

# PLS416/516: Experimental Political Science

Spring 2021

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Nazarbayev University

Last Update: January 11, 2021  
(**TENTATIVE and SUBJECT TO CHANGE**)

## 1 General Information

### Class Hours

Official Class Hours for this class is **12:00-2:50pm Wednesdays (Nur-Sultan local time)**. However, given that the course is remotely taught, following adjustments are planned to be made (subject to change as the semester proceeds):

- **Lecture contents** will be offered in a format of a **video presentation**. In each week, a video describing the theoretical backgrounds is planned be uploaded on Tuesdays (Nur-Sultan Local Time).
- **Discussion session** will be offered in a format of **video conference**, during **12:00-1:30pm Wednesdays (Nur-Sultan local time)**. Students are expected to attend, but in case one has technical troubles joining a live conference, a video recording will be uploaded after the class.

### Office Hours

Office hours will be held over Zoom and it is **by appointment only**. Schedule a meeting by checking the availability from the URL below.

<https://calendly.com/gentok/office-hours>

Each meeting slot is for 15 minutes. If you want longer meeting, reserve two slots separately. The Zoom invitation will be sent to your E-mail address once you successfully completed the reservation. **If the given slots do not work for you, contact me directly with the proposal of your available times.**

## 2 Prerequisite

It is assumed that students have basic knowledge on social science research design and hypothesis testing (contents covered in PLS210 & 211).

## 3 Course Objectives

This course is an introduction to experimental methods in political science. While many of the examples we will discuss relate to public opinion, experiment is becoming a vital methodology in every sub-field of political science. Therefore, we will also touch on experimental studies in elite behavior, international relations, psychology, and economics.

Every week, students will read 2-4 journal articles/book chapters on the specified topic in political science experiment. About 1-2 readings will cover the theoretical stuffs. Remaining half of the readings will touch on the applied published articles that uses experimental methods to get a sense of how exactly experiments are conducted/used in the field of political science.

From this course, students are expected to learn motivations behind conducting experiments in political science studies, various forms of experimental methods, advantages and disadvantages of using experiment, and ethical issues around experimental design. Also, the written assignment will give students an opportunity to develop their own experimental design.

## 4 Readings

The major theoretical readings for the course are derived from the following book:

James N. Druckman et al., eds. 2011a. *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press

The book is available from the NU library access, but the relevant chapters will be uploaded to the course website. All the other readings for this course will also become available online through the course website.

## 5 Course Requirements

There are five components to the course requirements:

1. **Discussion Questions (25%)**: Students are asked to **post one discussion question to the course website, by 12:00pm (i.e., noon) Tuesdays**. The question must be original and must be based on the reading of the week. Questions will be graded on check plus to minus scale. At the end of semester, **five best scored questions will be counted toward the final grade**.
2. **Response Papers (20%)**: Students are asked to submit **exactly two reaction papers based on the readings of the given week, by 12:00pm Tuesdays**. Papers will be graded in A to F scale.

3. **Resume & Leading Discussion (15%)**: Students are asked to prepare **one resume of the applied readings, by 12:00pm Tuesdays** of the corresponding week (counting toward 10%). The resume will be graded on check plus to minus scale. Those who wrote resumes are **expected to lead the discussion session** of the corresponding week (counting toward 5%).
4. **Experimental Design (35%)**: There will be an original experimental design assignment. Students will work in groups and suggest one simple survey experiment design. Then, I am planning to provide an opportunity to conduct a pilot experiment through student samples. Submission will be in three portions:
  - (5%) Short proposal **Due Week 6**
  - (20%) Theory and design. **Due Week 10.**
  - (10%) Pilot analysis and discussion. **Due Week 14.**More details will be provided as the semester proceeds.
5. **Participation (5%)**: The active engagements in the class materials will count towards 5% of the grade. Note that the participation to video conferences count, but given the potential technical difficulties, I do not weight them heavily.

## 6 Course Outline

Readings may subject to change.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Week 1: January 13

#### Week 2: January 20

- (Theory/Review) James N. Druckman et al. 2011b. “Experiments: An Introduction to Core Concepts.” In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, edited by James N. Druckman et al., 15–26. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- (Theory/Review) Rose McDermott. 2011. “Internal and External Validity.” In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, edited by James N. Druckman et al., 27–39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- (Theory/Review) James N. Druckman et al. 2006. “The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science.” *The American Political Science Review* 100 (4): 627–635
- (Applied) Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman. 1981. “The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice.” *Science* 211 (4481): 453–458

## LABORATORY EXPERIMENTS

### Week 3: January 27

- (Theory/Review) Shanto Iyengar. 2011. "Laboratory Experiments in Political Science." In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, edited by James N. Druckman et al., 73–88. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- (Theory/Applied) James N. Druckman and Cindy D. Kam. 2011. "Students as Experimental Participants: A Defense of the "Narrow Data Base"." In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, edited by James N. Druckman et al., 73–88. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- (Applied) Mark J. Landau et al. 2004. "Deliver Us from Evil: The Effects of Mortality Salience and Reminders of 9/11 on Support for President George w. Bush." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 30 (9): 1136–1150
- (Applied) Cheryl Boudreau. 2013. "Gresham's Law of Political Communication: How Citizens Respond to Conflicting Information." *Political Communication* 30 (2): 193–212

### Week 4: February 3

- (Theory/Review) John H. and Arthur Lupia Aldrich. 2011. "Experiments and Game Theory's Value to Political Science." In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, edited by James N. Druckman et al., 89–101. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- (Theory/Applied) Eric S. Dickson. 2011. "Economics versus Psychology Experiments: Stylization, Incentives, and Deception." In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, edited by James N. Druckman et al., 73–88. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- (Applied) Joseph Henrich et al. 2001. "In Search of Homo Economicus: Behavioral Experiments in 15 Small-Scale Societies." *The American Economic Review* 91 (2): 73–78
- (Applied) James Habyarimana et al. 2007. "Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?" *The American Political Science Review* 101 (4): 709–725

## SURVEY EXPERIMENTS

### Week 5: February 10

- (Theory/Review) Diana C. Mutz. 2011. *Population-Based Survey Experiments*. Princeton: Princeton University Press Ch.1
- (Theory/Applied) Adam J. Berinsky et al. 2012. "Evaluating Online Labor Markets for Experimental Research: Amazon.Com's Mechanical Turk." *Political Analysis* 20 (3): 351–368
- (Applied) David Samuels and Cesar Zucco. 2014. "The Power of Partisanship in Brazil: Evidence from Survey Experiments." *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (1): 212–225
- (Applied) Masaru Kohno et al. 2020. "Donor Competition and Public Support for Foreign Aid Sanctions." *Political Research Quarterly* (February 17, 2020)

## MEASUREMENTS

### Week 6: February 17

- (Theory/Review) Josh Pasek and Jon A. Krosnick. 2010. “Optimizing Survey Questionnaire Design in Political Science: Insights from Psychology.” In *Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*, edited by Jan E. Leighley, 27–50. Oxford University Press
- (Theory/Review) Roy F. Baumeister, Kathleen D. Vohs, and David C. Funder. 2007. “Psychology as the Science of Self-Reports and Finger Movements: Whatever Happened to Actual Behavior?” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 2 (4): 396–403
- (Applied) J.J. Mondak and B.C. Davis. 2001. “Asked and Answered: Knowledge Levels When We Will Not Take ‘Don’t Know’ for an Answer.” *Political Behavior* 23 (3): 199–224
- (Applied) Cindy D. Kam and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. 2013. “Name Recognition and Candidate Support.” *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (4): 971–986

### Week 7: February 24

- (Theory/Review) Milton Lodge, Charles Taber, and Brad Verhulst. 2011. “Conscious and Unconscious Information Processing with Implications for Experimental Political Science.” In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, edited by James N. Druckman et al., 155–170. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- (Theory/Review) Bertram Gawronski. 2009. “Ten Frequently Asked Questions about Implicit Measures and Their Frequently Supposed, but Not Entirely Correct Answers.” *Canadian Psychology - Psychologie Canadienne* 50, no. 3 (August): 141–150
- (Applied) John N. Bassili. 2003. “The Minority Slowness Effect: Subtle Inhibitions in the Expression of Views Not Shared by Others.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84 (2): 261–276
- (Applied) Shanto Iyengar and Sean J. Westwood. 2015. “Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization.” *American Journal of Political Science* 59, no. 3 (July): 690–707

### Week 8: March 3

- (Theory/Review) Elizabeth A. Phelps and Laura A. Thomas. 2003. “Race, Behavior, and the Brain: The Role of Neuroimaging in Understanding Complex Social Behaviors.” *Political Psychology* 24 (4): 747–758
- (Applied) Darren Schreiber et al. 2013. “Red Brain, Blue Brain: Evaluative Processes Differ in Democrats and Republicans.” *PLOS ONE* 8, no. 2 (February 13, 2013): e52970
- (Applied) Douglas R. Oxley et al. 2008. “Political Attitudes Vary with Physiological Traits.” *Science* 321 (5896): 1667–1670
- (Applied) Rose McDermott et al. 2009. “Monoamine Oxidase a Gene (MAOA) Predicts Behavioral Aggression Following Provocation.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 106 (7): 2118–2123

## FIELD EXPERIMENTS

### Week 9: March 10

- (Theory/Review) Alan S. Gerber. 2011. "Field Experiments in Political Science." In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, edited by James N. Druckman et al., 73–88. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- (Applied) Alan S. Gerber, Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment." *The American Political Science Review* 102 (1): 33–48
- (Applied) Daniel M. Butler and David E. Broockman. 2011. "Do Politicians Racially Discriminate against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators." *American Journal of Political Science* 55 (3): 463–477
- (Applied) Elizabeth Levy Paluck and Donald P. Green. 2009. "Deference, Dissent, and Dispute Resolution: An Experimental Intervention Using Mass Media to Change Norms and Behavior in Rwanda." *The American Political Science Review* 103 (4): 622–644

## NATURAL EXPERIMENTS

### Week 10: March 17

- (Theory/Review) Thad Dunning. 2008. "Improving Causal Inference: Strengths and Limitations of Natural Experiments." *Political Research Quarterly* 61 (2): 282–293
- (Applied) Daniel N. Posner. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *The American Political Science Review* 98 (4): 529–545
- (Applied) Susan D. Hyde. 2007. "The Observer Effect in International Politics: Evidence from a Natural Experiment." *World Politics* 60 (1): 37–63
- (Applied) Peter John Loewen et al. 2014. "A Natural Experiment in Proposal Power and Electoral Success." *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (1): 189–196

## ESTIMATING EFFECTS

### Week 11: March 31

- (Theory/Review) HEPS Ch.31
- (Applied) Adam J. Berinsky, Michele F. Margolis, and Michael W. Sances. 2014. "Separating the Shirkers from the Workers? Making Sure Respondents Pay Attention on Self-Administered Surveys." *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (3): 739–753
- (Applied) James N. Druckman and Thomas J. Leeper. 2012. "Learning More from Political Communication Experiments: Pretreatment and Its Effects." *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (4): 875–896

## Week 12: April 7

- (Theory/Review) Jens Hainmueller, Daniel J. Hopkins, and Teppei Yamamoto. 2014. “Causal Inference in Conjoint Analysis: Understanding Multidimensional Choices via Stated Preference Experiments.” *Political Analysis* 22 (1): 1–30
- (Applied) Jens Hainmueller and Daniel J. Hopkins. 2015. “The Hidden American Immigration Consensus: A Conjoint Analysis of Attitudes toward Immigrants.” *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (3): 529–548
- (Applied) Yoshikuni Ono and Barry C. Burden. 2019. “The Contingent Effects of Candidate Sex on Voter Choice.” *Political Behavior* 41 (3): 583
- (Applied) Connor Huff and Joshua D. Kertzer. 2018. “How the Public Defines Terrorism.” *American Journal of Political Science* 62 (1): 55–71

## ETHICS

### Week 13: April 14

- (Theory/Review) Eleanor Singer and Felice J. Levine. 2003. “Protection of Human Subjects of Research: Recent Developments and Future Prospects for the Social Sciences.” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 67 (1): 148–164
- (Theory/Review) Macartan Humphreys. 2011. “Ethical Challenge of Embedded Experimentation.” *Comparative Democratization APSA Newsletter* 9 (3): 10, 23–29
- (Applied) Stanley Milgram. 1963. “Behavioral Study of Obedience.” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67:371–378
- (Applied) Philip G. Zimbardo. 1973. “A Pirandellian Prison.” *New York Times Magazine* (April 8, 1973)
- (Applied) Leonard Wantchekon. 2003. “Clientelism and Voting Behavior: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Benin.” *World Politics* 55 (3): 399–422

### Week 14: April 21

- (Theory/Review) Alan Gerber et al. 2014. “Reporting Guidelines for Experimental Research: The Report of the Experimental Research Section Standard Committee.” *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 1 (1): 81–98
- (Theory/Review) Brian A. Nosek et al. 2018. “The Preregistration Revolution.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115 (11): 2600–2606

## 7 Grading Policy

### 7.1 Grading Scale

Each assignments will be given a **letter grade**, either by A to F or Check plus to minus scale (For convenience, letter grades may be expressed in a number out of 400 in the course website). Each letter grade is translated to grade point by the following tables:

### A to F Scale

Letter Grade	Out of 400	Grade Point
A	400	4.00
A-	367	3.67
B+	333	3.33
B	300	3.00
B-	267	2.67
C+	233	2.33
C	200	2.00
C-	167	1.67
D+	133	1.33
D	100	1.00
F	0	0.00

### Check Plus to Minus Scale

Letter Grade	Out of 400	Grade Point
✓+	400	4.00
✓	300	3.00
✓-	200	2.00
Fail	0	0.00

The final letter grade in A to F scale will be determined by the weighted average of grade points according to the percentages presented in the Course Requirements section. I hold a discretion over what threshold I use to determine grade, while those at the midpoint will always receive the higher grade.

## 7.2 Late Submission

For any assignment, the following late submission policies will be applied. The assignment submitted incorrectly will be considered as missing.

- Late submission **within 24 hours of the deadline**: Allowed without penalty. However, **a student needs to notify me by E-mail before the deadline**. Without notification, the assignment will be treated in the same way as the *late submission within 1 week of the deadline*.
- Late submission **within 1 week of the deadline**: Allowed with penalty. **The highest grade a student can get will be B or ✓**. No notification is required.
- Late submission **after 1 week of the deadline**: Not allowed at all time.

If you have any special reasons that force you to submit after the deadline, please E-mail me or come talk to me **before the deadline**. If the reason is valid, I may extend the deadline for you. I will **not accept any request after the deadline**.

## 7.3 Regrading Request

If there is a very clear error in grading your assignment or exam, please let me know as soon as possible. However, if you wish to contest your grade on other grounds, then you must submit a written request to me with following contents:

- Clearly identify the components of the exam or assignment that should be reconsidered.



- For each component, **propose the score** that you think you deserve on that specific component.
- For each component, provide at least a paragraph length explanation for why you think your score should be reconsidered.

I will only have a right to **accept or reject** your proposal. If your proposed score and explanation are compelling, I will change your score on that specific component to the score you proposed. Otherwise, I will reject it and keep the score as it is.

*Under no circumstances will I change any score on any assignment **more than one week** after we have released the grades to the class. If you anticipate that it will take you more than a week to review your graded assignment and draft a response, then you will need to request an extension in advance.*

## 8 Academic Conduct

I do not expect that any of the students in this course will violate the University's Student Code of Conduct. However, please be aware that **cheating, plagiarism, or other violations of the Code will not be tolerated and will be reported to the Vice Dean and/or the Dean** for appropriate action. Please check NU Student Code of Conduct for more details (<https://nu.edu.kz/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/NU-Student-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>). Also, NU library provides a helpful guideline regarding the academic integrity ([https://nu.kz.libguides.com/avoiding\\_plagiarism/academicintegrity](https://nu.kz.libguides.com/avoiding_plagiarism/academicintegrity)).

## 9 A Safe and Comfortable Learning Environment

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe and comfortable learning environment for my students and for the university as a whole. If you have any problems or concerns regarding your student life, including, but not limited to relationships, stress, self-esteem, body image, sexuality, anxiety, and/or depression, Psychological Counselling Center (PCC) provides consultation service for you. Contact [nu\\_counseling@nu.edu.kz](mailto:nu_counseling@nu.edu.kz) or make an appointment with psychologist through NU web portal, under SERVICES → Consultation tab. PCC also has YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZZCN6Kc7UcwWJO4Ai3y0XQ>) and Instagram ([https://www.instagram.com/nu\\_pcc/](https://www.instagram.com/nu_pcc/)) with additional resources.