### PS 291: Dealing With Data in Political Science

### Instructor: Simon Gilhooley Class Sessions: T & Th 10.10-11.30am

### Office: Aspinwall 207 Classroom: Olin 308

### Email: sgilhool@bard.edu Office Hours: M &W 2-3, Th 3-4 and by appointment

***Course Overview***

### The central element of making a convincing argument in politics is the ability to show that it is supported in “real” world. This course will examine the different ways in which scholars of politics make use of data in constructing and supporting their arguments. To begin with we will consider to what extent any artificial replication of the world around us can be completely accurate – and what that means for our own study. Examining a variety of different approaches including regressions, game theory, discourse analysis, experimentation, and historical analysis, the course will consider the advantages and disadvantages of various approaches and discuss examples of each. For students thinking about a senior project in political studies, this course will give the opportunity to think about how they will construct their own research project.

### *Attendance and Participation*

Because this course is intended to create a stimulating intellectual atmosphere and promote participatory learning, students are expected to attend all classes and be prepared to take part in discussions. Because absence is sometimes unavoidable, students will be excused in advance on up to three occasions. Thereafter a letter grade will be deducted from your final grade for every unexplained additional absence. In the event of sickness please contact the instructor with a note from the student health center. In the event of an absence you are strongly encouraged to find out from your peers what you missed during the session.

This course will be conducted as a seminar, meaning that students will be responsible for carrying the bulk of discussion and debate. However, talking for the sake of talking is not the goal. Rather, students should seek to make comments, ask questions, share ideas, and otherwise interact respectfully with one another.

***Accommodations***

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, Bard College is committed to providing otherwise qualified individuals with disabilities equal access to the College's academic courses, programs, and activities. In support of this mission, the College provides services and reasonable accommodations to self-identified students who present the appropriate documentation. Students who claim learning, psychological or physical disabilities should register with The Disability Support Coordinator in the The Learning Commons at the start of the semester or as soon as the diagnosis of disability is made.

***Academic Integrity***

All the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course and not another and must be original in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged.

***University Policies and Regulations***

This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.

***Requirements and Grading***

Students will be graded on the completion of 1 research assignment (proposal, literature review, and final plan), 6 Assignments, and participation. Assignments are due at the start of the seminar on the given date, unless otherwise noted. Late papers will be marked down one letter grade for every day they are late. Papers submitted over five calendar days late will not be accepted. When extraordinary circumstances arise beyond a student’s control, please notify me as soon as possible (and *before* the paper is due) so that we may work out an agreeable solution. The final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

1) Topic Proposal (10%)

2) Literature review 1 (10%)

3) Literature review 2 (10%)

4) Final Written Plan (15%) + 5% for Presentation

5) Assignment Papers (40%)

6) Participation (10%)

Written assignments should reflect the following standards:

* All submitted written work should be word-processed; handwritten work is not acceptable.
* Assignments should use a standard, 12-point font, be double-spaced and use one inch margins.
* Assignments should be securely stapled in the top left hand corner and contain numbered pages.
* Assignments should have a cover sheet containing your name, the assignment number and name, the date, your instructor’s name, and the course name.
* All submitted work (and drafts to be used in class or individual conference) should be proofread and spellchecked.
* **All assignments should be submitted in hard copy in class AND in (identical) electronic format via email (in .doc format) by the end of the day of the class in which they are submitted.**

***Textbooks and Readings***

The following books are available for purchase at the bookstore:

**GB -** Alexander L. George & Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in*

*the Social Sciences*

**KKV -** Gary King, Sidney Verba, & Robert O. Keohane, *Designing Social Inquiry:*

*Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*

**BC -** Henry E. Brady & David Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared*

*Standards*

Other readings marked \* can found on the course’s Moodle site. The access code is **supportF14**

Assignment 1: Attend the Arendt Conference and take notes as a participant observer. Write up your notes suggesting ways in which this event might be used to analyze political behavior. Include suggestions for a hypothesis to test and the observations that you would need to make in order to test this. Also consider what problems might be encountered in this project, and how could it be most effectively carried out. 2-3 pages, **Due 21st October.**

Assignment 2: Write a short report outlining the ways in which your topic could be explored through regression analysis. How would you go about setting up such an analysis? What measurements would you need to get access to in order to do this? How might you “operationalize” the different variables that you wish to analysis? Attempt to find a dataset that holds the information you need. If you cannot find one, list those available in your area and explain why they are not suitable. 2-3 pages, **Due 23rd October.**

Assignment 3: Write a short report outlining the ways in which cases studies or experiments might enable you to work on the project that you are undertaking for the final paper. How would you select the case studies?/How could an experiment be constructed to explore the puzzle that you are investigating? What might be the limitations of such an approach? 2-3 pages, **Due 30th October.**

Assignment 4: Write a report in which you consider the ways in which a current event can be explained using game theory. Provide a brief outline of the event, the actors involved, and their interests. Propose pay-offs for each actor and model the game. On this basis attempt to predict the outcome or explain it in terms of a strategic game. 3-4 pages, **Due 11th November.**

Assignment 5: Tuesday 4th November was Election Day in the United States. Pick a journalistic account of the elections printed in the next few days that seeks to explain the causes and consequences of the electoral outcome. Write a response to that account which outlines how this journalistic account could be tested, either using the election returns themselves or other data. Carry out such an analysis and provide an assessment of the article’s claims. 2-3 pages, **Due Sunday 16th November.**

Assignment 6: Write a report in which you assess the prospects for gaining historical records in assisting your research. What sort of records might be useful to you in probing your question? Are these records accessible to you? If you could access them what data could you hope to glean from them, and how could you make use of this in your research? Attempt to locate archives that would be of use to you, either at an institution or online. Detail what records/holding you have identified and why you think they will be of use. 3-4 pages, **Due 2nd December**.

*Readings*

Week 1

Tuesday 2nd September: Introduction

Thursday 4th September: The Social Scientific Method

***Readings:*** KKV Chapter 1

 \*HD (Kenneth Hoover & Todd Donovan, *The Elements of Social*

*Scientific Thinking*, (Boston: Wadsworth, 2011) Chapters 1 & 2

Week 2

Tuesday 9th September: Theory Development

***Readings:*** KKV Chapter 2

Thursday 11th September: Theory Development

***Readings:*** KKV Chapter 4

Week 3

Tuesday 16th September: Measurement

***Readings:*** \*TNG (Michael Blastland & Andrew Dilnot, *The Numbers Game: The Commonsense Guide to Understanding Numbers in the News, in Politics, and in* Life, (New York: Penguin, 2010)), Chapter 5

**\*\*\*Topic Proposal Due\*\*\***

Thursday 18th September: Sampling

***Readings:*** \*TNG Chapter 8

Week 4

Tuesday 23rd September: Value and Preparation

***Readings:*** \*TNG Chapter 1

Thursday 25th September: Surveys and Their Limitations

***Readings:*  \***JR (Janet Buttloph Johnson & H. T. Reynolds, *Political Science*

*Research Methods*, (Sage: London, 2011)), Chapter 10

Week 5

Tuesday 30th September: Observation

***Readings:*** \*Howard S. Becker, “Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant

Observation,” *American Sociological Review* 23 (6) (1958)

 \* Richard F. Fenno, *Home Style*: *House Members in Their Districts*,

Extracts

Thursday 2nd October: Inference

***Readings:*** \*JR Chapter 12

Week 6

Tuesday 7th October: What is “a regression”?

***Readings:*** \*JR Chapter 13

 **\*\*\*Literature Review Due\*\*\***

Thursday 9th October: Arendt Conference

Week 7

Tuesday 14th October: Fall Break

Thursday 16th October: No Class

Week 8

Tuesday 21st October: What does “a regression” show? What does it not show?

***Readings:*** \*TNG Chapter 12

 KKV Chapter 3

Thursday 23rd October: Experiments

***Readings:*** \*JR 170-190

Week 9

Tuesday 28th October: Selecting and Comparing Cases

***Readings:*** GB Chapter 1, 3, & 4

Thursday 30th October: Within Case comparison

***Readings:*** GB Chapter 8

 \*TNG Chapter 3 & 11

Week 10

Tuesday 4th November: Basic Game Theory

***Readings:***\*Avinash Dixit & Susan Skeath, *Games of Strategy*, (New York: W. W.

Norton, 2004), Chapter 2

\*Martin J. Osborne, *An Introduction to Game Theory*, (New York:

Oxford University Press, 2004), Chapter 2

Thursday 6th November: Sequential Games

***Readings:*** \*Avinash Dixit & Susan Skeath, *Games of Strategy*, (New York: W. W.

Norton, 2004), Chapter 3

Week 11

Tuesday 11th November: Historical Analysis: Collection

***Readings:*** \* Jo Guldi & David Armitage, *The History Manifesto*, Chap 4

Thursday 13th November: Process Tracing

***Readings:*** GB Chapter 10

 BC Chapter 11

 Sherlock Holmes: Silver Blaze

Week 12

Tuesday 18th November: Election Retrospective

Thursday 20th November: Textual Analysis - Content

***Readings:*** \*JR 292-305

 **\*\*\*Second Literature Review Due\*\*\***

Week 13

Tuesday 25th November: Discourse Analysis

***Readings:*** \*David J. Howarth & Yannis Stavrakakis, “Introducing discourse

theory and political analysis,” in David J. Howarth, Aletta J. Norval, & Yannis Stavrakakis, (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)

\* Nur Betül Çelik, “The constitution and dissolution of the Kemalist

imaginary,” in Betin David J. Howarth, Aletta J. Norval, & Yannis Stavrakakis, (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)

Thursday 27th November: Thanksgiving Break

Week 14

Tuesday 2nd December: Does Political Theory have a method?

***Readings:*** \*David Leopold & Marc Stears, *Political Theory: Methods and*

*Approaches,* Extracts

Thursday 4th December: Does Political Theory have a method?

***Readings:*** \*Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de*

*France, 1978--1979 (Lectures at the College de France)*, pp. 1-50

\*Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, Part 1

Week 15

Tuesday 9th December: Reflections

***Readings: \****HD Chapter 6

 BC Chapter 5

Thursday 11th December: Presentations

Week 16

Monday 15th December: **\*\*\*Final Plan Due\*\*\***