

GOVT 301 Research Methods

Fall 2018

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Course Meetings: Tuesday & Thursday, 5:00-6:20pm, 114 Tyler Hall

Office Hours: Wednesday 1:00-3:00pm and by appointment. Occasionally, my duties as chair of the Department of Government will require me to reschedule these hours. I will let you know in advance when that happens.

1. Course description

This is a course about discovery. It will be one of your most important courses at William & Mary because it will help you learn how to take the burning questions you have about government and politics and then embark on intellectual journeys to answer them. As a result of your work in GOVT 301, not only will you learn how to scrutinize the ideas of others, but you also will develop the skills and habits of mind required to create new knowledge for others to consider. Specifically, as a result of your hard work and our working together to help you reach your potential, by the end of the semester you will know how to:

- ask researchable empirical questions about the world;
- put your questions into a larger context to better understand their implications;
- identify methods that can help you gather evidence to answer your questions; and
- recognize the advantages and limits of the various methods you might choose to answer your questions.

Learning how to do these things well requires much practice. To that end, nearly every class session will stress active use and experimentation with the ideas and methods we will be learning. You won't just hear a bunch of lecturing from me. Putting your energy and best efforts into your work in GOVT 301 will allow you to complete the semester well-prepared to begin your own independent research projects (e.g., seminar paper for a class, independent study, honors thesis, Monroe project, etc.), to be a valuable research assistant for W&M faculty members, and to be a competitive applicant for jobs and internships that involve doing original research or critically analyzing the research of others.

2. Required course materials

2.1 Books and videos

- Christopher Howard. 2017. *Thinking Like a Political Scientist: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Michael S, Lewis-Beck. 1995. *Data Analysis: An Introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. If you already own an introductory statistics book you can use it instead of buying this book. Simply review concepts from your statistics book that are addressed in class when we cover readings from Lewis-Beck.
- Steven Johnson. 2006. *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic—and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Stata's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCV4G4nEtBS4tLOyHqstDA>. I have assigned some videos, but there also are others you likely will find helpful to consult as we learn Stata.

2.2 How to engage the course materials

Please follow these instructions to help you make the most of the assigned material.

Types of materials:

- Core: Consider Howard, Lewis-Beck (or the stats book you are reading in place of this), Johnson, and the Stata YouTube videos to be core materials. These items contain essential concepts or examples (or both). You should read all the assigned pages or, in the case of the Stata videos, watch the full video, prior to coming to class each day.

- **Applications:** Materials on the syllabus that provide examples of political science research that are not core readings are considered application readings. I will provide guidance on how to engage these pieces. Typically, I will assign specific parts that elaborate a class concept or method we are studying. You won't have to consider the entire item, but you should carefully engage the assigned excerpt before class.
- **Optional items:** Occasionally, I will encounter readings or on-line videos that I distribute by email or on the course Blackboard site. I would encourage you to consider them, but they are optional. Typically these articles will provide further examples of course concepts or ideas in a journal article or current events story. These also will provide opportunities for you to see how William & Mary faculty use course concepts and methods in their research.

Reading questions: Prior to each class I will post questions on Blackboard to help you identify essential parts of the core and application readings. You should do the readings with those questions in mind. These questions also will create a useful study guide you can use to help prepare for class exams.

Readings that repeat: Sometimes the same reading appears in multiple places on the syllabus. That is by design. It could be because I am asking you to focus on different parts of it for particular days. It also could be that sometimes re-reading a piece in light of new information can help you to see it in another way.

3. Class expectations

3.1 Assignments and grading

Weight (%)	Item
1	Omnibus Project participation
0	First draft of research question
4	Research question and annotated source list
7.5	Data description exercise
20	Midterm exam
15	Literature review
7.5	Statistical inference exercise
20	Final research design
20	Final exam
5	Class participation and attendance

I will base final course grades on the following scale, with partial-percents typically rounded to the nearest full percent: A 100-93, A- 92-90, B+ 89-88, B 87-83, B- 82-80, C+ 79-78, C 77-73, C- 72-70, D+ 69-68, D 67-63, D- 62-60, F <60. Please keep a copy of all work you submit until I have processed final grades.

3.2 Brief description of assignments

More details on these assignments will be forthcoming on Blackboard.

Omnibus Project participation (1%). The Department of Government runs a collaborative subject pool for survey and experimental research that our students and faculty conduct. To help introduce you to the field of political science and earn credit for this course, you will participate as a subject in a research project this semester. Doing so will contribute to research projects of your fellow W&M students and faculty members in Government and help you see examples of empirical research in real time. An alternative assignment will be available for students who do not want to participate in the Omnibus Project or who are not old enough to participate (you must be 18 years of age).

Research design project. Across the semester you will be working towards developing a research design, which you could then carry out in a subsequent setting such as a research seminar, independent study, honors thesis, or collaboration with a faculty member. Each of these assignments will help you build toward the final research design that is due at the semester's end.

- First draft of research question (0%): This will be your first cut at asking an empirical research question. I will provide feedback to help you sharpen and clarify your question. The question will provide for you a powerful lens through which you should consider subsequent material we encounter in the course.
- Research question and annotated source list (4%): This brief paper will ask you to present your polished research question and to begin showcasing a list of sources that would be relevant for helping you answer your question.
- Literature review (15%): In this writing assignment you will draw on your annotated source list, and additional sources, to place your research question in a larger context among scholarship in the field.
- Final research design (20%): In this assignment you will pull together the work you have done on your research question and review of the literature. It also will describe a research plan, specifying methods and data you could use to answer your research question. You will not have to actually carry out the research plan you describe. That is something you could do (and I hope you will consider doing!) in a future class or research experience, such as those described above.

Statistical computing exercises. You will learn the statistical computing package Stata in this class. Two assignments will require you to demonstrate your ability to use Stata to describe data (data description exercise, 7.5%) and to draw inferences from data (statistical inference exercise, 7.5%). All students will be held accountable for knowing how to perform the techniques in these exercises. You will have the option to complete these assignments with a partner and, if you do, you and your partner will receive the same grade.

Exams. There will be a midterm exam (20%) and a final exam (20%) that you will complete in class. The exams will contain a variety of question types. In fairness to everyone, students who arrive late for an exam may not work overtime. The only valid reasons for missing and rescheduling an exam are due to a documented illness, religious observance, a grave family emergency or other similar circumstance, a W&M-sponsored travel commitment that you have discussed with me before the exam, or, during final exams only (as W&M allows), you have several exams in a row. If you miss an exam for another reason you can take a makeup exam for which the maximum grade you can earn is a C (75%).

Class attendance and participation (5%). Attendance every day and active class participation are essential components of this class. Great participation includes not only raising a point, but also asking good questions, and most important of all, participating in the hands-on activities and thought experiments we will do each day in class. Please do these things to ensure that you actively participate in class each day:

- Do the assigned readings and review assigned videos before you arrive each day.
- Come to class on time and ready to engage me and your classmates.
- Turn off your phone and store it where you cannot see it.
- Bring to class at least one question about the readings or videos that you hope our class session will answer. Be sure to ask that question during class if we have not addressed it in lecture and discussion.
- Pay attention in lecture, discussion, and in-class activities (see also section 3.4 below). Participate actively in the exercises and thought experiments we will do each day. Do not use that time to do other things such as letting your electronic devices distract you or leaving class for a break.

Here are two important related notes.

- Absences: Excused absences due to these reasons will not count against you: illness, religious observance, a grave family emergency or other similar circumstance, a W&M-sponsored travel commitment that you have discussed with me in advance. Please email me if you were absent or anticipate being absent for one of these reasons.
- Helping you learn to participate well: If generally you are shy in classes (e.g., you don't like speaking up or you don't like working with partners or groups) you should see me immediately so I can help you overcome those tendencies. I have had fantastic experiences working with students in previous classes who thought they would struggle with class participation and engaging classmates, but with their hard work and my guidance they succeeded.

3.3 Accommodations for students with disabilities

William & Mary accommodates students with disabilities in accordance with federal laws and university policy. Any student who feels she or he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric,

physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) staff at 221-2509 or at sas@wm.edu. An official letter from SAS is required before students can receive an accommodation.

3.4 *Appropriate use of technology in class*

Appropriate use of technology: Please do not let your electronic devices distract you, your fellow classmates, or me during our in-class work. As noted earlier, when you arrive to class, power off your phone and store it where you cannot see it. Please do not use technology in class to check or send text messages or emails; read or participate on social media sites; surf the Internet; or attend to other non-class business. Doing these things will distract your fellow students and harm your class attendance and participation mark.

A word about laptops: I allow laptops in class, but I would discourage you from using them for note-taking. They are best used as a way to access the class readings, any notes you have taken on the readings before class, and to use them in virtual desktop mode when we learn Stata. A mounting body of research shows that students learn less when they rely on laptops and other electronic devices to take notes. There is a good chance you will earn a higher grade in this class if you take hand-written notes.

If necessary: Finally, if there appear to be students who have trouble using technology appropriately in class, I reserve the right to ban the use of laptops or other devices for individual students or the class as a whole.

3.5 *Honor Code*

I begin by assuming academic misconduct will not become an issue in this class. Still, for any questions about policies regarding cheating, plagiarism, or other types of academic dishonesty please see the William & Mary Honor Council’s web site and the discussion of the Honor Code in the Student Handbook. If I discover a student violating the Honor Code I will initiate an Honor Council proceeding and, at a bare minimum, recommend that the student receive an F for the course.

3.6 *What you can expect from me*

So far I have described what I expect from you. But what can you expect from me? Several things. First, I will not ask you to do things that waste your time. All—yes, *all*—of the ideas and methods I will teach you in this class are things that I use every day in my own scholarship and in my applied policy work for foundations and other organizations. Second, I will give you lots of honest feedback in class discussions, office hours, email exchanges, and on your written work. Finally, I promise to treat you with respect. I anticipate that we will sometimes disagree about government and politics this semester. In fact, I hope we do because that will make the course more interesting. I will not penalize you if you do not embrace my political beliefs, nor will I reward you simply because we happen to agree on political matters.

4. **Schedule**

- We will adjust this schedule as needed.
- BB = Reading appears on Blackboard.

4.1 *Launching a research project*

Th 8/30	Course introduction: Studying government and politics scientifically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard, Introduction • Johnson, Ch. [1] The night-soil men
T 9/4	Getting ideas and asking research questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard, Ch. 1 Who cares? pp. 13-14 and 25-29 • Lewis-Beck, Ch. 1 Introduction; Ch. 2. Data gathering, pp. 2-3 • Johnson, Ch. [2] Eyes sunk, lips dark blue

Th 9/6	<p>Conducting a literature review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard, Ch. 1 Who cares? pp. 15-25 and 29-34 • BB. Katherine Cramer Walsh. 2006. Communities, race, and talk: An analysis of the occurrence of civic intergroup dialogue programs. <i>Journal of Politics</i> 68(1): 22-33 • BB. Erica Chenoweth. 2010. Democratic competition and terrorist activity. <i>Journal of Politics</i> 72(1): 16-30
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****F, 9/7 DUE: First draft of your research question****

T 9/11	<p>Theories and hypotheses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard, Ch. 3 Why? pp. 64-71 and 81-84 • Johnson, Ch. [3] The investigator • BB. Marcus Holmes. 2013. The force of face-to-face diplomacy: Mirror neurons and the problem of intentions. <i>International Organization</i> 67(4): 829-861 • BB. Katherine Cramer Walsh. 2006. Communities, race, and talk: An analysis of the occurrence of civic intergroup dialogue programs. <i>Journal of Politics</i> 68(1): 22-33
Th 9/13	<p>Measurement: From concepts to variables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard, Ch. 2. What happened? pp. 36-52 • BB. Robert D. Putnam. 1995. Tuning in, tuning out: The strange disappearance of social capital in America. <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i> 28(4): 664-683 • BB. Elizabeth Pelletier and Paul Manna. 2017. Learning in harm's way: Neighborhood violence, inequality, and American schools. <i>Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science</i> 674(1): 217-239 • BB. Seva Gunitsky. 2015. How do you measure 'democracy'? <i>Washington Post</i> Monkey Cage Blog. June 23. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/06/23/how-do-you-measure-democracy/

****M, 9/17 DUE: Revised research question and annotated source list****

T 9/18	<p>Intro to statistical computing in Stata</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour of Stata 15 interface: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nV5Wfr92LIM&index=3&list=PLN5IskQdgXWnHC_5-ebmFZUNdpKcoLdtDT • What's it like—Getting Started in Stata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAVq99iUTTI&index=1&list=PLN5IskQdgXWnHC_5-ebmFZUNdpKcoLdtDT
Th 9/20	<p>Describing one variable using descriptive statistics: central tendency, variability, and statistical distributions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard, Ch. 7 Using numbers as evidence, pp. 174-179 • Lewis-Beck, Ch. 3. Univariate statistics • Descriptive Statistics in Stata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKFbnEWwa2s • Box Plots in Stata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7ko844ff-g • Histograms in Stata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPqNZVTToGx8 • Paul Manna, Jack Cooper, and Elizabeth Pelletier. 2015. Financing K-12 education in Virginia. <i>Virginia Issues and Answers</i>. http://pmanna.people.wm.edu/research/MannaCooperPelletier2014VIAFinancingK12.pdf

T 9/25	<p>Describing relationships between two variables: correlation, bi-variate regression, cross-tabulation [Don't worry about the discussion in the reading of statistical significance, p-values, and hypothesis testing. We'll cover that later.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard, Ch. 2 What happened? pp. 52-58; Ch. 7 Using numbers as evidence, pp. 179-187 • Lewis-Beck, Ch. 4. Measures of association, pp. 19-22; Ch. 6 Simple regression, pp. 41-49 • Tables and Cross-Tabs in Stata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WpMRtTNZsw • Basic Scatter Plots in Stata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhVGpe3Ib3E • Simple Linear Regression in Stata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HafqFSB9x70 • Pearson Correlation in Stata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7ko844ff-g • BB. Elizabeth Pelletier and Paul Manna. 2017. Learning in harm's way: Neighborhood violence, inequality, and American schools. <i>Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science</i> 674(1): 217-239.
Th, 9/27	Data description practice

4.2 Collecting data

T 10/2	<p>Guiding principles in tension: Ethics, documentation, and replication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BB. Gary King. 1995. Replication, replication. <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i> 28(3): 444-452 • BB. Sarah Elizabeth Parkinson and Elisabeth Jean Wood. 2015. Transparency in intensive research on violence: Ethical dilemmas and unforeseen consequences. <i>Qualitative & Multi-Method Research Newsletter</i> 13(1):22-27
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W, 10/3 DUE: Data description exercise

Th 10/4	<p>Conducting surveys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard, Ch. 5 Choosing cases, pp. 117-131 • Kenneth Fernandez. Methods of Collecting Survey Data. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cuOyAR-Y9I • Kenneth Fernandez. 7 Tips for Good Survey Questions. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iq_fhTuYlhw&feature=youtu.be • Skim over these websites, and read in depth one of them that interests you. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --World Values Survey. http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp --American National Election Studies: https://electionstudies.org/ --Afrobarometer survey: http://www.afrobarometer.org/ --Eurobarometer survey: http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm
T 10/9	<p>Conducting interviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Layna Mosley (ed.) 2013. <i>Interview Research in Political Science</i> (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press [Available on Swem Library website as an e-book.] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Ch. 10. by Matthew N. Beckmann and Richard L. Hall. Elite interviewing in Washington, DC --Appendix: Sample materials for interview research • Paula M. Pickering, 2003. Gaining access: Courting minorities in postwar Bosnia. In Martha Feldman et al. (eds.) <i>Gaining Access: The Inside Story</i> (Lanham, MD: Altimira Press). http://pmpick.people.wm.edu/research/GainingAccess.pdf
Th 10/11	**MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS**
T 10/16	No class—Fall break

Th 10/18	<p>Analyzing administrative data to study organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> David E. Lewis. 2008. <i>The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance</i> (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press) --Read the publisher's overview of the book: https://press.princeton.edu/titles/8663.html --Then go to this link: https://my.vanderbilt.edu/davidlewis/data-books/ --Under the heading "Administrative Agency Insulation Data Set" read the Code Book document: https://my.vanderbilt.edu/davidlewis/files/2011/12/Codebook.pdf United States Government, Office of Management and Budget. Historical Tables. https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/historical-tables/ National Center for Charitable Statistics --Overview: https://nccs.urban.org/database/overview-nccs-data-files --Try a search: https://nccs.urban.org/sites/all/nccs-archive/html/PubApps/search.php
T 10/23	<p>Coding documents for their content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Howard, Ch. 6 Using documents as evidence, pp. 165-166 BB. Andrea Lawlor. 2015. Framing immigration in the Canadian and British news media. <i>Canadian Journal of Political Science</i> 48(2): 329-355 Comparative Agendas Project --About: https://www.comparativeagendas.net/pages/About --Datasets / Codebooks: https://www.comparativeagendas.net/datasets_codebooks. Skim all of the different sections. Then read about one of them in some depth. Wesleyan Media Project --About: http://mediaproject.wesleyan.edu/about/ --Project background: http://mediaproject.wesleyan.edu/about/project-background/

4.3 Making inferences

Th 10/25	<p>Hypothesis testing and threats to inference (measurement error, bias, spurious relationships, endogeneity)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Howard, Ch. 3 Why? pp. 71-81 Johnson, Ch. [4] That is to say, Jo has not yet died; Ch. [5] All smell is disease
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****M, 10/29 DUE: Literature review****

T 10/30	<p>Inference about a single variable (means and proportions hypothesis testing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lewis-Beck, Ch. 5 Significance testing, pp. 30-35, 38-40 One-sample t-test in Stata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwzCyqW-0dc
Th 11/1	<p>Inference with a dependent variable and one independent variable (difference between means, difference between proportions, cross-tabulations, bivariate regression)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Howard, Ch. 7 Using numbers as evidence, reread pp. 179-187 and pay attention this time to the discussion of hypothesis testing, p-values, and statistical significance Lewis-Beck, Ch. 6 Simple regression, reread pp. 41-49 and also read pp. 49-53 T-test for two independent samples in Stata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=by4c3h3WXQc Rewatch and focus on hypothesis testing discussion: Tables and Cross-Tabulations in Stata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WpMRfTNZsw Rewatch and focus on hypothesis testing discussion: Simple Linear Regression in Stata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HafqFSB9x70
T 11/6	<p>Inference with a dependent variable and many independent variables (multiple regression)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Howard, Ch. 7 Using numbers as evidence, pp. 187-193 Lewis-Beck, Ch. 7 Multiple regression pp. 53-62 (optional: pp. 62-72) STATA Tutorials: Multiple Linear Regression https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbSjQ0n-Gss

Th 11/8	Statistical inference practice
T 11/13	Inference and case selection in qualitative case studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard, Ch. 5 Choosing cases, pp. 127-138 • BB. John Gerring. 2008. Ch. 28 Case selection for case-study analysis: Qualitative and quantitative techniques. In Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier (eds.) <i>The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology</i>. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 645-684.
Th 11/15	Drawing inferences about historical events with process tracing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard, Ch. 4 Choosing a Research Design, pp. 109-113; Ch. 6 Using documents as evidence, pp. 143-154 • BB. Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro. 2012. Testing the surge: Why did violence decline in Iraq in 2007? <i>International Security</i> 37(1): 7-40. • BB. Paul Manna. 2006. <i>School's In: Federalism and the National Education Agenda</i> Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press. Ch. 5. Borrowing strength, federalism, and education agendas

****M, 11/19 DUE: Statistical inference exercise****

T 11/20	Experiments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard, Ch. 4 Choosing a Research Design, pp. 100-105 • BB Susan D. Hyde. 2010. Experimenting in democracy promotion: International observers and the 2004 presidential elections in Indonesia. <i>Perspectives on Politics</i> 8(2): 511-27 • BB. Ismail K. White, Chryl N. Laird, and Troy D. Allen. 2014. Selling out?: The politics of navigating conflicts between racial group interest and self-interest. <i>American Political Science Review</i> 108(4): 783-800
Th 11/22	No class—Thanksgiving break

4.4 Concluding thoughts

T 11/27	Research prospectus roundtable discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come to class prepared to discuss your draft research prospectus and to comment on those of others.
Th 11/29	Mixed-methods and triangulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard, Ch. 4, pp. 113-114; Ch. 6 Using documents as evidence, pp. 154-163 • Johnson, Ch. [6] Building the case

****F, 11/30 DUE: Research prospectus****

T 12/4	Reason and the politicization of evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnson, Ch. [7] The pump handle; Ch. [8] Conclusion • RAND Truth Decay project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --video: https://www.rand.org/research/projects/truth-decay.html --report: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2314.html (look at summary)
Th 12/6	Course evaluation and next steps for you

****Th, 12/13, 7:00-10:00pm, FINAL EXAM IN CLASS****