

SYLLABUS

G53.3200.001: Experimental Methods in Political Science
Fall 2005, New York University
Tuesdays, 2pm-4pm
726 Broadway, room 747

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Course Description: This course is designed to provide an introduction to experimental methods in political science for graduate students. The emphasis of the course will be on several different styles of laboratory experiments, but field experiments, survey experiments, and frontier techniques such as MRI experiments will also be discussed.

Experimental methods have become an increasingly important tool for political scientists. What are the potential strengths and weaknesses of different kinds of experiments relative to other research methods, such as surveys or econometric analyses of real-world data? What sorts of things can we hope to learn from experiments? And what are some of the important methodological issues that must be considered in designing effective experimental tests of theories? During the course of the semester, we will address all of these questions. By the end of the semester, students should not only have read a broad selection from the experimental literatures in political science (and economics), but also gained specific insights into experimental design that will enable them to begin formulating their own experimental research projects.

While the purpose of the course is primarily methodological, there is no better way to get a feel for how experiments work than to read experimental literatures from different fields. The experiments that we will discuss during the course of the semester will fall into three main categories: political economy (tests of theories of institutional structure, voting rules, and related topics); political psychology (exploring topics such as persuasion, political attitudes, and the processing of political information); and foundational issues (tests of the decision- and game-theoretic foundations that underlie most rational choice and formal work in political science).

While the balance will vary from week to week, class sessions will generally be divided between class discussion (the larger part) and a presentation by the instructor (the smaller part).

Course Prerequisites: All students will be required to have completed at least one semester of graduate-level game theory, and at least one semester of graduate-level quantitative methods (statistics), or the equivalent. The course is primarily aimed at second- and third-year graduate students, though other students with adequate preparation are also welcome.

Course Requirements: Students are expected to do as many of the assigned readings as possible in advance of the class in which they will be covered, and to participate actively in class discussions. In addition to the readings and class participation, there are two further requirements. First, there will be three short writing assignments (approximately 2-3 pages) during the course of the semester in response to material that is covered in class and in the readings. Second, students will be expected to submit an experimental design at the end of the semester. The design must provide a detailed, and plausible, scheme for an experiment that addresses a specific political science research question of the student's choosing (with prior approval of the instructor partway through the semester). The research design (along with a brief literature review and other necessary background materials) will typically run about 15-25 pages in length. Time permitting, students will present their designs in-class towards the end of the semester. Course assignments will be weighted roughly as follows for grading purposes: 60% experimental design; 20% short writing assignments; 20% class participation.

Course Books:

The following books (or large portions thereof) will be assigned reading for the course. The first two are listed as required in the NYU bookstore; the third has not been ordered via the bookstore but is recommended as a good collection of some classic experiments in political science. In addition to these books, a number of separate articles will also be made available during the semester:

Camerer. 2003. *Behavioral Game Theory: Experiments on Strategic Interaction*. Russell Sage Foundation and Princeton University Press.

Kagel & Roth (ed.). 1995. *Handbook of Experimental Economics*. Princeton University Press.

(recommended, not at bookstore):

Kinder & Palfrey (ed.). 1993. *Experimental Foundations of Political Science*. University of Michigan Press.

Course Outline

Week 1 (Sept. 6): Introduction

- Camerer Chapters 1, 2.0-2.2
- McDermott. 2002. "Experimental Methodology in Political Science." *Political Analysis* 10(4):325-342.
- KR Chapter 1.
- Kinder and Palfrey. "On Behalf of an Experimental Political Science" in KP.

Week 2 (Sept. 13): Survey Experiments

- Sniderman and Grob. 1996. "Innovations in Experimental Design in Attitude Surveys." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22:377-99.
- Gilens. September 1996. "'Race Coding' and White Opposition to Welfare." *APSR* 90(3):593-604.
- Van Houweling and Sniderman. 2005. "The Political Logic of a Downsian Space." Working Paper. (Handout)
- Tomz and Sniderman. 2004. "Constraint in Mass Belief Systems: Political Brand Names as Signals." Working Paper. (<http://www.stanford.edu/~tomz/working/working.shtml>)
- Go to <http://www.experimentcentral.org/> and get a sense of what TESS (Time Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences) is all about. Once you've done that, go to either "Current TESS Projects" or "Previously Collected TESS Data and Links to Publications" and read one (or more!) papers that correspond to your

Week 3 (Sept. 20): Field Experiments

- Humphreys, Sandhu, and Masters. 2005. "The Role of Leadership in Democratic Deliberations: Results from a Field Experiment in São Tomé and Príncipe." Working Paper.
- Wantchekon. April 2003. "Clientelism and Voting Behavior: A Field Experiment in Benin." *World Politics* 55(3): 399-423.
- Gerber and Green. September 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *APSR* 94(3):653-664.
- Green and Gerber. 2002. "The Downstream Benefits of Experimentation." *Political Analysis* 10(4): 394-402.

Week 4 (Sept. 27): Individual Choice

- KR Chapter 8

Week 5 (Oct. 4): Iterated Dominance, Mixed Strategies, and other Staples of Game Theory

- Camerer Chapters 3 and 5
- Dickson, Hafer, and Landa. 2005. "Cognition and Strategy: A Deliberation Experiment." NYU Working Paper.

Week 6 (Oct. 11) Political Judgments

- Quattrone and Tversky. "Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice" in KP.
- Druckman. November 2004. "Political Preference Formation: Competition, Deliberation, and the (Ir)relevance of Framing Effects." *APSR* 98(4):671-686.
- Mutz. March 2002. "Cross-Cutting Social Networks: Testing Democratic Theory in Practice." *APSR* 96(1):111-126.
- Redlawsk. November 2002. "Hot Cognition or Cool Consideration? Testing the Effects on Motivated Reasoning on Political Decision Making." *JOP* 64(4):1021-1044.
- Druckman. November 2001. "On the Limits of Framing Effects: Who can Frame?" *JOP* 63(4):1041-1066.
- Nelson and Kinder. November 1996. "Issue Frames and Group-Centrism in American Public Opinion." *JOP* 58(4):1055-1078.

Week 7 (Oct. 18): Bargaining, Legislatures, Committees, and Juries

- Camerer Chapter 4
- KR Chapter 4
- Fiorina and Plott. "Committee Decisions under Majority Rule: An Experimental Study" in KP
- Frechette, Kagel, and Lehrer. May 2003. "Bargaining in Legislatures: An Experimental Investigation of Open versus Closed Amendment Rules." *APSR* 97(2):221-232.
- Guarnaschelli, McKelvey, and Palfrey. June 2000. "An Experimental Study of Jury Decision Rules." *APSR* 94(2):407-424.

Week 8 (Oct. 25): Voting and Elections

- Goeree and Holt. May 2005. "An Explanation of Anomalous Behavior in Models of Political Participation." *APSR* 99(2):201-214.
- Aragonés and Palfrey. February 2004. "The Effect of Candidate Quality on Electoral Equilibrium: An Experimental Study." *APSR* 98(1):77-90.
- Morton and Williams. 1999. "Information Asymmetries and Simultaneous versus Sequential Voting." *APSR* 93(1).
- Morton. 1993. "Incomplete Information and Ideological Explanations of Platform Divergence." *APSR* 87:382-392.
- Forsythe, Rietz, Myerson, and Weber. 1996. "An Experimental Study of Voting Rules and Polls in Three-Candidate Elections." *IJGT* 25:355-383.

Week 9 (Nov. 1): Media, Advertising, and Campaigns

- Brader. April 2005. "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions" *AJPS* 49(2):388-405.
- Mutz and Reeves. February 2005. "The New Videomalaise: Effects of Televised Incivility on Political Trust." *APSR* 99(2):201-214.
- Valentino, Hutchings, and White. March 2002. "Cues that Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns." *APSR* 96(1):75-90.
- Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, and Valentino. December 1994. "Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?" *APSR* 88:829-838.
- Iyengar, Peters, and Kinder. 1982. "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs." *APSR* 76(4):848-858.

Week 10 (Nov. 8) Public Goods, Collective Action & Coordination

- Camerer Chapter 7
- KR Chapters 2 and 3
- Habyarimana, Humphreys, Posner, and Weinstein. 2005. "Social Focal Points." Working Paper.

Week 11 (Nov. 15) Fairness, Reciprocity, and Social Preferences

- KR Chapter 4
- Charness and Rabin. August 2002. "Understanding Social Preferences with Simple Tests." *QJE* 817-870.
- Bolton and Ockenfels. March 2000. "ERC: A Theory of Equity, Reciprocity, and Competition." *AER*.
- Fehr and Schmidt. August 1999. "A Theory of Fairness, Competition, and Cooperation." *QJE*.

Week 12 (Nov. 22) Culture, Trust, & Subject Pools

- Camerer Chapter 2.3-2.9
- Habyarimana, Humphreys, Posner, and Weinstein. 2005. "Ethnic Identifiability: An Experimental Approach." Working Paper.
- Gintis et al. 2001. "Cooperation, Reciprocity, and Punishment in Fifteen Small-Scale Societies." Available at <http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~gintis/> (published as "In search of homo economicus: Behavioral experiments in 15 small-scale societies" in *AER* 91(2):73-79.)
- Bohnet, Frey, and Huck. March 2001. "More Order with Less Law: On Contract Enforcement, Trust, and Crowding." *APSR* 95(1):131-144.
- Glaeser, Laibson, Schankman, and Soutter. August 2000. "Measuring Trust." *QJE* 831-846.
- Andreoni and Vesterlund. February 2001. "Which is the True Fair Sex? Gender Differences in Altruism." *QJE* 293-312.

Week 13 (Nov. 29): MRI & other frontier experimental techniques

- McDermott. December 2004. “The Feeling of Rationality: The Meaning of Neuroscience for Political Science.” *Perspectives on Politics*.
- Phelps and Thomas. 2003. “Race, behavior and the brain: The role of neuroimaging in understanding complex human behaviors.” *Political Psychology* 24:747-758.
- McClure et al. 2004. “Separate Neural Systems Value Immediate and Delayed Monetary Rewards.” *Science* 306:503-507.
- Dickson and Scheve. 2005. “Testing the Effect of Social Identity Appeals in Election Campaigns: a Research Proposal.” (to be handed out)

Week 14 (Dec. 6) Student Presentations & Wrap-Up

AER = American Economic Review

AJPS = American Journal of Political Science

APSR = American Political Science Review

IJGT = International Journal of Game Theory

JOP = Journal of Politics

QJE = Quarterly Journal of Economics