

Bryn Mawr College
Department of Political Science
Fall 2023

POLS 233

Intro to Research Design and Data Analysis for Political Science

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Course Information

Class Meetings: MW 10:10-11:30AM, Dalton Hall 1

Office Hours: M 4-6:00PM, Dalton Hall 100G

You can set up a meeting using Calendly at www.calendly.com/asasmaz/officehours

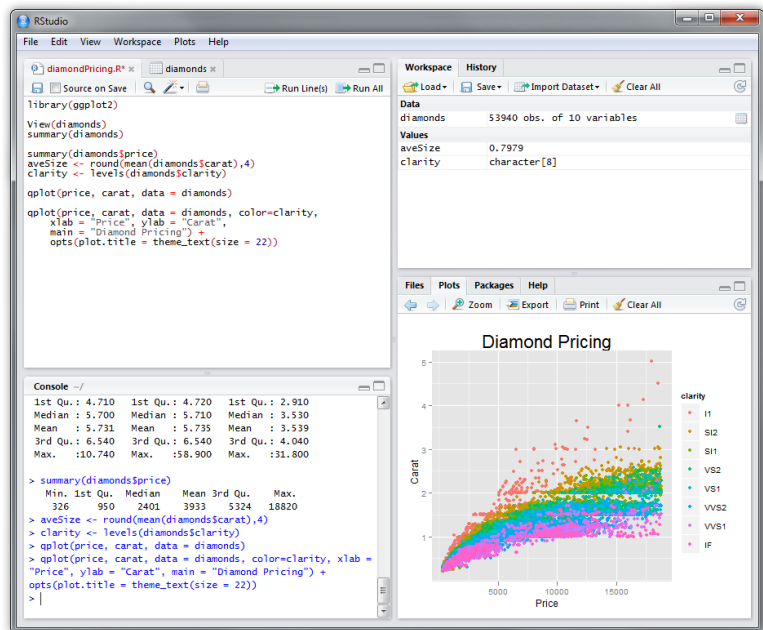
Course Description

Welcome to our introductory and comprehensive course on research design and methods in political science. This course is designed to provide students with a strong foundation in understanding and utilizing research methodologies commonly used in the field of political science. By the end of the semester, students will be proficient in reading and comprehending political science literature, identifying the methodologies employed, and applying the basics of these techniques to their own research projects.

Our primary objective is to equip students majoring in political science with the necessary skills to embark on their senior thesis projects confidently. Throughout the course, students will develop a well-rounded understanding of research design, qualitative and quantitative data collection, and analysis. By the end of the semester, students will create a comprehensive research design that can be implemented in their senior thesis work.

The course will delve into a variety of essential topics, including (but not limited to): (1) Empiricism vs. interpretivism, (2) deductive vs. inductive reasoning, (3) Conceptualization, operationalization and measurement, (4) Experimental design and causality, (5) Description and prediction using quantitative data, (6) Survey research and sampling, (7) the basics of probability and estimating uncertainty, (8) Comparative and historical research, (9) Interviewing and ethnographic research, and (10) textual analysis and critical research.

In addition to theoretical knowledge, students will gain practical skills in research design and data analysis. For this purpose, we will have weekly problem sets. For quantitative data analysis, we will use industry-standard software, R and R Studio. This will prepare students to handle and interpret (quantitative) data effectively.



A screenshot of R Studio.

An image that will become very familiar to you at the end of the semester.

Activities and Evaluation

In-class activities: Throughout the semester, we will convene for two 80-minute sessions each week. These interactive sessions will incorporate a blend of instructor-led lectures, collaborative group work, individual tasks, engaging class discussions, and Q&A sessions, all tailored to the specific topics being covered. Active participation in these in-class activities is crucial for fostering an effective learning experience. Your participation will contribute to 20% of your final grade. Furthermore, you will receive formal feedback on your participation after the first half of the semester.

Problem sets: With the exception of the first and final weeks, students will receive weekly problem sets to tackle. These problem sets are not limited to quantitative data analysis; they will also include questions related to research philosophy, research design, and qualitative research. Completing these problem sets is essential to ensure a solid understanding of the material covered each week and to prepare you for the subsequent topics. Problem sets are due by 6 pm on Fridays and will account for 48% of your final grade.

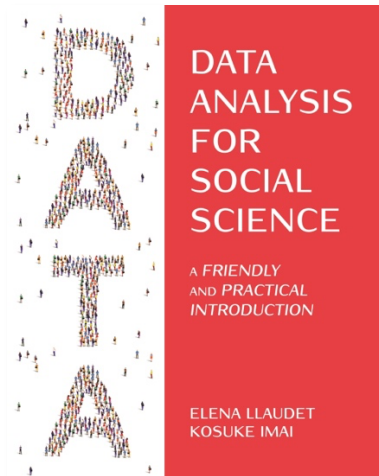
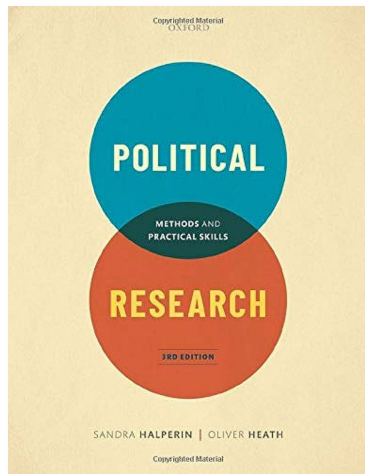
Final project: Towards the end of the examination period, students are required to submit a comprehensive 15- to 20-page (double-spaced) research design that can be implemented in their senior thesis. This design should encompass the analysis of existing quantitative data,

demonstrating how you can effectively apply the skills acquired throughout the semester. This final project serves as a culmination of your learning journey and an opportunity to showcase your proficiency in research design and data analysis. Final research design will account for 32% of your final grade.

Resources

Textbooks & Other Readings

For this course, we will use two textbooks:



- Halperin, Sandra, and Oliver Heath. *Political research: methods and practical skills* (3rd edition). Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Llaudet, Elena, and Kosuke Imai. *Data analysis for social science: a friendly and practical introduction*. Princeton University Press, 2022.

I encourage you to buy the books as they will be good reference books for you in future. The books are also available at the Canaday Library.

Over the course of the semester, we will also read other book chapters and articles, which will be available on Moodle.

Your professor

You are welcome to meet with me during my office hours (listed above), or at an alternative time if necessary. The best way to contact me outside of class is via email at asasmaz@brynmawr.edu. Please note that I check my email approx. three times a day

between the hours of 9:00am and 6:00pm, Monday through Friday. If you send me a message during evenings or weekends, I'll respond sometime after 9:00am on the following weekday.

Your classmates

Your classmates are an important, if not the most important, “resource” for your learning process. During class sessions, pay utmost attention to the comments and questions of your classmates and try to learn from them as much as possible. Outside of the classroom, as well, I encourage you to form **study groups**, discuss the course materials with your classmates, exchange summaries and study notes, etc. As long as the submitted work is wholly and originally produced by yourself, discussing the materials and potential solutions to problems or exchanging ideas would **not** be a violation of the Honor Code.

Academic support

I encourage you to reach out to the Academic Support and Learning Resources Specialist to explore effective learning, studying, test-taking, note-taking and time and stress management strategies that are essential to success in this course and college life. Bryn Mawr students can schedule a meeting with academic coaches Rachel Heiser or Amanda Brown. For more information, please see this site: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/academic-support>

Canaday Library

Kate Blinn, Social Sciences and Data Librarian, can help with questions about research and technology; you can reach her at kblinn@brynmawr.edu.

Moodle

On our course Moodle site, you can find electronic copies of course readings beyond the assigned textbooks, a copy of the syllabus, and other useful information. The problem sets will also be made available Moodle.

Course Policies

Access Services & Accommodations

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Access Services. Students can call 610-526-7516 to make an appointment with the Director of Access Services, Deborah Alder, or email her at dalder@brynmawr.edu to begin this confidential process. Once registered, students should schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible to share the verification form and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website (<http://www.brynmawr.edu/access-services/>).

Attendance & Extensions

I encourage you, to the best of your ability, not to miss any session. But we live in a (post-) pandemic world, and we all know that unexpected things do happen. Therefore, each student is allowed to miss two sessions without any excuse. Beyond these two absences, each missed session will negatively affect your participation grade. If you have, in addition to these excused absences, a reason that can be **documented** to miss class a session, please share that reason and document with me. I will do my best to propose a way of making up what you have missed.

Assignments submitted late will receive partial credit, with each day lowering the grade by 5 percentage points. I understand sometimes you may for various reasons need more time for submitting your assignments. If you foresee any conflicts (such as religious holidays), come and see me or send an email as soon as possible to discuss options. In the event of illness or emergency, please also try to contact me as soon as possible.

Laptop and Phone Use

Laptops are permitted in class. Keep in mind that laptops can be a useful learning tool but also a distraction for you and those around you. I ask that you silence your cell phone, disable your email notifications, and close unrelated browser windows so you can focus on the class.

Please keep phones out of sight during class time. If you absolutely must use your phone, please step outside of class.

Academic Integrity

I am committed to adhering to the standards regarding academic honesty contained in the Bryn Mawr Honor Code. All work submitted in this course for academic credit must be

student's own work. You may consult the internet, various other sources such as and AGI services such as ChatGPT to solve problems that you encounter with your coding in R in this class. But again, the work that you submitted should be your own work, not a copy-paste. Material drawn from other materials must be cited (yes, in problem sets, too). If it is a direct quote, it should be demarked by quotation marks. If you have any doubts about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please ask.

Using Generative AI

In this course, you can use generative AI models (ChatGPT, Elicit, GitHub Copilot, etc.) to generate ideas, brainstorm, edit the language you use in assignments, solve problems in your code, etc. However, these models still generate content that can be inaccurate, incomplete, biased and offensive. You will be responsible for any inaccurate, biased, offensive, or otherwise unethical content you submit regardless of whether it originally comes from you or a generative AI model. If you use content from a generative AI model, its contribution must be acknowledged in the work you turn in. If you use AI at any point in the writing process for editing, translating, brainstorming, etc. purposes, include a footnote at the beginning of the paper describing in detail how you used it. If you use AI at any point in the coding process, also include a note in the beginning of your code.

Written work that you submit for this course may not use any verbatim language (three or more words) from any source, including AI or a translator, without proper attribution via quotation marks and an in-text citation.

Gender Identities and Expressions

I affirm people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is indicated on the class roster, please let me know. Please feel free to correct me on your preferred gender pronoun. I use the "he" set of pronouns.

Readings & Sensitive Material

It is relatively unlikely for this course, but some readings can be sensitive for some participants. If you find that a material is particularly challenging for your mental health or emotional stability, I encourage you to skip it. You can always talk to me or to your classmates (during or outside of our sessions) why you find this material challenging.

Course Schedule & Materials

Week 1 – September 6, 2023: Introduction to Research in Political Science

- Halperin & Heath, Ch. 1

Week 2 – September 11 & 13, 2023: Forms of Knowledge

- Halperin & Heath, Ch. 2
- Gibbons, M. T. (2006). Hermeneutics, Political Inquiry, and Practical Reason: An Evolving Challenge to Political Science. *American Political Science Review* 100(4) (November): 563-71.
- El-Ghobashy, M. (2021). *Bread and Freedom: Egypt's Revolutionary Situation*. Stanford University Press. (Ch. 1 and Ch. 4)

Week 3 – September 18 & 20, 2023: Asking Questions and Finding Answers

- Halperin & Heath, Ch. 4 (for Sep. 18) and Ch. 5 (for Sep. 20)
- Geddes, B. (2003). Big Questions, Little Answers, How the Questions You Choose Affect the Answers You Get. In *Paradigms and Sand Castles* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press), chapter 2 (for Sep 18).

Week 4 – September 25 & 27, 2023: Research Design and Data

- Halperin & Heath, Ch. 6 and Ch. 7 (both for Sep. 25)

Guest speaker: On Sep. 27, Professor Joel Schlosser will join us. We will talk about the differences between empirical research and political theory, how they can complement each other, and how those who would like to do political theory research can gain the most from this class. Professor Schlosser will assign readings for Sep. 27.

Week 5 – October 2 & 4, 2023: Introduction to Quantitative Analysis and Experiments

- Llaudet & Imai, Ch. 1 and Ch. 2 (both for Oct. 2)
- Rivera, M., Hughes, D., & Gell-Redman, M. (2023). Email Mobilization Messages Suppress Turnout Among Black and Latino Voters: Experimental Evidence From the 2016 General Election. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 10(2), 261-266.

Week 6 – October 9 & 11, 2023: Surveys

- Llaudet & Imai, Ch. 3
- Kennedy, C., Blumenthal, M., Clement, S., Clinton, J. D., Durand, C., Franklin, C., ... & Wlezien, C. (2018). An evaluation of the 2016 election polls in the United States. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 82(1), 1-33.

Week 7 – October 23 & 25, 2023: Predicting Outcomes using Linear Regression

- Llaudet & Imai, Ch. 4
- Onur Altındağ, Stephen D. O'Connell, Aytuğ Şaşmaz, Zeynep Balcıoğlu, Paola Cadoni, Matilda Jerneck, and Aimee Kunze Foong. "Targeting humanitarian aid using administrative data: Model design and validation." *Journal of Development Economics* 148 (2021): 102564.
- Blair, Robert A., Christopher Blattman, and Alexandra Hartman. "Predicting local violence: Evidence from a panel survey in Liberia." *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 2 (2017): 298-312.

Week 8 – October 30 & November 1, 2023: Estimating Causal Effects with Observational Data

- Llaudet & Imai, Ch. 5
- Thomas R. Cusack, Torben Iversen, and David Soskice. Economic interests and the origins of electoral systems. *American Political Science Review*, 101(3): 373–391, July 2007.

Week 9 – November 6 & 8, 2023: Probability

- Llaudet & Imai, Ch. 6

Week 10 – November 13 & 15, 2023: Quantifying Uncertainty

- Llaudet & Imai, Ch. 7

Week 11 – November 20 & 22, 2023: Comparative and Historical Research

- Halperin & Heath, Ch. 9 (for Nov. 20) and Ch. 10 (for Nov. 22)
- Lupu, N. (2014). Brand dilution and the breakdown of political parties in Latin America. *World Politics*, 66(4), 561-602. (for Nov. 20)
- Weyland, K. (2016). Crafting counterrevolution: How reactionaries learned to combat change in 1848. *American Political Science Review*, 110(2), 215-231. (for Nov. 22)

Week 12 – November 27 & 29, 2023: Interviews, Focus Groups and Ethnographic Research

- Halperin & Heath, Ch. 12 (for Nov. 27) and Ch. 13 (for Nov. 29)
- Bussell, J. (2020). Strategic interests and public roles: Village council presidents in India. Working paper. See the anonymized field notes and accompanying methodology article by Bussell in *Political Analysis*.
- Hochschild, J. (1981). *What's Fair? American Beliefs about Distributive Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapters 1-2.

Week 13 – December 4 & 6, 2023: Textual Analysis and Critical Research

- Halperin & Heath, Ch. 14 (for December 4)
- David E. McNabb, Ch. 24 and Ch. 25 (for December 6)
- Kim, A. et al. (2010). Coverage and Framing of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities in US Newspapers 1996-2005. *American Journal of Public Health* 100, S1: S225-S231. (for Dec. 4)

Guest speaker: Professor Elizabeth Corredor will join us on Dec. 6 to talk about her experiences in research and doing critical/feminist IR. Read the following piece for that session:

- Corredor, E. (2023). Secrecy, Uncertainty, and Trust: The Gendered Nature of Back-Channel Peace Negotiations. Working paper.

Week 14 – December 11 & 13, 2023: Catching Up, Going Back and Evaluations

- Halperin & Heath, Ch. 3