Logic of Political Inquiry

PSC 691
Fall 2021
Department of Political Science,
Syracuse University
Wednesday 9:30-12:15 Eggers 100A

Professor Shana Kushner Gadarian
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Course website: blackboard.syr.edu

Office Hours
Tuesday 1-3 pm or by appointment

Course Overview: The goal of this class is to introduce you to how empirical political scientists study, think, and research. We will discuss the process of theory building, hypothesis testing, and how political scientists across subfields ask and answer substantive questions. We will study both qualitative and quantitative methods but focus on how these methods help test causality. The course will also focus on professionalization topics (i.e. how to become a political scientist, not just study political science).

An important secondary goal, though, is to demystify graduate school and academic life more generally. Much about how academia in general, and university, departments, and the profession really work is not taught in graduate school—this stuff is often referred to as the “hidden curriculum.” The hidden curriculum is partially about jargon (CV, identification, micro-foundations, diff-in-diff, “manel” etc.), but more centrally it’s about understanding the norms and informal rules that bind everything together. More generally, I aim to cover as much hidden curriculum stuff as possible over the course of the semester. An important thing you should take away from this is that when you don’t know something, you should ask (even if you feel like everyone else knows and that you should know). Faculty forget what it is like to start something new like graduate school and by asking us, you remind us that we are here to teach you. You do not need to pick up everything through osmosis. We are happy to tell you what you need to know, but you need to remind us what you don’t know.

These are the course goals:

Learning Outcomes:

- To help you develop analysis skills to evaluate and produce political science research publishable in peer-reviewed journals.
- To help you develop writing skills analyzing empirical political science research.
- To develop presentational skills to use at conferences and as an instructor.
For each week's readings, you should be prepared to discuss the following questions:

- In your view, what do you see as some of the major strengths and weaknesses of the methods used to investigate the subject? What methodologies, broadly conceived (e.g., basic issues of design, measurement, etc.) do you feel are most appropriate, given the subject of inquiry, and to what degree do you think the substantive conclusions drawn are dependent on the particular methods employed?
- In your view, what are some of the major theoretical perspectives that structure research in a given area, what are their major strengths and weaknesses, and how do they compare with other perspectives you’re familiar with (encountered in the course or elsewhere)?
- How can this research be improved, in your view? What theories, methods and substantive foci deserve more attention in future research?
- What are the major implications of the findings for democratic theory and public policy? What relevance do the studies have for your interests? What does the study say about the way in which the American political system operates in practice – does the system live up to its billing as a democracy? According to what expectations and what definition of democracy?

Acknowledgements: Many thanks to Nate Monroe, Colin Elman, Matt Cleary and Logan Strother for sharing their syllabi with me. I have adapted several assignments and readings from their courses.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:**

**Course modality:** You are expected to read and analyze the readings prior to each week and come to class prepared to offer your insights. You are also expected to attend class each week and will need to inform me ahead of time if you will be absent. For at least the first few weeks, we will have a Zoom option for several students out of the country. Being physically in class will be better for discussion and for meeting other students. BUT, if you are ill or a loved one in your home is ill or quarantined, please do not come to class. Hop on Zoom if you are able and we will include you in the conversation.

We will be following all public health guidelines on campus. If you have particular concerns about health and safety that you’d like to share with me, let me know.

Zoom link:
Shana Gadarian is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: PSC 691

Join Zoom Meeting
https://syracuseuniversity.zoom.us/j/99697808513?pwd=c2ZkL3lvYk5jUHRtY0tqNjFKM3JtZz09

Meeting ID: 996 9780 8513
Passcode: 574624
Names: If you go by a different name or pronoun that is listed on the roster, please let me know so that your colleagues and I can refer to you by your preferred name. You are colleagues in the making so you are welcome to call me by my first name (Shana, rhymes with Dana) but Professor Gadarian or Dr. Gadarian are fine as well.

Exercises and class work (50%)

1. IRB training through CITI: The Institutional Research Board oversees all projects using human subjects at Syracuse. In order to collect data through an intervention such as survey or an experiment, you will need to go through the online training provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) by 9:30 am, September 4. Email your CITI certificate to me to complete the assignment. Follow the directions here to take the Basic Course: [http://researchintegrity.syr.edu/human-research/education-and-required-training/](http://researchintegrity.syr.edu/human-research/education-and-required-training/)

2. In class exercises – Several times during the semester you will work on exercises on topics such as conceptualization, operationalization, etc.

3. Discussion leading – Once during the semester you will outline the readings and how they relate to the overall theme of the week. Prepare questions about research design (operationalization, conceptualization, causality, etc.) to discuss with class. You will sign up for a week during class the first week of class.

4. Participation in Intellectual Life in the Department. You are expected to be active members of the intellectual life of the department; indeed, a large and crucially important chunk of your graduate education will come outside of the classroom. Specifically, for this class you will be required to attend at least two-thirds of the meetings of the department research seminar (Political Science Research Workshop, PSRW) over the course of the semester and at least two-thirds of the job talks that take place this semester. If you are in another department, you should attend the appropriate research seminars in your home department.

Grant proposal (based on a National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant) (50%):

Final proposals due by Dec 15 at 5 pm by email. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each 24 hours they are late. There are several interim deadlines.

There are multiple phases of this project. Please note the dates below:

1. Oct 6: Research Question (5%) (due in class): Submit a one-page typed description of your research question, and explain how it fits into the general topical themes for the course. Provide an initial bibliography of at least 10 sources.

2. Oct 20: Research Design (10%) (Bring to class and be prepared to discuss): - PREREGISTRATION PLAN Submit five to seven typed pages (with a bibliography) that identify your research question, review the literature relevant to your question, discuss the method of analysis you intend to employ, and describe any data or historical sources you will use to evaluate your hypotheses.
3. **Nov 3**: First Draft (15%): Submit the initial draft of your application, with all key parts included (introduction, theory, research design, analysis, references). Each draft will be read by the instructor and another other students in the class. The instructor will assign the student discussants for each paper.

4. **Nov 17**: Reviews (20%): Each student will write a 2-page typed review commenting on another other students’ papers in the class. The reviews should take the form of a journal review, where you make specific recommendations about how to improve the paper. See the readings on peer review on how to structure your review. Please bring 2 copies of the review to class – one for the person whose paper you reviewed and one for me.

5. **Dec 8**: In class presentation of your grant proposal. Prepare a 10 minute conference style presentation of your grant proposal. The presentation should give limited background and focus on the research design and the hypotheses you will be testing with the design.

6. **Dec 15** by 5 PM, Final Draft (50%): Submit your final grant proposal along with a memo responding to the reviewers’ comments in the previous round. I will take into consideration how well you responded to others’ criticisms when assigning a final grade. The final paper grade is based on the weighted component grades for each portion of the paper (research question, research design, first draft, reviews, and final draft).
At the end of the semester, your grade will be assigned based on the following scale:

A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72). F (69 and below). There are no D grades in graduate courses.

*Hidden curriculum note: You should understand that letter grades in graduate school are not very meaningful—which means by extension that GPAs in grad school also aren’t very meaningful. In most cases an A means something like “is doing graduate level work”, B means “is not doing graduate level work”, and C means roughly “are you sure you want to do graduate school?” To be clear, not all faculty use the grade scale in this way—but most do. You’ll get a sense for how different faculty use grades in graduate courses by reading their syllabi and talking to other students in the program.

Books to purchase:

*Readings denoted “Blackboard” are posted under “Readings” on the course Blackboard page. The other readings can be found either in the books that you’ve purchased or through JStor: https://www.jstor.org/action/showBasicSearch or Google Scholar.

**Sept 1 – Social Inquiry and Becoming a Political Scientist**

a. KKV – p3-33
**Homework:** Identify 5 research questions that a political scientist might want to answer. Bring to class on September 1

**September 8 –** No class, Rosh Hashanah

**Sept 15 – Transparency, reproducibility, the scientific method, ethics**

a. Shively, The Craft of Political Research, Ch. 1
b. Gerring, Jon, Social Science Methodology, Ch. 1
f. Listen to the podcast: Why Fish Don’t Exist (30 minutes) [https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/why-fish-dont-exist](https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/why-fish-dont-exist)

**Assignment:** Complete CITI training and email the certificate to me by 9:30 am Sept 15. [http://orip.syr.edu/human-research/training-list/Education%20and%20Training.html](http://orip.syr.edu/human-research/training-list/Education%20and%20Training.html)

**Sept 22 – Building theories**

a. Gerring, Jon. Social Science Methodology. Ch 3

**Assignment:** Deriving hypotheses from facts. See assignment on Blackboard. Due in class.

**Sept 29 – Building blocks of theory – operationalization and assumptions**


Assignment: Using the 2020 American National Election Studies Time Series, identify the variable or variables that measure the following concepts: 1. Political participation, 2. Religiosity, 3. Partisanship, 4. Social policy attitudes. Write a few sentences justifying the inclusion of these measures and why you excluded other potential measures. (https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-time-series-study/). Bring to class.

Oct 6 – Assessing theory
b. KKV. “Descriptive Inference,” “Causal Claims”, pp. 55-63, 76-82
e. Achen, Christopher. Interpreting and Using Regression. p. 17-30

Assignment: Submit a 1-page typed description of your research question that you will use for your grant application. Provide an initial bibliography of at least 10 sources.

RESEARCH DESIGNS

Oct 13 – Observational data
b. Gerring, John. Social Science Methodology. Ch 8, 9 (“Causal Arguments, Causal analyses)
e. Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 2007. “Fieldwork” in The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics. (Blackboard)

Assignment: Identify 2 observational datasets that you could use for your grant proposal. Use the library’s data resource guide to get you started: https://researchguides-library-syr-edu/data
Oct 20 – Barriers to inference in observational research

a. KKV.
   Chapter 4, pp. 115-149: “Determining What to Observe.”
   Chapter 5, pp. 150-207: “Understanding What to Avoid.


Assignment: Research design for your grant proposal due. Use the form of a pre-analysis plan. See https://egap.org/methods-guides/10-things-pre-analysis-plans

Oct 27 – Observational data: small/medium n research & peer review


Writing and communicating in the social sciences –

a. The Political Methodologist Special Issue on Peer Review (Fall 2015), pp. 2-24. URL: https://goo.gl/3kfa3e. (ALL)


Assignment: Make an appointment to come see me and talk about your research question and design.

Nov 3 – Historical analysis –
Trounstine, Jessica. 2018. *Segregation by design: Local politics and inequality in American cities*. Cambridge University Press,

**Assignment:** First full draft of your grant proposal is due. Email me a copy by 9:30 am on Nov 3.

**Nov 10 – Natural/Field Experiments**


**Assignment:** None.

**Nov 17 – Survey/Lab Experiments**


**Assignment:** Peer review of 1 classmate’s grant applications due in hard copy in class. Please bring one copy for me and one copy for your colleague.

**Nov 24 – No Class, Thanksgiving break (Eat some turkey)**

**Dec 1 – Integrating multiple methods and triangulating around research questions.**

- Seawright, Jason. Multi-Method Social Science, Chapter 8 (Blackboard)


**Assignment:** Keep working on your proposals!

**Dec 8—Presentations**

**Assignment:** Prepare a 10 minute conference style presentation of your grant proposal. The presentation should give limited background and focus on the research design and the hypotheses you will be testing with the design.

Some guides for giving excellent conference presentations:


COURSE POLICIES

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
There are many ways to succeed in this class. Cheating and plagiarism are not among them and will not be tolerated. The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see http://academicintegrity.syr.edu. Please see me if you have any questions about what constitutes original work. Plagiarism on research papers or the analytical papers will lead to an F for the course.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM
I encourage and value student participation. Keep in mind that since this is a class on politics, you will no doubt encounter point of views that differ from your own. Students in this class come from a variety of personal and academic backgrounds and these backgrounds may lead to a variety of perspectives on the political world. I believe that having a variety of viewpoints will make our discussions more interesting and will allow us to learn from each other. We will maintain a respectful dialogue even when we disagree and no student’s grade will be affected by his or her personal views.

ACCOMMODATIONS
If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), http://disabilityservices.syr.edu, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible. You are also welcome to contact me privately to discuss your academic needs, although I cannot arrange for disability-related accommodations.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES
It is the policy of Syracuse University that no student should be refused admission or be expelled because he or she is unable to participate in any examination, study, or work requirement because of his or her religious holy day requirements. An opportunity will be provided to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may have been missed because of an absence due to a religious observance providing that I have been notified in writing one week before the absence. No fees will be charged to the student for the costs incurred by the University for such makeup work. In effecting this policy, the University agrees that no adverse or prejudicial effect should result to any student who avails herself or himself of its provisions.

CAMPUS RESOURCES
There may be times during the semester that you need assistance, academically or otherwise. There are a wide variety of campus resources that may be able to help. Please consider using help when you need it. If you don’t know what type of help you need, you can ask me or other faculty.

- **Counseling Center**: [https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/help-a-student/](https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/help-a-student/)
- **Writing Center**: [https://thecollege.syr.edu/writing-center/](https://thecollege.syr.edu/writing-center/)
- **Tutoring Services**: Center for Learning and Student Success: [http://class.syr.edu/](http://class.syr.edu/)
- **Financial Counseling**: [http://financialaid.syr.edu/financialliteracy/](http://financialaid.syr.edu/financialliteracy/)
- **Sexual Harassment/Title IX Concerns**: Sheila Johnson-Willis, compliance officer [sjohnson@syr.edu](mailto:sjohnson@syr.edu) (315) 443-0211
- **Palmer Career Center (Maxwell graduate students)** [https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/career/](https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/career/)
- **Other personal health resources**: [https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/find-services/](https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/find-services/)

**HARRASMENT**

Federal and state law, and University policy prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sex or gender (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and retaliation). If a student has been harassed or assaulted, they can obtain confidential counseling support, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, from the Sexual and Relationship Violence Response Team at the Counseling Center (315-443-4715, 200 Walnut Place, Syracuse, New York 13244-5040). Incidents of sexual violence or harassment can be reported non-confidentially to the University’s Title IX Officer (Sheila Johnson Willis, 315-443-0211, titleix@syr.edu, 005 Steele Hall). Reports to law enforcement can be made to the University’s Department of Public Safety (315-443-2224, 005 Sims Hall), the Syracuse Police Department (511 South State Street, Syracuse, New York, 911 in case of emergency or 315-435-3016 to speak with the Abused Persons Unit), or the State Police (844-845-7269). I will seek to keep information you share with me private to the greatest extent possible, but as a professor I have mandatory reporting responsibilities to share with the Title IX office to create a safe campus for all.