

From Concept to Measure: Empirical Inquiry in Social Science

Fall 2023

Mondays, 1:30-3:20pm

Rosenkranz Hall, Room 202

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-4pm in RKZ 213 (or by appointment)
Signup: <https://calendly.com/sarah-khan/office-hours>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on a specific aspect of the research design process: the operationalization of abstract concepts into concrete measures that can be used for analysis and inference. The task of measurement is common to qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method research, and this course will draw on lessons from varied approaches.

Course readings will span:

1. “classic” theoretical texts dealing with broad concepts of interest to political scientists
2. empirical work that develops/applies novel strategies to measure foundational concepts
3. work that combines conceptualization (developing new concepts and/or reimagining old ones) and measurement

This course is intended for graduate students in the process of designing original research, and is also open to advanced undergraduate students (juniors and seniors) with an interest in social science research.

On Readings: All readings are available freely online. I will upload copies of any readings not easily available to the course Canvas Modules page. I prefer that students engage in depth with each text, rather than skimming a large number of pages and have tried to keep required readings to a manageable amount. If you would like further reading recommendations on a particular method or substantive topic, please get in touch as I am always happy to provide those. [Here](#) is an interview with Jacqueline Woodson on the power of slow reading.

COURSE FORMAT

This course is a seminar, which will meet in person. We will meet once a week during the designated class time.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation.....20%

This is a reading intensive and discussion based course. Students are expected to closely read the required texts before each week's seminar and come prepared to discuss the readings.

Reading Critiques x 3.....30%

Students will write three short critique papers (2-3 pages, double spaced, 12pt font) in weeks of their choice addressing issues of measurement in an empirical piece for a particular week. I have added an asterisk to readings suitable for this assignment.

See the following guidelines for a checklist of things to look out for when reading a paper. For this class focus especially on issues of measure validity and measurement error. <https://macartan.github.io/teaching/how-to-critique>

PDFs/Word documents can be uploaded to Canvas by midnight on the Sunday prior to the class meeting in which we will discuss the reading.

Please aim to write a critique of a paper that is **not** a choice for your alternate measurement strategy presentation (see next item). All readings with an asterisk are suitable for this assignment. However if you are writing a book review for your final assignment then please do not choose from the books in Week 13 for your reading critique(s).

Alternate Measurement Strategy.....15%

Students will make individual presentations proposing an alternative measurement strategy for an empirical paper/chapter in a week of choice. We will determine a presentation schedule during the second class meeting.

A presentation should be approximately 20 minutes, summarize the measurement strategy from the paper, and present the alternative(s). Slides are encouraged. Readings with an asterisk (except the books in Week 13) are suitable for this assignment.

This presentation is also required of auditors/guest students in the course.

For Graduate Students:

Original Research Design.....35%

The final assignment for this course is a 12-15 page (double spaced, 12pt font) research design document focused heavily on the measurement strategy for a key concept in the research design. This may be an elaboration of a part of a dissertation prospectus, or a separate study altogether.

Alternate Option For Undergraduate Students:

Concept & Measure Review.....35%
Undergraduate students have the option to instead complete a 7-10 page (double spaced, 12pt font) analytical review of a chosen concept and its empirical measurement overtime. Reviews should critically assess the work of concept development and measurement strategies from scholarly texts, using a criteria of measurement validity developed from readings in the first part of the course.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. You will have 1 excused absence during the semester – no questions asked. In case of illness, other obligations, or conflict with a religious observance, please email me to arrange an appropriate accommodation.

Email:

In general, email should be used for logistical and short queries and you can expect a reply within 24hrs during weekdays. More substantive questions and concerns should be brought to office hours, where I look forward to seeing you!

Grading:

Grades will be allocated along the following scale

A:	93-100	C+:	77-79	D-:	60-62
A-:	90-92	C+:	73-76	F:	Below 60
B+:	87-89	C-:	70-72		
B:	83-86	D+:	67-69		
B-:	80-82	D:	63-66		

Late Work: Late work will be downgraded by 1/3rd of a letter grade (A to A-, A- to B+ etc.) for each day after the deadline. If you require an extension for any reason, please email me to arrange this.

Academic Integrity: It is your responsibility to be aware of the various forms of academic dishonesty and plagiarism, related university regulations, and to adhere to these regulations. Ignorance will not constitute an excuse for violation.

Undergraduates: Please refer to the Yale College Undergraduate Regulations (<http://catalog.yale.edu/undergraduate-regulations/>) for more detail, and to these

guidelines on the use of sources_ (<https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/using-sources>) for guidance on how to appropriately cite sources in your work

Disability: I will work to provide the appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. Please contact the Yale University Resource Office on Disabilities to discuss your needs and request accommodations.

Inclusivity and Classroom Climate: An inclusive and safe learning environment for all students is a priority for this course. Please be aware that if you discuss an incident of potential sexual misconduct¹ with the professor or teaching fellows, we are obligated to inform the college's Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident. The coordinators will not take action or plan response without the complainant's consent and can be asked to maintain confidentiality.

PART I: Introduction

Friday 09/01 Week 1: Introduction

(Note that the first class meets on Friday, Sept. 1)

- Gerring, John. "What makes a concept good? A criterial framework for understanding concept formation in the social sciences." *Polity* 31.3 (1999): 357-393.
- Adcock, Robert, and David Collier. "Measurement Validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research." *American Political Science Review* 95.3 (2001): 529-546

Read any 1 of the following pieces:

- Knight, Kathleen. "Transformations of the Concept of Ideology in the Twentieth Century." *American Political Science Review* 100.4 (2006): 619-626.
- Weyland, Kurt. "Clarifying a contested concept: Populism in the study of Latin American politics." *Comparative politics* (2001): 1-22.

Monday 09/04 Labor Day, No Class Meeting

09/11 Week 2: What is at Stake with Conceptualization & Measurement

- Karim, Sabrina, and Daniel Hill. "The study of gender and women in cross-national political science research: Rethinking concepts and measurement." *[selected chapters]*
- Wuttke, Alexander, Christian Schimpf, and Harald Schoen. "When the whole is greater than the sum of its parts: On the conceptualization and

¹ See here for a definition and information on policies: <https://smr.yale.edu/find-policies-information/yale-sexual-misconduct-policies-and-related-definitions>

- measurement of populist attitudes and other multidimensional constructs." *American Political Science Review* 114.2 (2020): 356-374.
- Jefferson, Hakeem. Jefferson, Hakeem. "The curious case of Black conservatives: construct validity and the 7-point liberal-conservative scale." *Available at SSRN 3602209* (2020).

09/18 Week 3: Concept Formation, Typologies & Categories

- Jones, Charles O. 1974. "Doing Before Knowing: Concept Development in Political Research." *American Journal of Political Science* 18, No. 1: 215-228
- Collier, David, Jody LaPorte, and Jason Seawright. "Putting typologies to work: Concept formation, measurement, and analytic rigor." *Political Research Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2012): 217-232

Read any 2 of the following pieces as examples of typologies:

1. Mares, Isabela and Lauren Young. *Conditionality and Coercion: Electoral Clientelism in Eastern Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2019. [Chapter 2]
2. Wood, E. J. (2018). Rape as a practice of war: Toward a typology of political violence. *Politics & Society*, 46(4), 513-537.
3. Yashar, Deborah J. *Contesting citizenship in Latin America: The rise of indigenous movements and the postliberal challenge*. Cambridge University Press, 2005. [Chapters 1 and 2]
4. Helmke, Gretchen, and Steven Levitsky. "Informal institutions and comparative politics: A research agenda." *Perspectives on politics* 2, no. 4 (2004): 725-740.

PART II: MEASUREMENT CHALLENGES ACROSS RESEARCH METHODS

09/25 Week 4: Bias, Validity and Reliability: Perspectives from Survey Methods

- King, Gary, et al. "Enhancing the validity and cross-cultural comparability of measurement in survey research." *American Political Science Review* 98.1 (2004): 191-207.*
- Blair, Graeme, Alexander Coppock, and Margaret Moor. "When to Worry about Sensitivity Bias: A Social Reference Theory and Evidence from 30 Years of List Experiments." *American Political Science Review* 114.4 (2020): 1297-1315.
- Thachil, Tariq. "Improving Surveys Through Ethnography: Insights from India's Urban Periphery." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 53.3 (2018): 281-299.

Read at least 1 of the following pieces:

1. Adida, C. L., Ferree, K. E., Posner, D. N., & Robinson, A. L. (2016). Who's asking? Interviewer coethnicity effects in African survey data. *Comparative Political Studies*, 49 (12), 1630-1660.*
2. Di Maio, Michele, and Nathan Fiala. "Be Wary of Those Who Ask: A Randomized Experiment on the Size and Determinants of the Enumerator Effect." (2018).*
3. Davis, Darren W., and Brian D. Silver. "Stereotype threat and race of interviewer effects in a survey on political knowledge." *American Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 1 (2003): 33-45.*
4. Blaydes, Lisa, and Rachel M. Gillum. "Religiosity-of-interviewer effects: Assessing the impact of veiled enumerators on survey response in Egypt." *Politics and Religion* 6, no. 3 (2013): 459-482.*
5. Press, Julie E., and Eleanor Townsley. "Wives and Husbands' Housework Reporting: Gender, Class, and Social Desirability." *Gender & Society* 12.2 (1998): 188-218.*

10/02 Week 5: Bias, Validity and Reliability: Perspectives from Archival Methods

- Lustik, Ian S. 1996. "History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias." *American Political Science Review* 90(3): 605-618.
- Cirone, Alexandra, and Arthur Spirling. "Turning history into data: data collection, measurement, and inference in HPE." *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 1.1 (2021): 127-54.
- Davenport, Christian, and Patrick Ball. "Views to a kill: Exploring the implications of source selection in the case of Guatemalan state terror, 1977-1995." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 3 (2002): 427-450.

Read one pair of the following readings:

Pair 1:

- Lee, Alexander. "Who becomes a terrorist? Poverty, education, and the origins of political violence." *World Politics* (2011): 203-245.*
- Lee, Alexander. "The Library of Babel: How (and How Not) to Use Archival Sources in Political Science." *Journal of Historical Political Economy* 2.3 (2022): 1-39.

OR

Pair 2:

- Garfias, Francisco, and Emily A. Sellars. "Epidemics, Rent Extraction, and the Value of Holding Office." *Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy* 1.4 (2020): 559-583.*
- Sellars, Emily. "Archival Silences and Historical Political Economy" *Broadstreet Blog*. October 21, 2020

10/09 Week 6: Bias, Validity and Reliability: Perspectives from Qualitative Methods

- Allina-Pisano, Jessica. "How to tell an axe murderer: An essay on ethnography, truth, and lies." In *Political ethnography: What immersion contributes to the study of power* (2009): 53-73.
- Walsh, Katherine Cramer, and Edward Schatz. "Scholars as citizens: studying public opinion through ethnography." *Political ethnography: What immersion contributes to the study of power* (2009): 165-82.
- Fujii, Lee Ann. 2010. "[Shades of Truth and Lies: Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence.](#)" *Journal of Peace Research* 47 (2) (March 1): 231 – 241.
- Thaler, Kai M. "Reflexivity and Temporality in Researching Violent Settings: Problems with the Replicability and Transparency Regime." *Geopolitics* (2019): 1-27.

PART III: FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS AND HOW OTHERS HAVE MEASURED THEM

10/16 Week 7: Power

Concepts

- Dahl, Robert A. "The concept of power." *Behavioral science* 2, no. 3 (1957): 201-215.
- Lukes, Steven, 1974. *Power: A Radical View*, London: Macmillan.
- Allen, Amy. "Rethinking power." *Hypatia* 13, no. 1 (1998): 21-40.

Empirics

- Mendelberg, Tali, and Christopher F. Karpowitz. "Power, gender, and group discussion." *Political Psychology* 37 (2016): 23-60.*
- Hart, Jeffrey. "Three approaches to the measurement of power in international relations." *International organization* 30.2 (1976): 289-305.*
- John Gaventa (2019) Power and powerlessness in an Appalachian Valley – revisited, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 46:3, 440-456, DOI: [10.1080/03066150.2019.1584192](https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2019.1584192)

10/23 Week 8: Preferences

Please be ready to introduce your idea for the final assignment to the class.

Concepts

- Druckman, James N., and Arthur Lupia. "Preference formation." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3.1 (2000): 1-24.

- Nussbaum, Martha C. "Symposium on Amartya Sen's philosophy: 5 Adaptive preferences and women's options." *Economics & Philosophy* 17.1 (2001): 67-88.

Empirics

- Levitt, Steven D., and John A. List. "What do laboratory experiments measuring social preferences reveal about the real world?." *Journal of Economic perspectives* 21.2 (2007): 153-174.
- Khan, Sarah. "Count Me Out: Women's Unexpressed Preferences." *Working Paper*. 2019*
- Buckley, Noah, et al. "Endogenous popularity: How perceptions of support affect the popularity of authoritarian regimes." *American Political Science Review* (2023): 1-7.*
- Lindsey, Summer. "Social Preferences: Measuring Private, Public, and Group Preferences through Focus Groups." *Perspectives on Politics* (2022): 1-20.*

10/30 Week 9: Norms²

2-page outline of final research design due

Concepts

- Bicchieri, Cristina. *The grammar of society: The nature and dynamics of social norms*. Cambridge University Press, 2005. [select chapters]
- Benabou, Roland, and Jean Tirole. *Laws and norms*. No. w17579. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011.

Empirics

- Anoll, Allison P. "What makes a good neighbor? Race, place, and norms of political participation." *American Political Science Review* 112.3 (2018): 494-508.*
- Bursztyn, Leonardo, Georgy Egorov, and Stefano Fiorin. "From extreme to mainstream: The erosion of social norms." *American economic review* 110.11 (2020): 3522-3548.*

11/06 Week 10: Identity

Concepts

² Note that this unit focuses on social norms, with application to the study of political behavior. This does not cover the extensive literature on norms in international relations.

- Kalin, Michael, and Nicholas Sambanis. "How to think about social identity." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (2018): 239-257.
- Chandra, Kanchan. "What is ethnic identity and does it matter?." *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 9 (2006): 397-424
- Monroe, Kristen Renwick, James Hankin, and Renée Bukovchik Van Vechten. "The psychological foundations of identity politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3.1 (2000): 419-447.

Empirics

- Sen, Maya, and Omar Wasow. "Race as a bundle of sticks: Designs that estimate effects of seemingly immutable characteristics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19 (2016).*
- Spry, Amber (2021). "Identity Experiments: Design challenges and opportunities for studying race and ethnic politics." In *Advances In Experimental Political Science*. James N. Druckman and Donald P. Green (eds.). Forthcoming, Cambridge University Press.*
- *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists*, edited by Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott [select chapters]

11/13 Week 11: Status

Concepts

- Ridgeway, Cecilia L. "Why status matters for inequality." *American Sociological Review* 79.1 (2014): 1-16.
- Mendelberg, Tali. "Status, Symbols, and Politics: A Theory of Symbolic Status Politics." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 8.6 (2022): 50-68.

Empirics

- Suryanarayan, Pavithra. "Status Politics Hollows out the State: Evidence from Colonial India" *Working Paper**
- Thal, Adam. "The desire for social status and economic conservatism among affluent Americans." *American Political Science Review* 114.2 (2020): 426-442.*
- McClendon, Gwyneth H. *Envy in politics*. Vol. 5. Princeton University Press, 2018. [extracts]*

11/20 Thanksgiving Break; Class Does Not Meet

11/27 Week 12: Representation

Concepts

- Mansbridge, Jane. "Rethinking representation." *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 4 (2003): 515-528.
- Powell Jr, G. Bingham. "Political representation in comparative politics." *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 7 (2004): 273-296.
- Disch, Lisa. "Toward a mobilization conception of democratic representation." *American Political Science Review* 105.1 (2011): 100-114.

Empirics

- Wahman, Michael, Nikolaos Frantzeskakis, and Tefvik Murat Yildirim. "From Thin to Thick Representation: How a Female President Shapes Female Parliamentary Behavior." *American Political Science Review* (2021): 1-19.*
- Bussell, Jennifer. "Political Responsiveness in a Patronage Democracy." *Clients and Constituents*. Oxford University Press chapter 2*

PART IV: WRAP-UP

12/4 Week 13: Research Design Workshop

Students will present their research designs in progress and provide feedback on each others' designs

Final Assignments Due Via Canvas by midnight on Monday 12/18