
- Be sure to have signed up for the appointment slots for today.
- In the 1/11 meeting, you will not yet have turned in the **1/14 writing assignment**, but we will discuss the different components of the project raised in the assignment and will discuss your research plan for the class.

*Writing Assignment (**no more than 6 double-spaced pages**):* <mark>**"Project Plan"**</mark>
Details: <mark>**due to your advisor and me by 9am, 1/14 (Thursday).**</mark>

- 1 page (at most): State your research question and your theory.
- 1 page (at most): State your hypotheses. These should be clear observable implications (**recall POL242 and/or see Lave & March in the reading folder at Canvas**) of your theory.
- 1 page (at most): Clearly & succinctly explain your data, model, and most important variables. **Bullet point form would be fine here (possibly even advisable).**
- 1 paragraph (at most): In one paragraph, please explain how your research design and case selection will be likely to shape the types of conclusions you can draw. More specifically, please discuss how the following (and any other design issues you think of) affects the types of conclusions you will be able to draw from your study:
  - In POL242, we talked about the types of conclusions we could draw from our analysis depending on the types of designs we used (e.g., our ability to draw conclusions about generalizability or causation). In addition, our case selection and types of design shapes the conditions and/or types of cases in which we can feel more or less confident about our conclusions holding.
- 1 page (at most): Expectations
  - Indicate what you expect to find from your hypothesis tests (or, alternatively, explain what results you could get that would tell you that you were wrong).
  - For example, make clear what sign you expect to see on your independent variables' coefficients.
  - Explain what different results would mean for your theory.
    - Would certain results offer evidence in support of your theory?
    - What would a null result look like in your data analysis? (And what would it suggest about your theory?)
    - What results would suggest that your theory is wrong?
    - Would certain results be indeterminate in terms of evaluating the accuracy of your theory?
  - Might alternative theories explain each of these results as well?
- If you have results already, feel free to add 1 more page on them (not including the table/figure that shows them – definitely, please add that too) and which of your expectations they match up with.

<mark>**3. January 18: No Class – MLK, but this week will have 30-minute meetings with advisor and me**</mark>
Reading for this week – I will ask you to refer to these in future assignments:
- Caltech Rules (Weingast)
- James Stimson, "Professional Writing in Political Science: A Highly opinionated Essay"
- Boydstun's "The Ten Elements of a Good Research Project"

4. January 25: No class, but I'm available if any of you would like to meet individually. Just email me in advance and we can set up a Zoom meeting.

5. February 1: Brief meeting to discuss plan for presentations to department
- **We will meet today beginning at 2pm**
- We will discuss this in class. Starting this week, you are, as a group, in charge of figuring out the specifics on when to hold the class presentations to the department. However, before finalizing anything, please talk with me.
  - Constraints:
    - To ensure that you have time to incorporate comments you receive from the department, I would like to hold the presentations 3/1-2. 3/3-5 are unavailable because of grad recruitment, but 3/3 might open up. If it does, I will let you know ASAP.
    - If we cannot fit all presentations into the week of 3/1, we can consider doing all or part in the week of 3/8.
    - Please only schedule times that I will be available. I will send you my schedule for 3/1-12.
    - Be sure to schedule a time for your specific presentation that your most influential advisors are available to attend.
    - You should reach out to as many faculty as you feel comfortable to check their schedule and try to include as many faculty as you can at your presentation.
    - We will allot 45 minutes per presentation (which includes ample Q&A time).
    - Please try to include a minimum of 2 presentations back-to-back (i.e., no presentation by itself, with none right before or right after). If this becomes a problem, please reach out to me.
- Notice that the **"Results" assignment is due 2/5**.
- Also, notice how soon the next assignment (rough draft) is due.
- I will email advisors today about your rough draft and the plan to meet again. After class today, will you please reach out to your advisor and set up a 30-minute meeting for the 3 of us to discuss your rough draft during the **2/15 week (ideally Th/F and only do Wed if nothing else works**)? I will send you my available times.

6. February 8: 1-on-1 meetings with me to discuss "Results"
- 12pm: Mieke
- 12:30pm: Siobhan
- 1pm: Rana
- 1:30pm: Jorge
- 2pm: Dylan
- 2:30pm: Ginger

- **Assignment** (**due by 2/5 (F), 9am**)**:** Provide no more than 6-page write-up of your data set-up, hypotheses, and research "Results" section. The 6 pages refers to text – you can have more pages of tables/figures. **Due by email to me.**
- In addition, on a separate page at the start of this write-up, please answer the following questions:
  - For your headings, did you use "take-aways" or "topics." If "topics," why?

- o Did you state your hypotheses explicitly?
- o Where did you state them? In your theory section? In your data section? A separate hypothesis section?
- o If you are doing quantitative analysis:
  - ▪ Were you explicit about how we know if your hypothesis is right? E.g., prior to showing your results, do you state the expected direction of regression coefficients?
  - ▪ In discussing your results, do you explain both statistical and substantive significance? I.e., maybe the key coefficient is statistically significant, but is the size of the effect really meaningful?
  - ▪ Do you show your results graphically in a way that is easy for the reader to understand without reading your explanation in the text?
  - ▪ Have you explained the results with respect to your "other" variables (i.e., those not relating directly to your core hypotheses)? Are these results important in any ways – perhaps allowing you to reject alternative hypotheses – or are they just controls?
  - ▪ Have you stated what the results say about your hypotheses and theory?
- Also, notice how soon the next assignment (rough draft) is due.

- This week, I will post at Canvas the slides and a recording of my Presentation on Presentations.
  - o When you do your in-class presentations, we (the class) will evaluate your presentation in part on your ability to include these suggestions in your presentations.
  - o See advice **on p. 11** on doing presentations.
- Need to figure out plan for **in-class presentations on 2/22**
  - o Can we extend beyond the 12-3pm time period?
  - o Order of presentations?

7. February 15: No Class – Presidents' Day, but lots to do this week
- **Assignment (due by 2/16 (T), 9am):** Rough Draft of entire paper.
- The rough draft cannot be a mere outline.
- In addition, on a separate page prior to p. 1/your introduction, please answer the following questions:
  - o What is the one main point (Caltech Rules) you are pursuing? If you are pursuing more than one, why are you doing so?
  - o What is your hummable tune? Is that hummable tune clear in what you wrote?
  - o Did you maintain the kosher principle (Stimson)?
  - o Did your literature review only focus on how the literature addresses your question? If no, why did you include that other literature/discussion?
  - o Did you keep the literature review separate from the theory section? Or, following Boydstun, did you combine them into a single section?
  - o Where did you place your hypotheses? Why?
  - o For your headings, did you use "take-aways" or "topics." If "topics," why?

- o Please email to your advisor and me. **If your advisor wants it earlier than 2/16, please give it to them when they want it.**
- **You will meet with your advisor and me this week (ideally, Thursday or Friday) to discuss the rough draft. If absolutely necessary, I could meet to discuss the draft on Wednesday (as long as only 1 or 2 of you need to do so), but not earlier.**

8. February 22: In-class "formal" presentations (practice)
- Need to discuss logistics well in advance

9. March 1: Presentations to the department this week
- If necessary, we will extend to the week of 3/8 (or do only during the week of 3/8).

10. March 8: Finishing up
- Work on finalizing your papers
- I'm totally available for consulting
- Prior to completing your final draft, ask yourself if you adequately addressed all of the questions I raised with the earlier assignments (e.g., about hummable tune). If not, you should keep revising. **See recommendations for things to do in your paper on the final pages of this syllabus.**
- Due by 9am on Wednesday, March 17 to me by email, but due to your advisor by whatever deadline (s)he sets. **Be sure to have your advisor email me, signing off on your paper by end of day on Friday, March 19.**

Presentations

In-class Presentations
- Please do Power Point style presentations.
- Be sure to follow my advice on Presentation on Presentations.
- You should present:
  - Your question
  - Why it's important
  - What your theory is
  - What your hypotheses growing out of the theory are
  - What your "data" are and how you will test your hypotheses
  - What your "results" are
    - If you use quantitative data, I strongly recommend using figures to show your results
  - What these results say about your theory
- Is your hummable tune clear throughout?
- Please plan on your <u>presentation going no longer than 22 minutes</u>
  - We will then leave some time for Q&A.
- Don't stress out over the presentations! They are just an opportunity for practice and for you to present what you've done and to get feedback.
- If you have any questions about the format or anything else about the presentations, please just ask any time!

Final Paper for POL210

Assignment: Complete Paper

Please note: The most important task here is NOT that you provide convincing evidence for your model. Rather, your job is to put together a compelling research question that you address in a convincing way with a careful research design. You want to be intellectually careful and honest. In essence, you are being evaluated on your ability to compose a professional-style paper with a professional research design. So, of course null results are fine!

Some things to ask yourself as you go along:
- Are your conclusions appropriate given the design/cases you chose?
- Did you maintain the kosher principle (Stimson)?
- For your headings, did you use "take-aways" or "topics." If "topics," why?

You should include:
- Abstract (no more than 150 words)
    - For a guide, check out various journal articles that you like and see how they construct their abstracts.
- Introduction:
    - What is the research question?
    - Why is this research question interesting/important?
    - What is the puzzle?
    - What is your paper doing to address that puzzle?
    - How do you test it?
    - What answer do you come to through your analysis?
    - Are the following things clear in your introduction?
        - What is the one main point (Caltech Rules) you are pursuing? If you are pursuing more than one, why are you doing so?
        - What is your hummable tune? Is that hummable tune clear in what you wrote? (Or, possibly, since you do not yet have results, you can't state the hummable tune yet?)
- Literature
    - What does the literature tell us about the research question?
    - Why is the literature insufficient?
    - Ask yourself:
        - Did your literature review only focus on how the literature addresses your question? If no, why did you include that other literature/discussion?
- Theory
    - Do you have this as it

- o Explain your model, which you are offering to answer your research question
- o Be sure to include clear step-by-step mechanisms
- o What justifies your model?
- o Is it clear how your theory builds off existing literature?
- o Ask yourself:
  - Did you keep the literature review separate from the theory section? Or, following Boydstun, did you combine them into a single section?
  - Do you plan to include your hypotheses as part of the theory section or later?
- Design & Hypotheses/Expectations
  - o What data you will use and how you will obtain the data?
    - Describe the data clearly
      - What is the unit of analysis?
      - Time period?
      - Sample size?
      - Probably include tables/figures with descriptive statistics
    - Justify your choice of data (why these and not others?).
    - What variables will you use and why? Why not others?
      - In most cases, you will want to state your dependent variable before the independent variables.
  - o If doing quantitative analysis, what kind of techniques will you use? Why? Potential shortcomings with these techniques?
  - o What are observable/testable implications of your model?
  - o What is your research design? How will you evaluate/test your model?
    - Why is your research design helpful? What types of conclusions will it allow you to draw? Causation? Mechanisms? Generalizations?
  - o Expectations
    - Ask yourself:
      - o Were you explicit about how we know if your hypothesis is right? E.g., prior to showing your results, do you state the expected direction of regression coefficients?
    - Indicate what you expect to find from your hypothesis tests (or, alternatively, explain what results you could get that would tell you that you were wrong).
      - If doing quantitative tests, what do you expect to see? Direction of coefficients? Statistical significance? T-tests? What expect?
    - Explain what different results would mean for your model.
      - Would certain results offer evidence in support of your model?
      - What would a null result suggest?
      - What results would suggest that your model is wrong?
      - Would certain results be indeterminate in terms of evaluating the accuracy of your model?
    - Might alternative models explain each of these results as well?
- Results
  - o What do you find?
  - o Be sure to present your results in a way that is easy for your reader to grasp

- o If using quantitative data, try to use figures – as well as numbers – to show your results
- o What do the results suggest about your hypotheses & your theory?
    - Do the results support your hypotheses/theory? How do we know?
    - Might reasons that are different from the theory you put forward explain your results?
- o <u>Ask yourself:</u>
    - In discussing your results, do you explain both statistical and substantive significance? I.e., maybe the key coefficient is statistically significant, but is the size of the effect really meaningful?
    - Do you show your results graphically in a way that is easy for the reader to understand without reading your explanation in the text?
    - Have you explained the results with respect to your "other" variables (i.e., those not relating directly to your core hypotheses)? Are these results important in any ways – perhaps allowing you to reject alternative hypotheses – or are they just controls?
    - Have you stated what the results say about your hypotheses and theory?
- Conclusions
    - o Short summary of the paper – the question & its importance, how you addressed it, what you found, etc.
    - o How does your analysis shed light on the question you raised? What sorts of conclusions can we draw?
    - o How confident can we feel in your conclusions?
    - o What should future research do to better understand this problem?
    - o (You might also consider: Does your research suggest other questions that should be addressed as well?)