

International Research Methods (INTL 101)

Prof. Nathan Batto

Spring 2007, MWF 9:30-10:50

OH: George Wilson Hall, 1st floor; MW 3:30-4:30, Th 10:00-12:00, and by appointment

Phone: 946-7637

Email: nbatto@pacific.edu

Contributing to what is known about individuals, societies, countries, and the way they interact requires research. Original research involves reading what other people have written on the issue, using your creative skills and your analytical ones to learn more than was known before, communicating that research to others.

In IRM, you will begin to learn the standard research methods used to understand a wide range of topics in the social sciences. We will study both qualitative and quantitative methods. There are three main components in this class. First, you have to learn how to design and carry out a research project generally. Beware! This is the hardest part of the course, because it involves a lot of thinking. Second, within your general understanding of the research project, you have to confront and contemplate a host of issues and problems, ranging from ethical dilemmas, to how to gather evidence, to what type of evidence you need in the first place. The third element of the class will emphasize learning how to use basic statistical methods to evaluate evidence when they are appropriate to the question asked. Relax, this is the easiest part of the course!

Statistics is formulaic; it does not really require any hard thinking.

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- 1) demonstrate an understanding of the scientific method and the elements of a research project.
- 2) demonstrate an understanding of the relationships between important concepts and the theoretical depth of international issues through completing a literature review on a topic of your choosing.
- 3) demonstrate the ability to design and carry out a research project.
- 4) display a basic practical understanding of descriptive and inferential statistics.
- 5) demonstrate an understanding of the complementary relationship between qualitative and quantitative research.

Required Books

Babbie, Earl. *The Basics of Social Research*.

Salkind, Neil. *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*.

Other readings will be on Blackboard.

Your grade will be determined as follows:

1 st Midterm	15%
2 nd Midterm	15%
Final Exam	25%
In-Class presentation	5%
Survey Research Project	10%
Literature Review	20%
Homework assignments	10%

Attendance Policy

You are expected to be in class. Most students have a hard time learning research methods from a book; they have to learn from other people. Because of this, I will have a fairly strict attendance policy. I reserve the right to take attendance at any time, and I will usually start the class by taking attendance. If you are absent more than three times, I will start docking your grade by a third of a letter grade for each additional absence. In other words, your fourth absence will lower your grade from an A to an A-, the fifth absence will make it a B+, and so on. I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences (except under extreme circumstances and at my discretion). If you arrive in class after I have taken roll, you will still be considered absent. In short, be in class.

Academic Honesty

I take cheating very seriously. If you cheat in my class, I will fail you. I will also report you to the Office of Student Life.

Cheating on exams is usually obvious and blatant, but students often are confused about what constitutes plagiarism. I strongly urge you to review the section on plagiarism in your student handbook. As a general rule of thumb, unless an idea is common knowledge, you should cite the source.

Disclaimer

This syllabus is intended to provide an overview over the course. You cannot claim any rights from it. In particular, scheduling and dates may change. I may also choose to add or subtract readings and homework problem sets. Although the syllabus should be a reliable guide for the course, official announcements are always those made in class.

Homework problem sets

At various times throughout the term, especially as we get into the more quantitative parts of the course, I will give you homework problem sets. For almost all students, the best way to learn how to do statistics is to actually do statistical problems repeatedly. We learn by repetition. In addition, by playing with data in SPSS, you will learn that numbers are easy and fun!

Presentations

From Feb 9 to Feb 16, each student will give an in-class presentation. You will have 10-15 minutes for your presentation. One purpose of this exercise is to force you to figure out how to make the most effective presentation in an allotted amount of time, so presentations under 10 minutes will be penalized and you will be cut off when your time is up. We will allow another 5-15 minutes for questions and discussion. You will be graded on how much the rest of the class learns from your presentation, including the quality of questions and comments inspired by your presentation, so make your presentation interesting and informative.

On each day there will be several readings on a particular theme. Your job is to dissect one of the readings for the class. You should briefly introduce the reading and explain its content. Then you should evaluate the research design. What is the research question? What theory or theories are proposed? What hypotheses are drawn? What are the important variables? What kind of data are used? Are there any serious flaws in the research design? How does this reading fit with the other readings for the day?

Survey research project

In groups of two or three you will come up with a general research question that can be addressed through survey research. Once we have approved that, you will come up with a series of appropriate survey questions; we will also have a look at those and make suggestions, etc. Then, you will go out and gather data. In order to do that, you'll have to decide who you are going to ask, how, etc. Are you going to stand on street corners, and you going to survey your dorm, etc.?

Your final project, **due March 23**, should contain the following elements:

- A clear statement and explanation and justification of your general research question
- An explanation about who completed your survey (not names, but why that group) and how they completed it (was it written? Did you ask the questions out loud? Etc.)
- A discussion of the results of your survey: what patterns did you see in the answers? Do you think you asked a good sample of people given your question? How did the people you asked affect your results? Did you get any patterns in the answers you weren't expecting (people interpreted your question differently than you meant), etc? That sort of thing.
- A list of the survey questions you asked, with brief annotations (two sentences) about why you asked the question
- An appendix that contains all your raw data; how many people did you ask, what were their specific responses to each question (an SPSS file with the data). *Remember, you have to respect the confidentiality of your subjects, so just number them in the final report.*
- Not counting the annotated list of questions, or the appendix, your statement of the question and discussion of results should be 3-5 pages in excellent essay form.
- A one-page summary of how the group members divided the work with an estimate of what percentage of the work was done by each person, signed by

each person in the group. If it is evident that one or two members of the group did the bulk of the work, the person who was disrespectful of the group and derelict in their duty can expect a lower final grade.

Literature review.

This project is due to be turned in on **April 23**. Your project will be on a research question approved by me. It should be an essay (roughly 10-15 pages, not counting the bibliography) written in (and graded for) clear, correct, and elegant use of the English language. It should contain the following elements:

- An explanation of the question, and a justification of why that is an interesting and important question (roughly 1 to 1.5 pages)
- The literature review (the *key* part of it) (roughly 8-10 pages)
- An assessment of where the research project could go in light of what you have learned by writing the literature review (roughly 1 page)
- A brief discussion of a methodological approach one might take to answer the question if the project is worth continuing (if you don't feel the questions were satisfactorily answered in the literature) (roughly 1 page)

Whenever researchers have a research question, the first step they must take at that point is to read everything they can about that topic and question in order to find out what other researchers have done. For a large project, that typically means reading hundreds of books and articles. It is entirely possible that someone else has already answered the question to your satisfaction, and if you were going to do a research project, you would need another question (but don't worry about that for this project).

The literature review is NOT a summary of each article on the topic; it is not an LTD or a series of LTDs. It is an essay that summarizes the literature on the subject AS A WHOLE, making reference to specific articles and explaining why you have come to the conclusions about the literature that you have based on those individual articles/books. As a matter of form, each paragraph should be about an idea regarding the literature, not about a particular book or article.

Questions you must consider while preparing to write your literature review: What have other researchers had to say about this subject? What are the important concepts in your research, and how are they related to each other? How are they defined? How have they been measured (operational definitions)? A lot of research projects find themselves sitting at the crossroads of several different literatures. You must read enough to determine what is already out there, to find out what controversies there might be in the literature, what holes there are in the literature, how others have tried to answer the same or similar questions. Also consider historical context. Your written literature review should discuss what others have done in the context of framing your own question and research project. The literature review is critical to a research project. This is the foundation that you will build on. It addresses any number of important issues. What have others already learned about the topic? What relevant questions have they addressed? What theory or theories does the literature contain already? Are these explanations of the social phenomena in question good? Good enough? What hasn't the current literature already done? What empty places are there? Tell us what others have

learned: the literature review should bring a non-specialist up to date so they can then read your research and know what's going on.

A hint about how to organize a literature review: think about all the above questions, and come up with the four or five major points that you want to make about the literature as a whole, and organize your essay around those points. For instance (these points may or may not apply to your specific project; they are just examples of conclusions one could hypothetically reach):

- #1. in this literature, there seems to be a lot of disagreement about what the main concept actually means—then give lots of examples from the specific articles; or everyone agrees on the concept but measures it differently
- #2. in this literature there seems to be a lot of disagreement about whether x is causing y, or y is causing x—then explain, giving examples from specific articles.
- #3. Everyone in this literature seems to use large n studies (or, alternatively, case studies)...then give examples
- #4. Comparison/contrast to be named later....

The quality of your literature review will depend critically on the quality of your choices. You will be graded on the quality of the articles you cite and their relevance to your topic. You must cite at least 15 refereed and relevant articles. You should be aware that you will almost certainly read articles that *aren't useful*; you'll just have to read others that are.

One of the great potential pitfalls to avoid with this project is starting too late to do a good job. Remember, you have to do a thorough library search so that you have a sufficient number of articles to read. You should consult me, or a reference librarian, for help with searching as necessary. When you read each article, you should probably summarize it as if you were writing an LTD. Your analysis of these summaries, especially how they fit together, will be the basis of your written literature review.

This project will take a lot of time, so you can't put it off until the last minute and expect to pass. Keep in mind that professors give themselves *much* more time to write than students typically do, and we have much more experience. You might just want to think about that as you plan.

Notes on Academic Sources

Refereed Journal Articles: Typically, professors must submit their research to referees to get it published. This vetting process involves an editor sending out the research with all identifying marks erased to other professors who are experts in the field. They read it and judge whether it is good enough to merit publication. Most research is actually rejected, not accepted, for publication. Work that is published in these journals represents the best work of the discipline. Typically, the front pages of a journal explain the review process of the journal. Many of the best journals can be found on JSTOR.

Books: There are academic books that go through a refereeing process, but there are also “popular” books that only go through editorial approval. The latter may be interesting and marketable, but they are often not academic-quality research. As a general rule of thumb, books published by a university press of a prestigious research university (such as Stanford University Press, Cambridge University Press, or University of Chicago Press) are of high academic quality. You may consider these books as refereed sources and count them toward your 15 cited sources. Other publishers are usually less stringent and will not count toward your 15 cited sources.

Non-refereed sources: Newspaper articles, magazine articles, internet blogs, wikipedia, and almost any other source you can think of are not refereed. They have not been scrutinized by other experts in the field and are highly unreliable. They may be interesting and informative, but they may also be deeply flawed. There is no quality control. As such, they are not appropriate sources for a literature review.

Course Schedule

Jan 17: Introduction

Jan 19: Elements of research

Read: Babbie ch 1

Jan 22: What's a good research question?

Jan 24-26: Variables and concepts

Read: Babbie ch 4-5

Jan 29: The role of theory in research

Read: Babbie ch 2

Jan 31: Literature reviews

Feb 2-5: Qualitative research

Read: Babbie ch 10-11

Feb 7: The Comparative Method

Read: Lim ch 2 (on Blackboard)

Feb 9-16: In-class presentations (all readings on Blackboard)

Feb 9: What determines the number of parties in a political system?

Riker, William. 1982. "The Two-party System and Duverger's Law: An essay on the History of Political Science." *American Political Science Review* 76,4: 753-66.

Canon, Bradley. 1978. "Factionalism in the South: A Test of Theory and a Revisitation of V.O. Key." *American Journal of Political Science* 22,4: 833-48.

Lipset, Seymour Martin and Stein Rokkan. 1967. "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction." In *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, eds. New York: Free Press. Pp 1-64.

Feb 12: Why did democracy fail in Chile?

Linz, Juan. 1994. "Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does it make a difference?" In *The Failure of Presidential Democracy: Comparative Perspectives*, Juan Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Pp 3-87.

Fuandez, Julio. 1997. "In Defense of Presidentialism: The Case of Chile, 1932-1970." In *Presidentialism and Democracy in Latin America*, Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Shugart, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kinzer, Stephen. 2006. *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*. New York: Henry Holt. Pp 170-94.

Feb 14: How did Taiwan get rich?

Wang, Fang-Yi. 1994. "Reconsidering Export-Led Growth: Evidence from Firm Performance, Taiwan, 1983-1987." In *The Role of the State in Taiwan's Development*, Joel Aberbach, David Dollar, and Kenneth Sokoloff, eds. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Meaney, Constance Squires. 1994. "State Policy and the Development of Taiwan's Semiconductor Industry." In *The Role of the State in Taiwan's Development*, Joel Aberbach, David Dollar, and Kenneth Sokoloff, eds. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Kuo, Cheng-Tian. 1995. *Global Competitiveness and Industrial Growth in Taiwan and the Philippines*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. Ch 1, 3

Feb 16: How does trust in government affect democracy?
 Dalton, Russell. 2004. *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp 157-87.
 Montinola, Gabriella. 2004. "Corruption, Distrust, and the Deterioration of the Rule of Law." In *Distrust*, Russell Hardin, ed. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
 Batto, Nathan. 2005. "The Adverse Consequences of Trust in Government." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association.

Feb 19: HOLIDAY, NO CLASS

Feb 21: Ethics in research
 Read: Babbie ch 3

Feb 23: 1st Midterm (in class)

Feb 26-Mar 5: Survey research and sampling
 Read: Babbie ch 9, 7; Salkind ch 20

Mar 7: Types of variables; validity and reliability
 Read: Salkind ch 1, 16

Mar 9: Measures of central tendency
 Read: Salkind ch 2

Mar 12-16: SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS

Mar 19: Measures of dispersion
 Read: Salkind ch 3

Mar 21: Z-scores
 Read: Salkind ch 4, 7

Mar 23: Survey Research Project due

Mar 23: Confidence intervals
 Read: Salkind ch 6

Mar 26-30: Hypothesis testing
 Read: Salkind ch 8; Babbie ch 14

Apr 2-4: t-tests
 Read: Salkind ch 9-10

Apr 6: ANOVA
 Read: Salkind ch 11-12

Apr 9: HOLIDAY, NO CLASS

Apr 11: Methods in Anthropology

Apr 13: 2nd Midterm (in class)

Apr 16: Association and correlation
 Read: Salkind ch 5, 13

Apr 18-23: Bivariate relations
 Read: Salkind ch 14-15

Apr 23: Literature Review due

Apr 25-May 4: Controlling for Third Variables

May 7: Conclusion