

Professor Jeffrey Karp
jeffrey.karp@brunel.ac.uk 20 Credits
Office Hours: Tuesday 11:00-12:30; Thursday 12:00-1:30

PP2611 (2020-21 Term 2)
Brunel University London
Version: 11.01.21

Explaining Politics: Quantitative Political Science in Practice

Introduction: In this module, we will focus on the use of quantitative methods because this is the most widely used methodology in political science today. By the end of the module, you should have an enhanced understanding of why political scientists rely on numbers and what implications this has for understanding real world political problems. We will focus on data analysis, introducing you to some of the basic statistical skills employed in political science. You will learn SPSS, a user-friendly statistical software program, which will give you the opportunity to analyse real political data. At the end of the course, we hope that you will be comfortable not only reading and interpreting material that relies on quantitative data but also using data in your own research.

Main Aims

- To provide students with the skills to analyse political data
- To introduce methods for gathering and understanding data
- To encourage students to critically engage with the use of existing statistical data in political discourse
- To demonstrate the importance of quantitative analysis in domestic and international politics

Reading List

The readings can be accessed online through Talis.

CORE TEXTS (available as e-books)

Marchant-Shapiro, Theresa. 2015. *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers*. Sage Publications.

Pallant, Julia. 2020. *SPSS Survival Manual: A Step by Step Guide to Data Analysis*. 7th Edition. Routledge.

Shively, W. Phillips. 2017. *The Craft of Political Research* 10th Edition. Routledge.

COMPUTER LAB SESSIONS

You will be assigned to a weekly lab session which will be conducted online.

You will be given some problem sets that will provide you with the skills necessary to complete your final project. **Warning: If you do not attend the lab sessions you will not be able to complete the final assignment.**

SCHEDULE

Week 16 (11 January)

Lecture 1: Introduction

Shively, Ch. 1 “Doing Research” in *Craft of Research*.

Bond, Jon. 2007. “The Scientification of the Study of Politics: Some Observations on the Behavioral Evolution in Political Science” in *Journal of Politics* 69(4): 897-907.

Crichton, Michael. 2008. “Aliens Cause Global Warming.” Excerpt of speech in *The Wall Street Journal*, 7 November.

Robison, Joshua et al. 2018. “An Audit of Political Behavior Research” *Sage Open* 8(3): 1-14.
DOI: 10.1177/2158244018794769

Week 17 (18 January)

Lecture 2: Why Count? Making Observations with Numbers

Computer Lab 1: Introduction to SPSS

Pallant, Ch. 3 “Getting to Know IBM SPSS Statistics” in *SPSS Survival Manual*

Shively, Ch. 2 “Political Theories and Research Topics” in *Craft of Research*.

Marchant-Shapiro, Ch. 2: “Measurement: Counting the Biggel-Balls” in *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers*.

Gardner, Dana. 2013. “With big data, the DNC turns politics into political science”
BriefingsDirect. October 17.

Fowler, James. 2008. “The Colbert Bump in Campaign Donations: More Truthful than Truthy,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 41: 533-539.

Brady, Henry et al. 2001. “Law and Data: The Butterfly Ballot Episode.” *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 34: 59-69.

Bond, Robert M. et al. 2012. “A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization” *Nature* 489: 295-298.

Week 18 (25 January)

Lecture 3: Reliability

Computer Lab 2: Datasets

Nagler, Jonathan. 1995. “Coding Style and Good Computing Practices.” *PS: Political Science* 28(September): 488-492.

Marchant-Shapiro, Ch. 1: “The Political Use of Numbers: Lies and Statistics” in *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers*”

Shively, Ch. 4: “Problems of Measurement: Accuracy” in *Craft of Research*.

Maltzman, Forrest and Paul J. Wahlbeck. 1996. “Inside the U.S. Supreme Court: The Reliability of the Justices’ Conference Records” *Journal of Politics*. 58: 528-539.

Constance, Holden. 2009 “America’s Uncounted Millions” in *Science* Vol. 324 (5930: 1008-1009).

Week 19 (1 February)

Lecture 4: Validity

Gladwell, Malcolm. 2001. “Examined Life: What Stanley Kaplan Taught us about the SAT,” *The New Yorker*, December 17.

Steiner, Nils D. 2014. “Comparing Freedom House Democracy Scores to Alternative Indices and Testing for Political Bias: Are US Allies Rated as More Democratic by Freedom House?” in *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*

Holmes, Steven A. 1994. “THE NATION; You’re Smart If You Know What Race You Are” *New York Times*. October 23.

Karp, Jeffrey A. and David Brockington. 2005. “Social Desirability and Response Validity: A Comparative Analysis of Over-Reporting Voter Turnout in Five Countries” *Journal of Politics*. 67(3): 825-840.

Elkins, Z. 2000. “Gradations of Democracy? Empirical Tests of Alternative Conceptualizations.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 44:293-300.

Computer Lab 3: Running Descriptive Statistics

Pallant, Ch. 6 “Descriptive Statistics” in *SPSS Survival Manual*

Week 20 (8 February)

Lecture 5: Levels of Measurement

Shively, Ch. 5: “Problems of Measurement: Precision” in *Craft of Research*.

Marchant-Shapiro. Ch 3: “Measures of Central Tendency: That’s Some Mean Baseball” in *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers*.

Marchant-Shapiro, “Ch. 4: Measures of Dispersion: Missing the Mark” in *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers*”

Computer Lab 4: Using SPSS Syntax and Recoding Variables

Pallant, Ch. 8 “Manipulating the Data” in *SPSS Survival Manual*

Week 21 (15 February):

No Class, Reading Week

Week 22 (22 February)

22 February: Assignment #1 Due

Lecture 6: Graphical Illustrations and Visualizing Data

Marchant-Shapiro, Ch 8: “Describing the Pattern: What Do You See?” in *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers*.

Computer Lab 5: Producing Graphs

Pallant, Ch. 7 “Using Graphs to Describe and Explore the Data” in *SPSS Survival Manual*

Week 23 (1 March)

Lecture 7: Hypothesis Testing and Statistical Significance

Marchant-Shapiro, Ch. 7 “Hypothesis Testing: Examining Relationships” in *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers*.

Marchant-Shapiro, Ch. 8 “Describing the Pattern: What do You See? in *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers*.

Marchant-Shapiro, Ch. 9 “Chi-Square and Cramer’s V: What do you Expect? in *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers*.

Computer Lab 6: Crosstabs

Pallant, Ch. 16 “Non-Parametric Statistics” in *SPSS Survival Manual*

Week 24 (8 March)

Lecture 8: Bivariate Relationships

Shively, Ch. 8: “Introduction to Statistics: Measuring Relationships for Interval Data” in *Craft of Research*.

Shively, Ch. 9 “Introduction to Statistics: Further Topics on Measurement of Relationships” in *Craft of Research*.

Marchant-Shapiro, Ch. 10 “Measures of Association: Making Connections” in *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers*.

Computer Lab 7: Measures of Association

Pallant, Ch. 11 “Correlation” in *SPSS Survival Manual*

Week 25 (15 March)

Lecture 8: Multivariate Relationships

Shively, Ch. 6: “Causal Thinking and Design of Research” in *Craft of Research*.

Marchant-Shapiro, Ch. 11 “Multivariate Relationships: Taking Control” in *Statistics for Political Analysis: Understanding the Numbers*.

Computer Lab 8: Controlling for Other Variables

Pallant, Ch. 10 “Choosing the Right Statistic” in *SPSS Survival Manual*

Week 26 (22 March)

Lecture 9: Feed Forward: Preparing Your Essay

Week 27-30 (29 March-6 April): Easter Break

26 April: Assignment #2 Due

ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

All students are expected to keep up to date by watching pre-recorded videos on the week that they are scheduled and attending lab sessions regularly as those who fail to attend often get lower marks than those who do attend, and actively participate. ***This course, given the nature of the material and the skills required to complete the assessment, requires your regular attendance.*** It is in class where students learn subject matter and skills that they will be assessed on and when writing references members of staff often comment on a student’s performance in classes.

ASSESSMENTS

Assessment (<i>presentation, Essay 1, Essay 2, exam, etc.</i>)	Submission Deadline	Feedback mechanism and date
Essay (30% of grade). 1500 words.	22 February, 2021	Written feedback by 15 March, 2021
Empirical Essay (70% of grade) 3000 words.	26 April, 2021	Written feedback by 17 May, 2021

Assignment #1

Select one of the journal articles listed below and write an essay (1500 words) where you address the following:

- Briefly summarise the research question and the main concepts
- What is the hypothesis?
- What are the independent and dependent variables and how are they measured?
- Select another journal article by a different author(s) that investigates one of the same concepts but is measured in a different way.
- Describe how the concept has been measured.
- Compare and contrast the measurement of the concepts in the two articles and explain which is the better measure in terms of both reliability and validity.
- Include the full citation of the journal article that you select in your references using the same citation format as used below.

Please use double spacing with 12 point font and one inch margins.

Bol, Damien, Marco Giani, Andre Blais, and Peter J. Loewen. 2020. "The Effect of COVID-19 Lockdowns on Political Support: Some Good News for Democracy?" *European Journal of Political Research*. Online 19 May. doi: 10.1111/1475-6765.12401

Nai, Alessandro., Ferran Martinez i Coma, and Jurgen Maier. 2019. "Donald Trump, Populism, and the Age of Extremes: Comparing the Personality Traits and Campaigning Style of Trump and Other Leaders Worldwide", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. 49(3): 609-643.

Malik, Rabia. 2019. "Transparency, Elections, and Pakistani Politicians' Tax Compliance" *Comparative Political Studies*, 53(7): 1060–1091.

Meyer, Thomas M., Martin Haselmayer, and Markus Wagner. 2020. "Who Gets into the Papers? Party Campaign Messages and the Media". *British Journal of Political Science*, 50(1), 281-302.

Assignment #2

This assignment consists of a research paper (maximum 3,000 words) that addresses the question of why Labour lost the 2019 General Election. You will use SPSS to conduct an original empirical analysis using data from the **2019 British Election Study**. A link to the datafile will be provided on BBL.

The paper should include the following:

Introduction

- (1) Consider an explanation for why Labour lost the 2019 General Election based on a brief literature review.
- (2) Specify a main hypothesis and identify and discuss at least one rival hypothesis. The rival hypothesis should have the same dependent variable as the main hypothesis but a different independent variable.

Research Methods

- (1) Describe the data source
- (2) Identify the dependent and independent variables and explain how they are measured.
- (3) Evaluate the measures in terms of their reliability and validity.
- (4) Report how the dependent variable is distributed in a figure.

Findings

- (1) Select an appropriate method for testing the main hypothesis and explain why the method was chosen.
- (2) Explain whether the null hypothesis has been rejected using the appropriate statistic.
- (3) If the null hypothesis has been rejected, summarise the strength of the relationship using an appropriate measure of association and discuss the findings.
- (4) Do the same for the rival hypothesis and explain whether it has (or has not) been ruled out by using it as a control variable.
- (5) Report the findings from the analysis in a series of tables and/or figures that were produced from the SPSS output.

Conclusions

- (1) Reflect on the implications of your findings, compare them with the secondary literature, and propose what further research might be done.
- (2) Include a full list of references.
- (3) Attach the original SPSS output to the end.

The following criteria will be taken into consideration in assessing the project:

- Indications of capability in computer aided analysis of quantitative data
- Understanding of statistical and quantitative techniques;
- Ability to relate data analysis results to findings in the secondary literature;
- Presentation, structure, style, referencing, grammar and spelling.

Please report the total word count on the title page and use double spacing with 12 point font and one inch margins.

The following criteria will be taken into consideration in assessing the project:

- Indications of capability in computer aided analysis of quantitative data
- Understanding of statistical and quantitative techniques;
- Ability to relate data analysis results to findings in the secondary literature;
- Ability to clearly present results in tables and figures;
- Structure, style, referencing, grammar and spelling.

Note on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as “To take and use as one’s own the thoughts, writings or inventions of another” (Oxford English Dictionary). It is important you understand the rules and regulations with regards to plagiarism and that you reference your coursework appropriately. More information and referencing guidance is available in the College Student Handbook: [College Student Handbook/Teaching Matters/Referencing](#)

Submitting Coursework

As per the [College Student Handbook](#) and [College Coursework Submission Procedure](#), formal coursework submissions must be made via *WiseFlow only*. On no account will we accept any coursework via any other means. So, if you attempt to, or actually submit it to, a lecturer, the Taught Programmes Office (TPO) or to anyone else, either in person or via email, we will not accept it, and we will not look at it or mark it. This is the case for those with extenuating circumstances and for those without extenuating circumstances. Any coursework not submitted via *WiseFlow* will be deemed to have not been submitted.

While submitting your coursework online, you must use the e-coversheet available on Blackboard Learn in the folder called ‘*How to submit*’ available on the main page of each module. In this folder you will also find a video and a written description of the coursework submission process.

Please note that we will not accept coursework submitted in any other file format than this/those prescribed on the coursework brief’s submission instructions section. We do not accept any document ending in ‘.pages’, and if you choose to use a Mac, you should be aware that this is not supported by the University and there are sometimes technical ‘issues’ caused when you choose to do so. What ‘technical issues’? It might be that the document is not openable (the most likely) or that something is deleted. After submitting your coursework to *WiseFlow*, please check that it is actually there. Do not rely on simply pressing the ‘submit’ button *hoping* that it has been submitted and it is on *WiseFlow*. Go back in, and check, that it is actually there. Because, if you discover, later, that it is not then this will be an error on your part for which the university cannot be held accountable.

Late submissions of coursework

The late submission policy has changed as of September 2016. How ‘late coursework’ is handled and who to get in contact with is detailed in the College Student Handbook in the ‘Late Submission Policy’ and ‘Mitigating Circumstances’ sections: [College Student Handbook/Assessment and Award/Late submission policy](#)

Academic support

A full list of the Departments academic staff profiles and contact details can be found online at: <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/cbass/politics-history-law/people>. It is useful to note that Brunel staff email addresses usually use the format of: Firstname.Surname@brunel.ac.uk. Academic staff will normally respond to student emails within 2 working days.

During term time, all academic staff have feedback and consultation hours for personal tutees and for students taking their modules. These will normally be posted on the academic member of staff’s door and published on the TPO page on Blackboard Learn. Students may use these hours to follow up aspects of the modular/study or assessment block or to discuss their studies. You can go to an office hour on your own or in a small group.

Out of term time, academic staff are still available for discussions and meetings (for personal tutees and for Dissertation tutees), but often work from home or are on annual leave. Therefore, it is advisable to contact them by email to arrange an appointment.

More information on academic support can be found in the student handbook: [College Student Handbook/Teaching Matters/Academic Support](#).