

GVPT 601
Research Design for Political Analytics
Fall, 2023

Dr. Richard N. Engstrom
Wednesdays, 6:00pm-8:45pm
Online
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Course Description

This class is a graduate-level introduction to empirical research techniques used in political science. It covers different approaches to answering empirical research questions and addresses the strengths and limitations of different research decisions. Students who successfully complete the course will be able to conceptualize and design an empirical research project, as well as evaluate the research designs used in the research projects conducted by other social scientists.

Grades

In this class you will be assessed based on the following:

1. Performance on a **midterm and final exam** (25% each, for a total of 50%)
2. Performance on **article presentation and discussion assignments** (20%)
3. Performance on a **seminar data analysis presentation assignment** (20%)
4. Quality of **participation** in seminar discussions (10%)

Exams will be essay tests, requiring 3-5 paragraphs per answer. Questions will be drawn from readings and seminar discussions. Twice during the first half of the semester, each student will be assigned a week for which they will **present and lead discussions on a report or analysis** related to their research interests. During the second half of the semester, each student will also be assigned a week for which they will **present analyses of research questions using census data** (details will be discussed in class), and the instructor will assess the students' preparation, presentation, and the extent to which the students communicate the how and why of their approach to the assignment. **Participation** in seminars will involve an evaluation of the frequency and quality of student participation in both in-class and online discussions (if necessary).

Final grades will be assigned on the following scale:

A+ 98-100%

A	92-97%
A-	90-91%
B+	88-89%
B	82-87%
B-	80-81%
C+	78-79%
C	72-77%
C-	70-71%
D+	68-69%
D	62-67%
D-	60-61%
F	59% or lower

Readings

There are two required textbooks in this course, and students will also be asked to find articles related to their areas of interest to discuss during Weeks 2-7:

- Toshkov, Dimiter. 2016. *Research Design in Political Science*. Palgrave.
- Walker, Kyle. *Analyzing U.S. Census Data*. <https://walker-data.com/census-r/>. This is the open-source version of the CRC Press book.
- Various reports and analyses: selected by students for discussion in class.

Class Format

This class will be run as a graduate-level seminar, which means it will be discussion-based rather than lecture-based. Every student is expected to come to class prepared to discuss the week's readings. It is usually helpful for students to come to class with questions related to the readings, and for students to be prepared to help others in the seminar with their questions. Seminars will normally be broken into two segments. Each week, the first class segment will be used to discuss the week's assigned readings and then, after a short break, the second segment will be used to present and discuss analyses brought to class by students that are related to their research interests. Every student will present two analyses for discussion over the course of the semester. During Weeks 9-15, students will be assigned to lead the discussion of each week's empirical exercises during the first half of class.

Any changes will be announced in class and/or via email.

Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Readings
Week 1	8/30	Introduction, Syllabus, Overview
Week 2	9/6	Toshkov, Chapters 1-2: Types of Research
Week 3	9/13	Toshkov, Chapters 3-4: Theory and Concepts
Week 4	9/20	Toshkov, Chapters 5-6: Description and Explanation
Week 5	9/27	Toshkov, Chapters 7-8: Experiments and Large-N Designs
Week 6	10/4	Toshkov, Chapters 9-10: Comparative Designs and Case Studies
Week 7	10/11	Toshkov, Chapters 11-12: Mixed Designs
Week 8	10/18	Midterm Exam
Week 9	10/25	Walker, Chapters 1 and 2: Intro to R and tidycensus
Week 10	11/1	Walker, Chapters 3 and 4: Using Census Data
Week 11	11/8	Walker, Chapters 5 and 6: Mapping Census Data
Week 12	11/15	Walker, Chapters 7 and 8: Spatial Analysis and Models
Week 13	11/22	THANKSGIVING
Week 14	11/29	Walker, Chapter 9 and 10: Census Microdata
Week 15	12/6	Walker, Chapters 11 and 12: International and Other Data

Make-up Assignments

Make-up Exams and Assignments will be given for a documented, unexpected emergency or as the result of a university-authorized commitment.

Contacting the Instructor

Students with requests or questions about the class should feel free to contact the instructor. I am happy to discuss issues related to DSS accommodations, class content, or other issues related to the class.

Statement on Diversity and Inclusivity

The Government and Politics department deeply values the voices and perspectives of all people. We are committed to having a diverse department that recognizes and appreciates the differences in race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, abilities, class, nationality, and other factors. Our department prioritizes diversity and seeks to foster a diverse community reflected in its faculty, staff, and students.

In this class, students are invited to share their thoughts and a diversity of opinions is welcome. Respectful communication is expected, even when expressing differing perspectives. Supporting one's statement with research findings is encouraged. In accordance with free speech statutes, speech that contains threats of violence is prohibited.

Reporting Racism and Other Forms of Hate and Bias

If you experience racism or other forms of bias in this class or any GVPT course, we encourage you to do at least one of the following:

- Please report the experience to the instructor or teaching assistant
 - Report the experience to David Cunningham, the GVPT Director of Undergraduate Studies at dacunnin@umd.edu
 - Report the experience to the GVPT Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee, led by Professor Antoine Banks at abanks12@umd.edu
- Please also report all incidents of hate and bias to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at <https://diversity.umd.edu/bias/>.

Additional Course Information

The syllabus is tentative, and mid-semester changes to the class may be necessary. Changes are at the discretion of the instructor and will be announced in class. Students are required to ensure that their emails are registered with ELMS.

Additional information about course-related policies at the University of Maryland, including academic integrity, sexual misconduct, and discrimination, can be found on the Course Related Policies page, hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Studies:

<http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

Information on campus closings and other emergencies can be found on the University website:

<http://www.umd.edu/>

Information related to weather emergencies and campus can be found on the University website and by calling the weather emergency phone number: 301-405-7669.