But is it true?

--Aaron Wildavsky

Science is a mechanism, a way of trying to improve your knowledge of nature. It's a system for testing your thoughts against the universe, and seeing whether they match.

--Isaac Asimov (1989)

Method without substance may be sterile, but substance without method is only fortuitously substantial.

--V.O. Key (1958 APSA Presidential Address)

God gave to physics all of the easy problems and left to the social sciences all of the hard problems.

--Anonymous pessimist (paraphrased, possibly attributed to physicist Niels Bohr)

Course Description

Scholars, concerned observers, and the mass public raise a wide range of questions about human behavior and the workings of human society. But how do we develop the answers to these questions, and how do we know whether our answers are reasonable? Many people have (informed and uninformed) opinions about these questions, but the task of social scientists is to conduct research that permits us to answer these questions in a systematic, definitive way. Answers to questions about human behavior do not magically appear—rather, they are developed through careful study and analysis, through the use of carefully crafted rules of evidence. Even things that are thought to be obvious to casual observers are sometime found to be wrong when subjected to systematic empirical analysis.

The purpose of this course is to provide a broad overview of research methodology and empirical analysis in the social sciences. This course is not about what we know about human behavior and the working of human society, but rather how we "know" about these things. Put another way, how do we design research projects about the social, economic, psychological, and political worlds so that we can be confident in the answers that we get at the end of the research process?
Course Requirements and Evaluation

Each student will be evaluated on the basis of the following:

- Research design paper: 30%
- Midterm examination: 30%
- Final examination: 30%
- Class participation: 10%

Grades will be based on the tradition 10-point scale (90%+ an "A," 80-89% a "B," etc.).

1. **Research Design Paper.** A major research design paper will be required of all students. This paper will involve the design of an original empirical research project on a topic of each student’s own choosing that addresses a research question of interest to social scientists. Each student will be expected to design a research project that could be used to evaluate the empirical validity of a single testable hypothesis or set of testable hypotheses pertaining to the phenomenon under study.

Each student should begin to consider possible research topics as soon as possible, and should consult with the instructor about potential topics and relevant literature. Each student is expected to obtain approval of the selected topic from the instructor before beginning work, and should be prepared to work closely with the instructor in fine-tuning the proposed research.

All research design papers are due on Friday, May 3, 2013. Late papers will be marked down the equivalent of a full letter grade (i.e., 10 points) for the first 0-24 hours the paper is late, as well as an additional letter grade for each subsequent 24 hours the paper is late. All papers should be (1) typed (double spaced), (2) written in accordance with the *APSR* style manual, proofread for mistakes, and (4) neat and professionally presented. Each student must submit an electronic version of the paper in either Word or .pdf format.

In order to facilitate the completion of papers by the end of the semester, the following timeline for various components of the paper should be met:

- February 15: Selection of paper topic (Note: submit to instructor)
- March 15: Draft of introduction and literature review completed
- April 5: Draft of theory and research design sections
- May 3: Final paper completed (Note: submit to instructor)

Detailed information pertaining to the research design paper will be provided in a separate handout.

2. **Midterm Examination.** A comprehensive midterm examination covering all material from the first half of the course will be required for all students. Information pertaining to the format of the midterm examination will be provided to all students prior to the exam.

3. **Final Examination.** A comprehensive final examination covering all material from the second half of the course will be required for all students. Information pertaining to the format of the final examination will be provided to all students prior to the exam.

4. **Class Participation.** Class participation and preparedness are major components of evaluation in 4000-level courses. Each student will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of informed participation and contribution to seminar discussion. Specifically, each student is expected (1) to attend every class meeting, (2) to have read and reflected upon all assigned readings before class, and (3) to be prepared to discuss critically the issues raised in the literature during the seminar meeting. Contributions to class discussion will be evaluated on the basis of both quantity and quality of informed discussion. A class participation grade of 0 will be assigned to students who have an unexcused absence from class on a given day.
The midterm and final exams are mandatory, and make-up exams will be given only under special circumstances. Students who have a serious pre-arranged conflict with an exam are expected to contact the instructor in writing no later than three days prior to the exam. Students who are ill on exam day or who have a family or personal emergency are expected to contact the instructor in writing prior to the exam (preferred) or no later than 24 hours after the exam period to be permitted to take a make-up exam.

Required Reading

The following book has been ordered and is available at the University bookstore:


In addition to this book, there are additional readings that will be required for the course. All additional readings will be made available to students via email or on the course Moodle page. Each student is expected to complete readings prior to the class for which they are assigned.

Office Hours

Garand:  Monday and Wednesday, 2:00 to 3:00
Other hours by appointment

Academic Misconduct Statement

Academic misconduct is defined by the Code of Student Conduct. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the LSU policy on academic misconduct, particularly regarding plagiarism. The LSU Code of Student Conduct can be found on the web site for the LSU Dean of Students:

http://app1003.lsu.edu/slads/cosrs/index

Academic misconduct is a serious violation of university policy, but more importantly it is a significant scholarly violation for political scientists. Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated in this course. Charges of academic misconduct will be turned over to the Dean of Students for appropriate disciplinary action.

Classroom Conduct

The rules relating to classroom conduct are based on the principle that students should not disrupt the learning opportunities of other students. Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. This includes disruptive behavior such as arriving late, leaving early, eating in class, and conversing privately during class. Students are prohibited from engaging in any forms of distraction. Students engaging in inappropriate behavior in the classroom will be asked to cease that behavior and, if it continues, be required to leave class.

Regarding electronic equipment, cellular telephones and pagers must be turned off and put away before the class begins. In addition, laptop computers may be used in class only at the discretion of the instructor; students whose laptop use disrupts (or has the potential of disrupting) class will not be permitted to use their laptop.

Finally, please note: **Students may not film or record this class without permission.**
About the Instructor

James C. Garand (Ph.D., University of Kentucky, 1984) is the Emogene Pliner Distinguished Professor of Political Science and the R. Downs Poindexter Professor of Political Science at Louisiana State University.

Professor Garand has teaching and research interests in the fields of legislative politics, electoral politics, public opinion, public policy, state politics, racial and ethnic politics, domestic political economy, and research methodology and statistics. His research on a wide range of topics in American politics has been published in numerous journals, including the American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, Journal of Politics, British Journal of Political Science, Political Research Quarterly, Western Political Quarterly, Comparative Political Studies, Legislative Studies Quarterly, PS: Political Science and Politics, American Politics Research, American Politics Quarterly, Public Choice, Social Science Quarterly, and Electoral Studies, among others. His coedited book, Before the Vote: Forecasting American National Elections, was published by Sage Publications in 2000. His current research agenda includes numerous projects relating to the study of American politics.

Professor Garand received the 2006 LSU Distinguished Research Master Award in recognition of outstanding faculty accomplishments in research and scholarship. In 2009 he was recognized as an LSU “Rainmaker,” an award given by the LSU Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) for national and international recognition “for innovative research and creative scholarship.” He served as President of the Southern Political Science Association in 2004, and he is also former president of the State Politics Section of the American Political Science Association. He served as Vice-President and Program Chair in 2001 for the Southern Political Science Association. Professor Garand is former editor of the American Politics Quarterly, one of the leading subfield journals in American politics. He currently serves on the editorial boards of the American Politics Research, Journal of Political Marketing, and Ralph Bunche Journal of Public Affairs, and he is a former member of the editorial boards of the American Journal of Political Science, Journal of Politics, State Politics and Policy, and Legislative Studies Quarterly. He also serves as a member of the International Advisory Board of the Online Portal for Social Science Education in Methodology (OPOSSEM).

Professor Garand has received numerous faculty awards. In 1997 Professor Garand received the LSU Alumni Association Distinguished Faculty Award in recognition of sustained excellence in teaching, research, and service. In 2012 he received the Tiger Athletic Foundation Undergraduate Teaching Award recognizing excellence in teaching in the LSU Honors College. In 2001 he received the LSU Foundation Distinguished Faculty Award in recognition of his excellence in graduate teaching, and he is the 1990 recipient of the university-wide Student Government Association Teaching Excellence Award for undergraduate teaching. He is also a recipient of the Alpha Lambda Delta Freshman Honor Society certificate of recognition for superior instruction of freshman students during the Fall 2000 semester.
Course Outline

January 14 Introduction to research in the social sciences
Roberts, “What the Heck is Research Anyway?”
Frey, Savage, and Torgler, “Behavior Under Extreme Conditions: The Titanic Disaster,”

January 16 What is science? Can we study human behavior and society scientifically? (continued)
Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Research Methods in the Social Sciences, Chapter 1
King, Keohane, and Verba, Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research, Chapter 1.

January 21 Martin Luther King Holiday (no class meeting)

January 23 What is science? Can we study human behavior and society scientifically? (continued)
Chalmers, “Theories as Structure I: Kuhn’s Paradigms,” Chapter 8 in Chalmers, What is This Thing Called Science?
Chalmers, “Theories as Structure II: Research Programs,” Chapter 9 in Chalmers, What is This Thing Called Science?

January 28 What is science? Can we study human behavior and society scientifically? (continued)

January 30 Scientific explanation, causation, and prediction
Cook and Campbell, “Causal Inference and the Language of Experimentation,” Chapter 1 in Cook and Campbell, Quasi-Experimentation: Design and Analysis Issues for Field Settings.

February 4 Elements of the research process
Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias Research Methods in the Social Sciences, Chapter 3
Philliber, Schwab, and Sloss, Social Research: Guides to a Decision Making Process, chapter 2.

February 6 Elements of the research process (continued)

February 11 Mardi Gras (no class meeting)

February 13 Elements of the research process (continued)

February 18 Concepts and concept formation
Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Research Methods in the Social Sciences, Chapter 2.
February 20  Concepts and concept formation (continued)


February 25  Theory and model development


February 27  Theory and model development (continued)


March 4  Theory and model development (continued)

March 6  Midterm exam

March 11  Operationalizing concepts: indicators and measurement

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, Chapter 7

March 13  Research design: general considerations


March 18  Research designs: experimental designs

March 20  Research designs: experimental designs (continued)


March 25  Research designs: quasi-experimental and cross-sectional designs


March 27  Research designs: quasi-experimental and cross-sectional designs (continued)


April 1  No class meeting (Spring Break)

April 3  No class meeting (Spring Break)

April 8  Strategies for data collection: sampling and sample designs


April 10 Strategies for data collection: survey research and questionnaire construction


April 15 Strategies for data collection: observational studies and qualitative research


Humphreys, “Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places,” in Golden (ed.), *The Research Experience*.

April 17 Strategies for data collection: secondary analysis
April 22 Strategies for studying individuals and aggregates


Jennings and Markus, “Partisan Orientations over the Long Haul: Results from the Three-Wave Political Socialization Panel Study,” American Political Science Review (December 1984: 1000-18).


April 24 The politics of social science research


April 29 Ethics and political research

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, Research Methods in the Social Sciences, Chapter 4.


May 1 Ethics and political research (continued)
