Course Overview: This course will teach you how to design empirical research projects. In terms of methods we focus on experiments, survey research, aggregate data analysis, content analysis, the comparative method, comparative historical analysis, cases studies, and participant observation techniques. Substantive examples are taken from the primary empirical subfields in political science: American politics, comparative politics, and international relations. Specific topics include interest groups, legislative politics, news media, public opinion and electoral behavior, campaigns and elections, social capital, public policy, democratization, deterrence, war, international political economy, social movements, revolution, and foreign policy. By the end of the term you will know how to (1) conduct a comprehensive literature review; (2) formulate interesting research questions whose answers can contribute to extant literatures; (3) define and measure abstract political concepts; (4) develop theoretical frameworks from which testable hypotheses can be derived; (5) define a population of cases and select a sample of analytically comparable units from it; (6) utilize quantitative and qualitative methodological tools to test the hypotheses; and (7) summarize, evaluate, and report on empirical political research.

Requirements:  
Preparation and participation: Class attendance is mandatory. You are expected to read all materials and to make thoughtful contributions to class discussions each session. In class I will ask you the following questions about specific empirical studies. What is the research question? What contribution does this research make to the literature? How are the concepts defined and measured? Are the measures valid and reliable? What is the theoretical framework? To what extent is the framework plausible? Do the hypotheses follow logically from the theory? What is the population? How are cases selected? Is the selection method defensible? What specific quantitative/qualitative methods are employed? To what extent does the empirical evidence support the hypotheses? What additional research questions should be explored in future research on this topic? Be prepared to give a clear and concise answer to each of these questions in a minute or two.

Literature review paper: You will write a 15 page paper that (1) summarizes the major findings in a particular area of research; (2) assesses the empirical support for the findings; (3) discusses the degree to which this research has led to genuine gains in knowledge; and (4) formulates three research questions that should be explored in future work. The paper is due at the start of class on October 12. Late papers will be penalized.

Literature review oral presentation: You will present the literature review paper in class on October 12. The presentation should take about 15 minutes.
Research design proposal: You will develop a 25 page research design proposal that explicates a systematic plan to answer one or more important research questions (you will not collect and analyze actual data). Ideally, the question/s will come from the literature review paper described above. Make sure your proposal has a realistic chance of being completed in one year. The following topics must be included in your proposal:

1. the research question/s
2. literature review
3. the contribution your research will make
4. concept definitions
5. measurement
6. theoretical framework and hypotheses
7. population, sample, and case selection method
8. data collection source/s
9. the method/s to be employed
10. design strengths and weaknesses

Starting the week of October 18, I will meet with students to review your proposal. During our meeting be prepared to discuss the 10 points listed above. Final papers are due in the political science office by noon on December 13. Late papers will be penalized.

Research design oral presentation: You will present the research design proposal in class on December 7. The presentation should take about 15 minutes.

Grading:

Preparation and participation 20 %
Literature review paper 20 %
Literature review oral presentation 10 %
Research design proposal 40 %
Research design oral presentation 10 %

Readings: The following texts are required for the course. They can be purchased at the ASU bookstore or from your favorite internet book retailer.


Additional readings are listed in the course schedule below. All books are on reserve at the Hayden Library. Most of the articles are available electronically at www.jstor.org or http://catalog.lib.asu.edu/. * readings are available in the graduate secretary’s office.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Course Introduction 08/24


Week 2: Overview of Research Design and Political Methodology 08/31

Manheim, Rich, and Willnat chapter 1, 5 (pg. 79-85)

King, Keohane, and Verba chapter 1

Gerring chapters 1, 2, 8, 9


Week 3: Literature Review and Research Questions 09/07

Manheim, Rich, and Willnat chapter 3


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**Week 4: Conceptualization and Measurement 09/14**

Manheim, Rich, and Willnat chapters 2 (pg. 20-22), 4

Gerring chapters 3, 4


**Week 5: Theory, Causality, and Hypotheses 09/21**

Manheim, Rich, and Willnat chapter 2 (pg. 14-16, 22-32)

Gerring chapters 5-7

King, Keohane, and Verba chapters 2, 3


**Week 6: Experiments 09/28**

Manheim, Rich, and Willnat chapter 5 (pg. 85-99)


Week 7: Survey Research 10/05

Manheim, Rich, and Willnat chapters 6, 7


Week 8: Literature Review Project 10/12

Oral presentation
Paper due

Week 9: Aggregate Data Analysis 10/19

Manheim, Rich, and Willnat chapter 10


Week 10: Content Analysis 10/26

Manheim, Rich, and Willnat chapter 9


Manheim, Rich, and Willnat chapter 11

King, Keohane, and Verba chapters 4, 5


Week 12: Comparative Historical Analysis


Week 13: Case Studies


King, Keohane, and Verba chapter 6


Week 14: Participant Observation 11/23

Manheim, Rich, and Willnat chapters 18, 19


Week 15: Multi-Method Approaches 11/30

Nisbett and Cohen book

Week 16: Research Design Project 12/07

Oral presentation
Paper due on 12/13 by noon