

Experimental Methods in Political Science

Class Meeting Times:

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30 to 9:50 am, room 212, in 19 West 4th Street.

Instructor: Professor R. Morton

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Course Objectives

In the past 15 years there has been explosion of research using experiments in political science. But most noteworthy, there has also been an increased focus on the methodological aspects of experiments in political science and how these methods should work. Furthermore, as experimentation has increased, debates over experimental approaches, subject pools, locations, and ethics have also become more prominent. In this course we will explore this methodological literature as well as some of the substantive contributions that have been made through experiments in political science.

In past semesters the course has spent considerable time on the statistics underlying experimentation as a method and experimental reasoning with observational (nonexperimental) data. However, there is considerable overlap between this material and the material taught in Quant II. Therefore, the course will focus more on issues that are not addressed in Quant II. We will focus instead on the interplay between formal theory and experimentation, current methodological issues that are particular to experimental research, the ethics of experimentation, and the practical matters of choosing and motivating subjects, etc. Moreover, technology and other advances in experimentation has meant that the distance and differences between lab and field experimentation is becoming smaller. Researchers working in the lab find themselves doing work in the field and vice-versa. Hence, the course will aim to provide training in both types of experimentation, with particular emphasis on how lab and fieldwork can complement each other. The course will also provide students with training in software for game theoretic experimentation in political science, which can be used in the field, traditional laboratory, and online.

Prerequisites

Game Theory I and Quant II (or equivalent courses or experience). First-year Phd students will be allowed to take the class if they can demonstrate exposure to these literatures.

Text (see Course Schedule for other required readings)

Rebecca Morton & Kenneth Williams, *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality: From Nature to the Lab*, Cambridge University Press

Course Grades

Course grades will be composed of the following components (each component is described in detail below) with the weights associated:

Course Component	Weight
Attendance and Class Discussion	10%
Experimental Design or Literature Review	30%
Critique Slides & Class Presentations	30%
Homework Assignments	30%
Total	100%

Attendance

This class will be taught roughly half as a lecture class and half as a seminar class in which students are expected to do readings in advance and contribute to class discussions. That is, typically the first class on a particular topic will be taught lecture style, while the second class on the topic will be conducted seminar style. Students often learn much from such discussions and thus attendance and participation in class discussions are important components of the class requirements. Absences are permitted if a student has an illness or a family has a serious illness or the student is required to attend an official university event. Students are expected to provide proof that an absence occurred for one of these reasons.

Experimental Design or Literature Review

Students have a choice; they can submit an original experimental design for a future experiment they would like to conduct or a literature review of research on a particular topic related to experiments in political science. If a student chooses the literature review option, the topic must be approved by the instructor in advance. Furthermore, the literature review should be a critical review, i.e., the student should attempt to provide a synthesis or otherwise analyze the literature, with suggestions about what the literature not only tells us but also future interesting

unanswered questions in the literature. Students will be expected to submit a preliminary 1-3 page plan for the design or literature review by Tuesday, November 3rd and final papers will be due by Tuesday, December 22nd.

Critique Slides

Each week we will explore one topic with associated readings. Some of these readings will be selected for student critiques. Each student in the class will be expected to write a brief critique and co-organize discussion on a set of the papers. Critique slides will be due on the course's nyuclasses webpage by the morning of the class in which the paper will be discussed.

Responsibilities of critique slide authors:

1. You should go through the paper you are assigned with a fine-tooth comb; i.e. don't just read the paper, work through as much as you can, if it is an experiment explore the experimental design and the results; if it is a model go through the proofs. Go through the appendix to the paper very carefully if it has one. Find supplemental material online if it is available.
2. If the authors use an approach that you are not familiar with, consult texts and readings on the subject and see if you can find a similar and simpler use of the approach that you can show to the class as an example.
3. If the paper refers to previous research, etc., seek out these papers and examine them in detail to consider whether the authors' statements about these papers are factual.
4. Find a paper or two that address the same topic or research question but use a different approach.

Homework Assignments

Occasionally during the semester you will be expected to complete a few homework assignments (especially when learning the software for programming experiments). The homework assignments will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Your first two assignments are below:

Your first homework assignment is to attend a presentation of a paper reporting on experimental results or experimental methods and write a critique of the paper presented (see information on critiques above). To see a list of some papers that you might consider, consult the seminar schedule for the Department of Politics and the Center for Experimental Social Sciences (CESS) Experimental Economics Seminar series, see <http://cess.nyu.edu/seminars/>. You must receive my approval that the paper qualifies before writing the critique. This assignment is due by Tuesday, October 6th.

Your second homework assignment will be to assist a fellow researcher (either PhD student or faculty member) in conducting an experiment at CESS (from start to

finish, i.e. from the time the researcher goes to set up the lab till the end when the researcher finishes payment and getting the data) so that you have some understanding of the process of running an actual experiment. You must receive my approval that the experiment you will assist with qualifies beforehand. You also must have completed the human subjects tutorial for NYU researchers and provided proof of this completion to the CESS laboratory and myself prior to the experiment. You can find the tutorial online at: <https://www.nyu.edu/ucaih/tutorial/> This assignment must be completed by November 24th.

Course Schedule

Date	Material Covered
Thursday, September 3 rd	No Class, APSA
Tuesday, September 8 th	What is an experiment? Manipulation and Baselines, Control and Random Assignment in Experiments, and Review of the Ruben Causal Model Lecture Class Required reading: Morton and Williams Chapters 1-5
Thursday, September 10 th	No Class
Tuesday, September 15 th	Formal Theory Approach to Experimentation & Theory-Based Experiments Lecture Class Required reading: Morton and Williams Chapter 6
Thursday, September 17 th	Digression – Extended Example of Theory-Based Experiments, the Literature on Information Aggregation Through Voting Lecture Class Required readings: 1. Morton and Williams Chapter 6 2. “The Swing Voter’s Curse in the Laboratory,” Marco Battaglini, Rebecca Morton, and Thomas Palfrey, Review of Economic Studies, January 2010, Issue 1, pages 61-89.
Tuesday, September 22 nd	Digression – Extended Example of Theory-Based Experiments, the Literature on Information Aggregation Through Voting Continued Lecture Class Required readings: 1. Tom Palfrey’s essay on Political Economy Experiments section on Information Aggregation, forthcoming in the new Handbook of Experimental Economics, see http://www.hss.caltech.edu/~trp/HEE_political_economy_100812_corrected.pdf Optional reading: “The Dark Side of the Vote,” Rebecca Morton, Marco Piovesan, and Jean-Robert Tyran, working paper.

Thursday, September 24 th	<p>Issues in Formal Theory Approach to Experimentation & Theory-Based Experiments Seminar Class Critique Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pedro Dal Bo, "Cooperation under the Shadow of the Future: experimental evidence from infinitely repeated games," American Economic Review, December 2005. 2. Chou, Eileen, Margaret McConnell, Rosemarie Nagel and Charles R. Plott "The control of game form recognition in experiments: understanding dominant strategy failures in a simple two person "guessing" game," Experimental Economics, June 2009, Volume 12, Issue 2, pp 159-179 3. Cognition and behavior in two-person guessing games: An experimental study, MA Costa-Gomes, VP Crawford, The American economic review, 1737-1768 4. Card, David, Stefano DellaVigna, and Ulrike Malmendier. 2011. "The Role of Theory in Field Experiments." Journal of Economic Perspectives, 25(3): 39-62.
Tuesday, September 29 th	No Class
Thursday, October 1 st	No Class
Tuesday, Oct. 6 th	<p>First Homework Assignment is Due Validity Lecture Class Required Reading: Morton and Williams Chapter 7</p>
Thursday, Oct. 8 th	<p>Types of Experiments, Location, Artificiality Lecture Class Required Reading: Morton and Williams Chapter 8</p>
Tuesday, Oct. 13 th	No Class, classes meet on a Monday schedule
Thursday, Oct. 15 th	<p>Validity, Location, Artificiality Seminar Class Critique Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Green and Coppock, Assessing the Correspondence between Experimental Results Obtained in the Lab and Field: A Review of Recent Social Science Research, Political Science Research and Methods / Volume 3 / Issue 01 / January 2015, pp 113-131 2. Daniel Balliet and Paul A. M. Van Lange "Trust, Punishment, and Cooperation Across 18 Societies: A Meta-Analysis," Perspectives on Psychological Science July 2013 vol. 8 no. 4 363-379 3. Yanna Krupnikova and Adam Seth Levine, Cross-Sample Comparisons and External Validity, Journal of Experimental Political Science, Volume 1 / Issue 01 / Spring 2014, pp 59-80 4. Kessler and Vesterlund, "The External Validity of Laboratory Experiments: The Misleading Emphasis on Quantitative Effects," working paper

<p>Tuesday, Oct. 20th</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Some Issues in Survey Experiments Seminar Class Critique Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Franco, Malhotra, and Simonovits, "Underreporting in Political Science Survey Experiments: Comparing Questionnaires to Published Results," <i>Political Analysis</i> (Spring 2015) 23 (2): 306-312 2. Jens Hainmueller, Dominik Hangartner, and Teppei Yamamoto, "Validating vignette and conjoint survey experiments against real-world behavior," <i>PNAS</i>, vol. 112 no. 8 3. Roberts, et al. "Structural Topic Models for Open-Ended Survey Responses," <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>, Volume 58, Issue 4, pages 1064–1082, October 2014 4. Graeme Blair, Kosuke Imai, and Jason Lyall, "Comparing and Combining List and Endorsement Experiments: Evidence from Afghanistan," <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>, Volume 58, Issue 4, pages 1043–1063, October 2014
<p>Thursday, Oct. 22nd</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Some Issues in the Field Seminar Class Critique Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sinclair, McConnell, and Green, "Detecting Spillover Effects: Design and Analysis of Multilevel Experiments," <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>, Volume 56, Issue 4, pages 1055–1069, October 2012 2. Grossman and Paler, "Using Field Experiments to Study Political Institutions," <i>Routledge Handbook of Comparative Political Institutions</i> edited by Jennifer Gandhi, Rubén Ruiz-Rufino 3. Ryan T. Moore, "Multivariate Continuous Blocking to Improve Political Science Experiments," <i>Political Analysis</i> (Autumn 2012) 20 (4): 460-479. 4. Günther Finka, Margaret McConnell & Sebastian Vollmer, "Testing for heterogeneous treatment effects in experimental data: false discovery risks and correction procedures," <i>Journal of Development Effectiveness</i> Volume 6, Issue 1, 2014 5. Sarah D. Humpage, "When Are Field Experiments with Individual Assignment Too Risky? Lessons from a Center-Based Child Care Study in Guatemala," <i>Inter-American Development Bank Department of Research and Chief Economist TECHNICAL NOTE No. IDB-TN-469</i>

Tuesday, Oct. 27th	<p style="text-align: center;">Some Issues in Labs-in-the-Field & Virtual Labs Seminar Class Critique Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz, "Evaluating Online Labor Markets for Experimental Research: Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk," <i>Political Analysis</i> (Summer 2012) 20 (3): 351-368. 2. John J. Horton, David G. Rand, Richard J. Zeckhauser, "The online laboratory: conducting experiments in a real labor market," <i>Experimental Economics</i> September 2011, Volume 14, Issue 3, pp 399-425 3. J Haushofer, M Collins, G de Giusti, JM Njoroge, "A Methodology for Laboratory Experiments in Developing Countries: Examples from the Busara Center," working paper, Princeton 4. Saikat Ray Majumder, Daniel Diermeier, Thomas A. Rietz, and Luís A. Nunes Amaral, "Price dynamics in political prediction markets," <i>PNAS</i>, vol. 106 no. 3, 679-684
Thursday, Oct. 29th	No Class
Tuesday, Nov. 3rd	<p style="text-align: center;">Design or Review Proposal Due Choosing Subjects Lecture Class Required Reading: Morton and Williams Chapter 9</p>
Thursday, Nov. 5th	<p style="text-align: center;">Some Issues in Choosing Subjects (More on Comparing Lab Subjects to Field Subjects) Seminar Class Critique Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scott Clifford and Jennifer Jerit, "Is There a Cost to Convenience? An Experimental Comparison of Data Quality in Laboratory and Online Studies," <i>Journal of Experimental Political Science</i> 2. Robert Slonim, Carmen Wang, Ellen Garbarino, Danielle Merrett, "Opting-in: Participation bias in economic experiments," <i>Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization</i>, Volume 90, June 2013, Pages 43-70 3. Armin Falk, Stephan Meier, and Christian Zehnder, "DO LAB EXPERIMENTS MISREPRESENT SOCIAL PREFERENCES? THE CASE OF SELF-SELECTED STUDENT SAMPLES," <i>Journal of the European Economic Association</i>, Volume 11, Issue 4, pages 839-852, August 2013 4. Jan Stoop, "From the lab to the field: envelopes, dictators and manners," <i>Experimental Economics</i>, June 2014, Volume 17, Issue 2, pp 304-313 5. Filippos Exadaktylos, Antonio M. Espín & Pablo Brañas-Garza, <i>Experimental subjects are not different</i>, <i>Scientific Reports</i> 3, Article number: 1213
Tuesday, Nov. 10th	<p style="text-align: center;">Motivating Subjects Lecture Class Required Reading: Morton and Williams Chapter 10</p>

Thursday, Nov. 12 th	<p style="text-align: center;">Some Issues in Motivating Subjects and Between and Within-Subject Designs Seminar Class</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Critique Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Michal Krawczyk, "What brings your subjects to the lab? A field experiment," <i>Experimental Economics</i>, November 2011, Volume 14, Issue 4, pp 482-489 2. Vossler, Christian A.; Doyon, Maurice; Rondeau, Daniel, Truth in Consequentiality: Theory and Field Evidence on Discrete Choice Experiments, <i>American Economic Journal: Microeconomics</i>, Volume 4, Number 4, November 2012, pp. 145-171(27) 3. Amir O, Rand DG, Gal YK (2012) Economic Games on the Internet: The Effect of \$1 Stakes. <i>PLoS ONE</i> 7(2): e31461. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0031461 4. Gary Charness, Uri Gneezy, Michael A. Kuh, "Experimental methods: Between-subject and within-subject design" <i>Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization</i>, Volume 81, Issue 1, January 2012, Pages 1–8
Tuesday, Nov. 17 th	<p style="text-align: center;">Ethics Lecture Class</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Required Reading: Morton and Williams Chapters 11 & 12</p>
Thursday, Nov. 19 th	<p style="text-align: center;">Some Ethical Issues Seminar Class</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Critique Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Macartan Humphreys, Raul Sanchez de la Sierra, Peter van der Windt, "Fishing, Commitment, and Communication: A Proposal for Comprehensive Nonbinding Research Registration," <i>Political Analysis</i> (Winter 2013) 21 (1): 1-20. 2. Lucas C. Coffman and Muriel Niederle, "Pre-Analysis Plans are not the Solution Replications Might Be," working paper 3. Macartan Humphreys, "Reflections on the Ethics of Social Experimentation," working paper. 4. Gregory M. Walton, <i>The New Science of Wise Psychological Interventions</i>, <i>Current Directions in Psychological Science</i> February 2014 vol. 23 no. 1 73-82, see correction: http://cdp.sagepub.com/content/23/2/154.2
Tuesday, Nov. 24 th	<p style="text-align: center;">Deception and Informed Consent Combined Seminar and Lecture Class</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Require Reading: Morton and Williams Chapter 13</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Critique Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. S. Alexander Haslam, Stephen D. Reicher, Kathryn Millard and Rachel McDonald 'Happy to have been of service': The Yale archive as a window into the engaged followership of participants in Milgram's 'obedience' experiments, <i>British Journal of Social Psychology</i>, Volume 54, Issue 1, pages 55–83, March 2015 2. Ilka H. Gleibs, "Turning Virtual Public Spaces into Laboratories: Thoughts on Conducting Online Field Studies Using Social Network Sites," <i>Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy</i>, Volume 14, Issue 1, pages 352–370, December 2014
Thursday, Nov. 26 th	<p style="text-align: center;">No Class, Thanksgiving</p>

Tuesday, Dec. 1 st	Software class
Thursday, Dec. 3 rd	Software class
Tuesday, Dec. 8 th	Software class
Thursday, Dec. 10 th	Software class
Tuesday, Dec. 15 th	Software class