

POLITICAL SCIENCE
PSC 300: INTRO TO ORIGINAL RESEARCH

 Spring 2025	 T/Th 2:00-3:20	 Eggers 400A	 Professor Erin Hern
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HOW TO REACH ME

<u>In Person Drop-In Hours</u> T/Th, 11AM -12 PM 400B Eggers Hall	<u>Online</u> Email: ehern@syr.edu Zoom: by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

How should a local government agency figure out the needs of its constituents? Why do Republicans and Democrats watch different sources of news? Are positive or negative campaign ads more effective? Whether your research question is relevant for the non-profit world, government functioning, or academic inquiry, answering these questions requires an understanding of conducting original research: tools for gathering original data from people or primary sources in “the field”—in other words, IRL. This course will take you through practical instruction on best practices in interviews, surveys, ethnography, experiments, and more, culminating in a final research design. While the course draws explicitly on political science literature and methods, it is applicable across the social sciences.

- LEARNING OBJECTIVES**
- How to select and conceptualize a good social science research project involving original data collection.
 - How to conduct five different methods of data collection (ethnography, interviews, surveys, experiments, and archives), including the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.
 - Practical issues of implementing research, including ethics, IRB applications, logistics, and budgeting.
 - How to put together a comprehensive research design and pitch it to possible funders.

COURSE MATERIALS + INFO
(pssst....everything is on Blackboard (BB))

Readings

All readings are listed on the course schedule below and available on BB:
Coursework>Week#>Readings

Lectures

Slides are available on BB:
Coursework>Week#>Lecture

Assignments

All assignments are listed on the course schedule below and available on BB:
Coursework>Week#

Communicating

If there are any changes to the course schedule or format, I will email you through BB. **Make sure you check your .syr email regularly** and use BB to stay on top of course deadlines.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Participation:

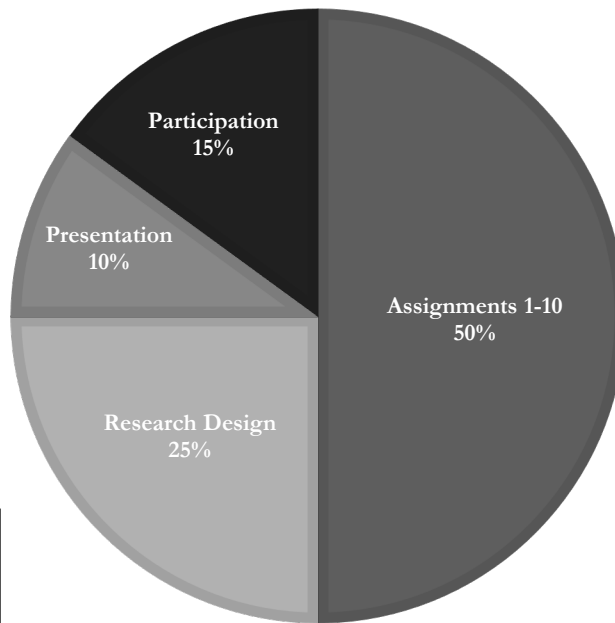
Made up of attendance and informal writing due before class. Informal writing will prepare you for the class discussions and workshops.

Research Design:

Final product of the class, due at the end of the semester. All assignments build toward it.

Presentation:

10 minute funding pitch of your research design



Assignments 1-10:

due weekly, guide you through the practical application of the skills we discuss in class each week. Builds to final research design.

Note:

further instruction for all of these assignments is available on BB on the assignment links associated with each week. Please ask if you are unsure how or when to complete any of the assignments.

A	>93
A-	90-92.9
B+	88-89.9
B	83-87.9
B-	80-82.9
C+	78-79.9
C	73-77.9
C-	70-72.9
D	60-69.9
F	<60

Attendance and Late Work

Attendance is required and comprises part of your final grade. Absence will be excused in the case of illness or other emergency that requires you miss class, but you must notify me in advance (unless impossible).

Because the assignments in this course are sequential and time-sensitive, I do not accept late work (except in the case of illness or emergency). **It is much better for you to submit an incomplete assignment than nothing at all.** I will accept extension requests for the final research design, but I do not guarantee that they will be granted.

COURSE POLICY ON AI

Based on the specific learning outcomes and assignments in this course, artificial intelligence is permitted on the following: Grammarly is permitted on all assignments with disclosure. You may use LLMs like ChatGPT to generate initial ideas for class assignments, but the assignments themselves must be written in your own words and reflect your work. You may use AI-enabled tools like Elicit or ResearchRabbit to help identify appropriate works to build your bibliography. See each assignment, quiz, or exam instructions for more information about what artificial intelligence tools are permitted and to what extent, as well as citation requirements. If no instructions are provided for a specific assignment, then no use of any artificial intelligence tool is permitted. Any AI use beyond that which is detailed in course assignments is explicitly prohibited except when documented permission is granted.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

1/14 T: Course Introduction

1/16 Th: Finding a Good Question

Read: Chodorow, Stanley. *Writing A Successful Research Paper: A Simple Approach*. Chapters 3

Write: Begin to brainstorm topic ideas. Start with a general topics and move to narrow, open-ended questions. Bring 3 ideas to class.

Week 2

1/21 T: One-on-One Meetings – Be ready with 2-3 possible topics ready to discuss

1/23 Th: Question Workshop

Assignment 1 due 1/26, midnight

Week 3

1/28 T: Explanations and Outcomes

Read: Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel Posner, and Jeremy Weinstein. 2007. “Why Does Ethnicity Undermine Public Goods Provision?” *American Political Science Review* 101(4). Read 709-711.

Write: Briefly describe the different explanations that the authors put forth about the relationship between ethnicity and public goods provision. Note: they call these explanations “families of mechanisms.”

1/30 Th: Explanations and Outcomes Workshop

Write: possible outcomes or explanations relevant to your research question. Whether you focus on outcomes (Ys) or explanations (Xs) depends on the format of your question.

Assignment 2 due 2/2, midnight

Week 4

2/4 T: Conceptualizing Variables

Read: Habyarimana et al, pages 712-721

Write: How do the authors measure the following variables: ethnicity, co-ethnicity, egoist, non-egoist, “commonality of taste,” “other-regardingness,” “efficacy”, “findability”, and “social sanctioning”?

2/6 Th: Variables Workshop

Write: Identify as many variables as possible in your research question and explanations/outcomes.

Assignment 3 due 2/9, midnight

Week 5

2/11 T: Ethnography and Participant Observation (1)

Read: Boswell et al. 2018. “State of the Field: What can Political Ethnography Tell us About Anti-Politics and Democratic Disaffection?” *European Journal of Political Research* 58: 56-71.

2/13 Th: Ethnography and Participant Observation (2)

Read: Scott, James. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 1.

Write: In documenting everyday life in “Sedaka,” what themes does Scott highlight? What do you think he is trying to convey through his descriptions?

Assignment 4 due 2/16, midnight

Week 6

2/18 T: Interviews and Focus Groups (1)

Read: Mosely, Layna. 2013. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Chapter 1 (**Focus on pgs 5-8; 12-26**) *Note: this e-book is available through the library and would be very useful in its entirety if you plan to carry out interviews.*

2/20 Th: Interviews and Focus Groups (2)

Read: Verwey, Cornel and Michael Quayle. 2012. "Whiteness, Racism, and Afrikaner Identity in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *African Affairs* 111/445: 551-575.

Write: What was the author's sampling strategy? What impact did the authors' personal identities have on the research process? What kind of interviews did they conduct? What was their process for analyzing the interview data?

Assignment 5 due 2/23, midnight

Week 7

2/25 T: Surveys (1)

Read: Fowler, Floyd and Carol Cosenza. 2008. "Writing Effective Questions," in *International Handbook of Survey Methodology*. Routledge.

2/27 Th: Surveys (2)

Write: Draft your survey questions.

Assignment 6 due 3/2, midnight

Week 8

3/4 T: No Class – Hern at Conference

3/6 Th: Experiments (2)

Read: Gerber, Alan and Donald Green. 2012. *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*. W.W. Norton. Introduction.

Write: Responses to the exercises at the end of the chapter.

Assignment 7 due 3/9, midnight

*******SPRING BREAK*******

Week 9

3/18 T: Archives and Primary Sources (1)

Read: Schmidt, Laura. 2016. "Using Archives: A Guide to Effective Research," Society of American Archivists.

3/20 Th: Archives and Primary Sources (2)

Write: Compile a list of primary documents that could be useful for your project, using one of the digitized collections we discussed on Tuesday.

Assignment 8 due 3/23, midnight

Week 10

3/25 T: Choosing a strategy

Read: Jensen, Eric and Charles Laurie. 2020. *Doing Real Research: A Practical Guide to Social Research*.

Sage publishing. Chapter 1.

3/27 Th: One-on-One meetings

Write: Your preliminary thoughts about the method (or combination of methods) you want to use in your research design.

Week 11

4/1 T: Ethical Considerations

Read: Mosely, Layna. 2013. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Chapters 2 (Sarah Brooks) and 3 (Lauren MacLean).

4/3 Th: Working with the IRB

Complete: [CITI training through SU. Submit completion certification via Blackboard.](#)

Assignment 9 due 4/6, midnight

Week 12

4/8 T: Logistics and Budgeting

4/10 Th: Research Design Workshop

Write: Complete a data collection plan for the “ideal” version of your research.

Assignment 10 due 4/13, midnight

Week 13

4/15 T: Giving Good Presentations

4/17 Th: Pitch Workshop

Write: Make an outline of the components you will include in your presentation.

Final Presentation Slides due 4/20, midnight

Week 14

4/22 T: Pitches (1)

4/24 Th: Pitches (2)

Final Research Designs Due 5/4, midnight

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity:

As a pre-eminent and inclusive student-focused research institution, Syracuse University considers academic integrity at the forefront of learning, serving as a core value and guiding pillar of education. Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy provides students with the necessary guidelines to complete academic work with integrity throughout their studies. Students are required to uphold both course-specific and university-wide academic integrity expectations such as crediting your sources, doing your own work, communicating honestly, and supporting academic integrity. The full Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy can be found by visiting class.syr.edu, selecting, "Academic Integrity," and "Expectations and Policy."

Upholding Academic Integrity includes the protection of faculty's intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or share instructors' course materials, including presentations, assignments, exams, or other evaluative materials without permission. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others, which are then presented as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation. All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person assignments, quizzes, and exams also apply online.

Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered. Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

Disability Related 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, TDD: (315) 443-1371 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.

Religious Observances:

SU religious observances notification and policy, found at <http://hendricks.syr.edu/spiritual-life/index.html>, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they **notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes** and by the submission deadline for flexibly formatted classes. An online notification process is available for students in **My Slice / StudentServices / Enrollment / MyReligiousObservances / Add a Notification**.