

Research Design

Jos Elkink, Sebastian Dellepiane & Andy Storey

School of Politics and International Relations
University College Dublin

jos.elkink@ucd.ie
sebastian.dellepiane@ucd.ie
andy.storey@ucd.ie

Spring 2008

Introduction

In this course we will discuss the logic of social science research and provide a brief overview of the various methods that are commonly in use. Because of severe time constraints, the focus will be on the overall logic of social science research and the overview of particular methods will not be exhaustive, nor very extensive. An immediate goal of the course will be to write the research proposal for your MA thesis.

Many of the topics discussed in this course are controversial - practitioners of social science research disagree on fundamental issues of research methods, design, interpretation, inferences, etc. The course will stimulate a critical view towards methods and you are encouraged to be critical in your writings for the course.

The course makes use of articles and occasional book chapters rather than a textbook. If you would prefer to have a textbook handy for future reference, two books are well worth considering. An excellent, albeit expensive, introduction to research design in the social sciences is Babbie (2006). In recent years, the 'bible' of research design has become King, Keohane and Verba (1994). This book attempts to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches in a unified methodology, with limited success. A useful, constructive critique on their book is Brady and Collier (2004). A nice, short introduction to social science research methods is Shively (2004).

Schedule

Date	Group	Lecturer	Location
25 January	Development Studies	Andy Storey	L504
	European Studies	Sebastian Dellepiane	L540
	all other students	Jos Elkind	G317
30 January	<i>Essay 1 due</i>		
1 February	Development Studies	Andy Storey	L504
	European Studies	Sebastian Dellepiane	L540
	all other students	Jos Elkind	G317
4 February	<i>Research statement due</i>		
8 February	all groups	Sebastian Dellepiane	Theatre N (Newman)
15 February	No classes		
20 February	<i>Essay 2 due</i>		
22 February	all groups	Andy Storey	Theatre N (Newman)
29 February	all groups	Jos Elkind	Theatre N (Newman)
5 March	<i>Essay 3 due</i>		
7 March	Development Studies	Andy Storey	L504
	European Studies	Sebastian Dellepiane	L540
	all other students	Jos Elkind	G317
31 March	<i>Research proposal due</i>		

Grading

Because the course is about controversial subjects rather than about facts, the focus of the grading will be on written essays rather than an exam. During the course you will be expected to write three essays, which together will count for 45 percent of the final grade (15 percent each), and one research proposal, which will count for the other 55 percent.

The essays should be argumentative in nature - you take a particular stance in a debate on research design and argue your case - whereby the arguments should be well embedded in the assigned (or additional) literature. As a topic for the essay you can either use one of the suggested propositions and argue either for or against, or you can come up with your own proposition. The essays should be between 600 and 700 words in length, excluding references. Points will be deducted for essays that are too long. The essays are due 48 hours before class in weeks 2, 4, and 6. Late submissions are not graded. You should bring a printed copy of your own assignment to class.

The main assignment of this course is the research proposal for your MA thesis. The course will help you develop your proposal. The final proposal should be at least 2000 words, in which you outline the research questions underlying your thesis, the argument that you will defend, and the methodological approach that you will use. You can freely choose a topic for your MA thesis, but it should be closely connected to one of the courses you took in this MA program.

Deadlines for the research design:

4 February 2008, 10 AM: A research question with a 300-word statement defending your choice and suggesting the general approach you intend to take to study the question. Although this will not count for a grade, you will get feedback, and it will be used to find you a supervisor for your thesis. Meeting this deadline is thus very important!

31 March 2008, 10 AM: The complete research proposal.

All assignments should be sent by email to the seminar lecturer of your respective group as well as submitted in hardcopy to the School office, including a signed Declaration of Authorship form.

Plagiarism

Although this should be obvious, plagiarism - copying someone else's text without acknowledgement or beyond "fair use" quantities - is not allowed. UCD policies concerning plagiarism can be found at http://www.ucd.ie/regist/documents/plagiarism_policy_and_procedures.pdf. A more extensive description of what is plagiarism and what is not can be found at http://www.ucd.ie/library/students/information_skills/plagiari.html.

Readings

25 January - Introduction: Persuasion, Logic, and the Scientific Method

Seminar

Logical fallacies; persuasion and argumentation; replicability; scientific method; elements of a research design.

Literature reviews; methods of citation.

A very brief introduction to positivist and post-positivist approaches to research; divisions in political science.

Required reading: *Chicago-style citation quick guide* (N.d.); Shively (2004: ch 1); King, Keohane and Verba (1994: ch 1).

Further reading: Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 1-2); Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2000: ch 1-2); Fearon (1991); Fischer (1970: 164-186); Gerring (2001: ch 1-2); Weber (1949); et al (1969); Moon (1975); Bowen and Balch (1981); Tsebelis (1989); Little (1993).

1 February - Concepts, Theories, and Hypotheses

Seminar

Reliability and validity; construct / measurement validity; conceptualisation; operationalisation and measurement; formal models; models as abstraction; Occam's Razor / parsimony; necessary and sufficient conditions; causation

Required reading: Sartori (1970); Collier and Adcock (2001); Shively (2004: ch 2-5); Fiorina (1975)

Further reading: Collier and Mahoney (1993); Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 3-4,6); King, Keohane and Verba (1994: ch 2,3,5); Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2000: ch 7); Morton (1999: ch 2-3); Peters (1998: ch 4); Friedman (1962); Rogowski (1995); Hill (1980); Levi (2004); Gelman and Hill (2007: ch ??); Riker (1977).

Possible essay topics

Note: this essay is due 30 January, 9 AM.

- “Objectivity in the social sciences is a misleading illusion.”
- “Social science should avoid using terms in common usage outside academia, to avoid the many connotations such terms have.”
- “Issues of measurement are as relevant for the qualitative approaches as they are for quantitative ones.”
- “Only parsimonious, abstract models can help social science forward.”
- “Due to the complexity of human behavior, the falsification requirement of theories is overly ambitious.”

8 February - Case Studies and Comparative Methods

Lecture by Sebastian Dellepiane

Required reading: Landman (2003: ch 2); Gerring (2004); Bennett (2004).

Further reading: Landman (2003: ch 1,3); Lijphart (1971, 1975); Eckstein (1975); Campbell (1975); Frendreis (1983); George (1989); Lieberman (1991); Collier and Mahoney (1996); Ragin (1997); Dion (1998); McKeown (1999); Geddes (1990); Sartori (1991); Gerring (2007a); Rueschemeyer (2003).

22 February - Interpretative Methods, Fieldwork and Interviews

Lecture by Andy Storey

Required reading: Michael (2005); Beazley and Ennew (2006).

Further reading: Fairclough (2003).

Possible essay topics

Note: this essay is due 20 February, 9 AM.

- “Human behavior cannot be quantified - without deep understanding and thick description, one cannot get any leverage on understanding social mechanisms.”
- “Fieldwork distracts from objective analysis of a culture.”
- “Since participants are too involved themselves, they cannot critically and objectively analyse their environment, and thus interviews are only of limited use to social science.”
- “Case studies cannot be used to test general theories.”

29 February - Sampling, Surveys, Quantitative Research Methods, and Interviews

Lecture by Jos Elkind

Required reading: browse through Shively (1997: ch 7-9); more important readings are King (1991); Dillman (1991). Focus on the concept rather than the details.

Further reading: Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 9); King (1998); Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2000: ch 8,10-11,14-19); Sprinz and Wolinsky-Nahmias (2004: ch 6-9).

Further reading on the quantitative-qualitative debate: Bennett and Elman (2007); Levy (2007); Jackman (1985); Hill (1980); Caporaso (1995); Collier (1995); Tarrow (1995).

7 March - Elements of a Research Design

Seminar

Research question; literature review; relevance; ethics; methods; what makes it academically responsible?

Required reading: Shively (2004: ch 6); George and Bennett (2005: ch 4); King (2006).

Further reading: Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 5,14); Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2000: ch 3-6); King (1995).

Possible essay topics

Note: this essay is due 5 March, 9 AM.

- “The first requirement of good social science research is its relevance for society in general.”
- “The logic of statistics should apply equally to qualitative methods.”
- “Quantitative methods are just as subjective and socially constructed as any other method in social science.”

Optional readings in specific methodological fields

When you apply a method to your MA thesis or possibly future research, you might want to dive a little deeper into that particular method than is possible in this short course. This section provides you with a list of possible material you could read, mostly collected from the syllabi of existing courses in research design.

General research methods

Brady and Collier (2004); Geddes (2000); Desai and Potter (2006); Denscombe (2007); Kane and Brún (2001); May (2001); Robson (2002); Munck (1998); Munck and Verkuilen (2005).

Case studies

Many textbooks have a section on case studies, including: George and Bennett (2005); Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 7); Gerring (2007*a*: ch 5); King, Keohane and Verba (1994: ch 4,6); Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2000: ch 9,12); Przeworski and Teune (1970); Geddes (2003: ch 3); Sprinz and Wolinsky-Nahmias (2004: ch 2-5); van Evera (1997: ch 2).

On case selection, check: Shively (2004: ch 7); Geddes (1990).

For useful articles and monographs, check: Eckstein (1975); Ragin and Becker (1992); Achen and Snidal (1989); Gerring (2007*b*); Dion (1998); Mahoney and Goertz (2004); Campbell (1975); Collier and Mahoney (1996); Fearon (1991); Yin (2003); Ebbinghaus (2005); Bennett and Elman (2006); Alston (2005).

An interesting example is: Lijphart (1968).

Comparative method

For textbook reading, check: King, Keohane and Verba (1994: ch 4,6).

Further useful references: Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003); Lijphart (1971, 1975); Coppedge (1999); Ebbinghaus (2005); Dogan and Kazancigil (1994).

Survey research

For textbook chapters, check: Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 10).

Elite interviewing

For textbook chapters, check: Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 10).

Field research

For textbook chapters, check: Desai and Potter (2006: ch 2, 5).

Interpretative methods

Examples: Geertz (2005).

Content analysis

For textbook chapters, check: Johnson and Reynolds (2005: ch 8).

See also: Laver, Benoit and Garry (2003).

Statistics

There are many books available on this subjects, generally with titles like “introduction to (multivariate) statistics”, or “introduction to econometrics”. From beginner to advanced, you could consider: Shively (2004: ch 8-10); Verzani (2005); Gujarati (2003); Greene (2003); Amemiya (1985).

Formal models

Green and Shapiro (1994); Morrow (1994*b,a*); Levi (2004); Sprinz and Wolinsky-Nahmias (2004: ch 10-14).

References

Achen, Christopher H. and Duncan Snidal. 1989. “Rational deterrence theory and comparative case studies.” *World Politics* 41(2): 143–169.

- Alston, L.J. 2005. "The 'case' for case studies in political economy." *The Political Economist* 12(4): 1.
- Amemiya, Takeshi. 1985. *Advanced econometrics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Babbie, Earl. 2006. *The Practice of Social Research*. 9th ed. Wadsworth.
- Beazley, Harriot and Judith Ennew. 2006. *Doing development research*. Sage chapter Participatory methods and approaches: tackling the two tyrannies, pp. 189–199.
- Bennett, Andrew. 2004. *Models, numbers and cases*. University of Michigan chapter Case study methods: design, use, and comparative advantages, pp. 19–55.
- Bennett, Andrew and Colin Elman. 2006. "Recent developments in case study methods." *Annual Review of Political Science* 9: 455–476.
- Bennett, Andrew and Colin Elman. 2007. "Qualitative methods: the view from the sub-fields." *Comparative Political Studies* 40(2): 111–121.
- Bowen, Elinor R. and George Balch. 1981. Epistemology, methodology, and method in the study of political behavior. In *Handbook of political behavior*, ed. Samuel L. Long. Vol. 1 New York: Plenum Press.
- Brady, Henry E. and David Collier, eds. 2004. *Rethinking social inquiry: diverse tools, shared standards*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Campbell, Donald T. 1975. "Degrees of freedom and the case study." *Comparative Political Studies* 8: 178–193.
- Caporaso, James A. 1995. "Research design, falsification, and the qualitative-quantitative divide." *American Political Science Review* 89: 457–460.
- Chicago-style citation quick guide*. N.d.
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
- Collier, David. 1995. "Translating quantitative methods for qualitative researchers: the case of selection bias." *American Political Science Review* 89: 461–466.
- Collier, David and James Mahoney. 1993. "Conceptual stretching revisited: adapting categories in comparative analysis." *American Political Science Review* 87: 845–855.
- Collier, David and James Mahoney. 1996. "Insights and pitfalls - Selection bias in qualitative research." *World Politics* 49(1): 56–..
- Collier, David and Robert Adcock. 2001. "Measurement validity: a shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research." *American Political Science Review* 95(3): 529–546.
- Coppedge, Michael. 1999. "Thickening thin concepts and theories: combining large and small N in comparative politics." *Comparative Politics* 31(4): 465–476.
- Denscombe, Martyn. 2007. *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects*. McGraw-Hill.
- Desai, Vandana and Robert B. Potter, eds. 2006. *Doing development research*. Sage.

- Dillman, Don A. 1991. "The design and administration of mail surveys." *Annual Review of Sociology* 17: 225–249.
- Dion, Douglas. 1998. "Evidence and inference in the comparative case study." *Comparative Politics* 30: 127–145.
- Dogan, Mattei and Ali Kazancigil, eds. 1994. *Comparing nations: concepts, strategies, substance*. Blackwell.
- Ebbinghaus, Bernhard. 2005. "When less is more: selection problems in large-N and small-N cross-national comparisons." *International Sociology* 20(2): 133–152.
- Eckstein, Harry. 1975. Case study and theory in political science. In *Handbook of sociology*, ed. N. Smelser.
- et al, John G. Gunnell. 1969. "Symposium on 'deduction, explanation, and social scientific inquiry'." *American Political Science Review* 63: 1233–1263.
- Fairclough, Norman. 2003. *Analysing discourse: textual analysis for social research*. Routledge.
- Fearon, James D. 1991. "Counterfactuals and hypothesis testing in political science." *World Politics* 43(2): 169–195.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 1975. "Formal models in political science." *American Journal of Political Science* 19(1): 133–159.
- Fischer, David. 1970. *Historian's fallacies*. New York: Harper.
- Frankfort-Nachmias, Chava and David Nachmias. 2000. *Research methods in the social sciences*. Worth Publishers and St Martin's Press.
- Frendreis, John P. 1983. "Explanation of variation and detection of covariation: the purpose and logic of comparative analysis." *Comparative Political Studies* 16: 255–272.
- Friedman, Milton. 1962. The methodology of positive economics. In *Essays in positive economics*. Chicago: pp. 3–43.
- Geddes, Barbara. 1990. "How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: selection bias in comparative politics." *Political Analysis* pp. 131–150.
- Geddes, Barbara. 2000. *Paradigms and sand castles: theory building and research design in comparative politics*. University of Michigan Press.
- Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and sand castles: theory building and research design in comparative politics*. University of Michigan Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 2005. "Deep play: notes on the Balinese cockfight." *Daedalus* 134(4): 56–86.
- Gelman, Andrew and Jennifer Hill. 2007. *Data analysis using regression and multi-level/hierarchical models*. Analytical Methods for Social Research Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- George, Alexander. 1989. Case studies and theory development: the method of structured, focused comparison. In *Diplomacy: new approaches in history, theory, and policy*, ed. P.G. Lawrence. New York: Free Press pp. 43–68.
- George, Alexander and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT Press.
- Gerring, John. 2001. *Social science methodology: a critical framework*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gerring, John. 2004. “What is a case study and what is it good for?” *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 341–354.
- Gerring, John. 2007a. *Case study research. Principles and practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gerring, John. 2007b. “Is there a (viable) crucial-case method?” *Comparative Political Studies* 40(3): 231–253.
- Green, Donald and Ian Shapiro. 1994. *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory : A Critique of Applications in Political Science*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Greene, William H. 2003. *Econometric Analysis*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.
- Gujarati, Damodar N. 2003. *Basic econometrics*. 4th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Hill, Kim. 1980. “Measurement problems in cross-national analysis: persisting dilemmas and alternative strategies.” *Quality and quantity* 14: 397–413.
- Jackman, Robert. 1985. “Cross-national statistical research and the study of comparative politics.” *American Journal of Political Science* 29: 161–182.
- Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. 2005. *Political science research methods*. CQ Press.
- Kane, Eileen and Mary O’Reilly-De Brún. 2001. *Doing your own research*. Marion Boyars.
- King, Gary. 1991. “On political methodology.” *Political Analysis* 2: 1–30.
<http://gking.harvard.edu/files/polmeth.pdf>
- King, Gary. 1995. “Replication, replication.” *Political Science and Politics* 28(3): 443–499.
<http://gking.harvard.edu/files/replication.pdf>
- King, Gary. 1998. *Unifying political methodology. The likelihood theory of statistical inference*. University of Michigan Press.
- King, Gary. 2006. “Publication, publication.” *Political Science and Politics* 39(1): 119–125.
<http://gking.harvard.edu/files/paperspub.pdf>
- King, Gary, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing social inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Landman, Todd. 2003. *Issues and methods in comparative politics: an introduction*. Routledge.
- Laver, Michael, Kenneth Benoit and John Garry. 2003. "Extracting policy positions from political texts using words as data." *American Political Science Review* 97(2): 311–331.
- Levi, Margaret. 2004. *Problems and methods in the study of politics*. Cambridge University Press chapter An analytic narrative approach to puzzles and problems, pp. 201–226.
- Levy, Jack S. 2007. "Qualitative methods and cross-method dialogue in political science." *Comparative Political Studies* 40(2): 196–214.
- Lieberson, Stanley. 1991. "Small N's and big conclusions: an examination of the reasoning in comparative studies based on a small number of cases." *Social Forces* 70(2): 307–320.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1968. *The politics of accommodation. Pluralism and democracy in the Netherlands*. University of California Press.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1971. "Comparative politics and the comparative methods." *American Political Science Review* 65(3): 682–693.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1975. "The comparable cases strategy in comparative research." *Comparative Political Studies* 8: 158–177.
- Little, Daniel. 1993. "On the scope and limits of generalizations in the social sciences." *Synthese* 97: 183–207.
- Mahoney, James and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds. 2003. *Comparative historical analysis in the social sciences*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz. 2004. "The possibility principle: choosing negative cases in qualitative research." *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 653–670.
- May, Tim. 2001. *Social research: issues, methods and process*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- McKeown, Timothy. 1999. "Case studies and the statistical world view." *International Organization* 53(1): 161–190.
- Michael, Sarah. 2005. "The promise of appreciative inquiry as an interview tool for field research." *Development in Practice* 15(2): 222–230.
- Moon, Donald J. 1975. The logic of political inquiry: a synthesis of opposed perspectives. In *Handbook of political science. Volume I: political science scope and theory*, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Morrow, James. 1994a. *Game theory for political scientists*. Princeton University Press.
- Morrow, James. 1994b. "Modeling the forms of international cooperation." *International Organization* 48: 387–424.
- Morton, Rebecca B. 1999. *Methods and models: a guide to the empirical analysis of formal methods in political science*. Cambridge University Press.
- Munck, Gerardo L. 1998. "Canons of research design in qualitative analysis." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 33: 18–45.

- Munck, Gerardo L. and Jay Verkuilen. 2005. *Encyclopedia of social measurement*. Elsevier / Academic Press chapter Research designs.
- Peters, B. Guy. 1998. *Comparative politics: theory and methods*. New York University Press.
- Przeworski, Adam and Henry Teune. 1970. *The logic of comparative social inquiry*. Wiley-Interscience.
- Ragin, Charles. 1997. "Turning the tables: how case-oriented research challenges variable-oriented research." *Comparative Social Research* 16: 27–42.
- Ragin, Charles C. and Howard Saul Becker. 1992. *What is a case? Exploring the foundations of social inquiry*. Cambridge University Press.
- Riker, William H. 1977. "The future of a science of politics." *American Behavioral Scientist* 21: 11–38.
- Robson, Colin. 2002. *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioners*. Blackwell.
- Rogowski, Ronald. 1995. "The role of theory and anomaly in social-scientific inference." *American Political Science Review* 89: 467–470.
- Rueschemeyer, Dietrich. 2003. *Comparative historical analysis in the social sciences*. Cambridge University Press chapter Can one or a few case yield theoretical gains?, pp. 305–336.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1970. "Concept misformation in comparative politics." *American Political Science Review* 64(4): 1033–1053.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1991. "Comparing and miscomparing." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 3(3): 243–257.
- Shively, W. Phillips. 1997. *The craft of political research*. 6th ed. London: Prentice-Hall.
- Shively, W. Phillips. 2004. *The craft of political research*. 6th ed. London: Prentice-Hall.
- Sprinz, Detlef F. and Yael Wolinsky-Nahmias, eds. 2004. *Models, numbers and cases*. University of Michigan.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1995. "Bridging the quantitative-qualitative divide in political science." *American Political Science Review* 89: 471–474.
- Tsebelis, George. 1989. "The abuse of probability in political analysis: the Robinson Crusoe fallacy." *American Political Science Review* 83(1): 77–91.
- van Evera, Stephen. 1997. *Guide to methods for students of political science*. Cornell University Press.
- Verzani, John. 2005. *Using R for introductory statistics*. Boca Raton, FL: Chapman & Hall/CRC.
- Weber, Max. 1949. 'Objectivity' in social science and social policy. In *The methodology of the social sciences*, ed. Max Weber. New York: Free Press.
- Yin, Robert K. 2003. *Case study research: design and methods*. Sage.