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 and 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:

  
  (recommended, not at bookstore):

Course Outline

Week 1 (Sept. 6): Introduction
- Camerer Chapters 1, 2.0-2.2
- KR Chapter 1.
- Kinder and Palfrey. “On Behalf of an Experimental Political Science” in KP.

Week 2 (Sept. 13): Survey Experiments
- 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

Week 4 (Sept. 27): Individual Choice
- KR Chapter 8

Week 5 (Oct. 4): Iterated Dominance, Mixed Strategies, and other Staples of Game Theory
Week 6 (Oct. 11) Political Judgments
- Quattrone and Tversky. "Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice" in KP.

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

Week 8 (Oct. 25): Voting and Elections

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

Week 10 (Nov. 8) Public Goods, Collective Action & Coordination
• Camerer Chapter 7
• KR Chapters 2 and 3

Week 11 (Nov. 15) Fairness, Reciprocity, and Social Preferences
• KR Chapter 4

Week 12 (Nov. 22) Culture, Trust, & Subject Pools
• Camerer Chapter 2.3-2.9
• 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.)
Week 13 (Nov. 29): MRI & other frontier experimental techniques


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