

Empirical Analysis of American Politics
Spring 2009

Professor Paul Wahlbeck
Office: Monroe 477 (wahlbeck@gwu.edu; 202-994-4872)
Office Hours: Thursday 11:00-12:30

Political Science 286
Classroom: Monroe B36
Class Time: Wednesday 4:00-5:50

Course Description: My belief is that an important component of graduate school education is your training in conducting original research. In our substantive seminars, students learn to dissect published research. In our methods courses, students learn how to use methodological tools. We do not spend considerable time training students to complete their own research projects or even teach students practical research skills. That is the primary objective of this course. Students will conduct primary research projects in three units (Congress, Judicial Politics, and Presidency/Voting Behavior). We will also discuss practical skills that will facilitate research projects.

Learning Outcomes: First, students will hone their ability to form and evaluate testable propositions. Over the course of the semester, students will develop hypotheses about American political behavior from the extant literature. Moreover, students will evaluate and critique one another's work. Second, students will become familiar with a range of data sources. To this end, there are four books available in the campus bookstore -- books that present data on Congress, the presidency, the Supreme Court, and American politics more generally. We will also discuss other sources of data, including the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), from time to time during the semester. Third, students will develop their skills in manipulating and handling data. There are many steps between gathering the data that are needed to test a proposition and the execution of the statistical techniques. These range from entering data in a form readable by the statistical package, to creating valid measures from data that you have collected, and so on. Fourth, students will apply the knowledge of empirical analysis that they have gained in the department's methodology sequence. Students will develop and test models using the appropriate econometric estimators.

Readings. There is one required book:

Long, J. Scott. 2009. *The Workflow of Data Analysis Using Stata*. College Station, TX: Stata Press.

The following books are books that contain data on American politics, which you might find to be a helpful addition to your library:

Epstein, Lee, Jeffrey A. Segal, Harold J. Spaeth, and Thomas G. Walker. 2007. *The Supreme Court Compendium: Data, Decisions, and Developments*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Ornstein, Norman, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin. 2008. *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2008*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Ragsdale, Lyn. 2008. *Vital Statistics on the Presidency*. 3rd ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Stanley, Harold W., and Richard G. Niemi. 2003. *Vital Statistics on American Politics, 2007-2008*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

These books are not required for this course. These books should be available at the reference section of Gelman Library if you do not want to purchase them.

Requirements. In each unit of the course (i.e., Congress, Supreme Court, and elections/presidency), I have assigned representative readings. We will discuss the readings the first week of each component. The primary objective of this reading is to present a variety of questions that have been addressed by scholars in that subfield. The purpose is not to provide an in-depth analysis of that subfield, but to give you a base from which you can generate further questions. I want to emphasize that the reading list is not, and should not be viewed by you, as the exclusive list of readings. If you find a question that intrigues you, pursue other related articles and materials. The first class session of each unit will be used to discuss the questions that have been explored by scholars in this subfield, but our discussion will focus on the propositions put forward by these scholars, the data that have been used, and directions for further examination. It is absolutely critical to the success of this course that you come to class prepared to discuss potential direction of research in each subfield.

For the second week of a unit, you will prepare a proposed paper topic. This proposal will follow the typical format of conference paper proposals: research question, theoretical relevance, major hypotheses, data sources, and modeling strategy. It should be no longer than one page. We will discuss these proposals in class. To facilitate discussion by all class members, these paper proposals are due at noon on the Tuesday before class. You should distribute them to the class via Blackboard's Discussion Board.

The core of the graded assignments will be papers written for each unit of the course. These papers will be 5-8 pages in length. They should include a brief section outlining the hypotheses to be tested (of course, you should discuss the existing literature in justifying your hypotheses, but the relatively short paper length precludes a full-blown theory section), the data and methods (i.e., what measures you use to test the hypotheses, your data sources, and the brief discussion of your method of analysis), your findings, and a brief discussion and conclusion.

In addition to submitting a paper to me, you will also distribute a copy of your paper to the other students via Blackboard's Discussion Board by noon on the Tuesday before our discussion. The last week of each unit will be devoted to a discussion of your papers. We will use the normal conference panel format – students will be assigned the honor of presenting their papers, while another student will be the designated discussant for that paper. The specific format will be finalized the week before each discussion session.

Grading. We will discuss three areas of American politics this semester. Each of these units will be worth 1/3 of the final grade. Your unit grade will be based on your paper proposal, class participation, and your research paper. The unit grade will be weighted heavily toward your paper (70%) with 20% from the proposal and 10% from participation. Since we will all benefit from

your paper proposals and research papers, I will assess a penalty for late work.

Academic Integrity. The GW Code of Academic Integrity states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

Support for Students Outside the Classroom

Disability Support Services (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

University Counseling Center (UCC) 202-994-5300

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
 - confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
- <http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices>

Security. In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.

Class Schedule. Next to each major topic, I have placed a date -- this is a tentative schedule that I have provided to give you an idea of our schedule. This class, more than most other courses, will be tailored to fit the needs of the students. As we progress through the semester, I will add topics that are relevant to your projects. Thus, this schedule is truly tentative, and I have left one week open.

Date

Topic and Readings

January 14

Introduction to Course

January 21

Congress

McCarthy, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, Howard Rosenthal. 2001. “The Hunt for Party Discipline in Congress.” *American Political Science Review* 95 (September): 673-687.

Wawro, Gregory. 2001. “A Panel Probit Analysis of Campaign Contributions and Roll-Call Votes.” *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (July): 563-579.

- Bickers, Kenneth N., and Robert M. Stein. 2000. "The Congressional Pork Barrel in a Republican Era." *Journal of Politics* 62 (November): 1070-1086.
- Binder, Sarah A. 1999. "The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock, 1947-96." *American Political Science Review* 93 (September): 519-533.
- January 28 Discuss Paper Topics
- February 4 Planning, Organizing, and Documenting Data (Long, Chapters 1-2, 5-6)
- February 11 Congress Paper Discussion
- February 18 Supreme Court
- Shipan, Charles R., and Megan L. Shannon. 2003. "Delaying Justice(s): A Duration Analysis of Supreme Court Confirmations." *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (October): 654-668.
- Segal, Jeffrey A., and Harold J. Spaeth. 1996. "The Influence of Stare Decisis on the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices." *American Journal of Political Science* 40 (November): 971-1003.
- Epstein, Lee, Valerie Hoekstra, Jeffrey A. Segal, and Harold J. Spaeth. 1998. "Do Political Preferences Change? A Longitudinal Study of U.S. Supreme Court Justices." *Journal of Politics* 60 (August): 801-818.
- Boucher, Robert L., and Jeffrey A. Segal. 1995. "Supreme Court Justices as Strategic Decision Makers: Aggressive Grants and Defensive Denials on the Vinson Court." *Journal of Politics* 57(August): 824-837.
- February 25 Discuss Paper Topics
- March 4 Manipulating Data (Long, Chapter 3-4)
- March 11 Supreme Court Paper Discussion
- March 25 Elections and Presidency
- Fiorina, Morris P. 1978. "Economic Retrospective Voting in

American Elections: A Micro-Analysis.” *American Journal of Political Science* 22 (May): 426-443.

Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. 2000. “The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment.” *American Political Science Review* 94 (September): 653-663.

Nadeau, Richard, Richard G. Niemi, David P. Fan, and Timothy Amato. 1999. “Elite Economic Forecasts, Economic News, Mass Economic Judgments, and Presidential Approval.” *Journal of Politics* 61 (February): 109-135.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. “The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals.” *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (April): 313-329.

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| April 1 | Discuss Paper Topics |
| April 8 | Presenting Results (Long, Chapter 7) |
| April 15 | Data Topic |
| April 22 | Presidency Discussion |

Sample ICPSR Datasets

Congress

9822	United States Congressional Roll Call Voting Records, 1789-1987: Reformatted Data
7645	Voting Scores for Members of the United States Congress, 1945-1982
7803	Roster of United States Congressional Officeholders and Biographical Characteristics of Members of the United States Congress, 1789-1993: Merged Data
8199	Federal Budget Outlays, 1971-1980 [United States]
6029	Federal Outlays, 1976-1980: [United States]
8082	Federal Outlays, County and City Master Files, Fiscal Year 1980

Supreme Court

6557	Expanded United States Supreme Court Judicial Database, 1946-1968 Terms
9422	United States Supreme Court Judicial Database, 1953-1993 Terms
8429	Federal Court Cases: Integrated Data Base, 1970-1991
7611	Supreme Court Certiorari Study, 1947-1956
6525	Crime and Justice Data (CD0003)
6495	Violence Research Data (CD0009)

Elections and Public Opinion

19	State-Level Presidential Election Data for the United States, 1824-1972
75	State-Level Congressional, Gubernatorial and Senatorial Election Data for the United States, 1824-1972
9405	Voter Registration in the United States, 1968-1988
7757 8611	Candidate and Constituency Statistics of Elections in the United States, 1788-1990

Electoral Data for Counties in the United States: Presidential and Congressional Races, 1840-1972

- 6537 American National Election Studies, 1948-1994 (CD0010)
- 6335 Campaign Expenditures in the United States, 1978-1992: Longitudinal Political Action Committee (PAC) Data
- 8158 Campaign Expenditures in the United States, 1977-1978 and 1979-1980 [Vol 1]
- 8238 Campaign Expenditures in the United States, 1981-1982
- 9313 Campaign Expenditures in the United States, 1983-1984: Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Data
- 8939 Campaign Expenditures in the United States, 1985-1986: Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Data
- 9314 Campaign Expenditures in the United States, 1987-1988: Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Data
- 9775 Campaign Expenditures in the United States, 1989-1990: Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Data
- 6337 Campaign Expenditures in the United States, 1991-1992: Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Data
- 9601 Activities and Maintenance Strategies of Interest Groups in the United States, 1980-1985
- 8635 ABC News/*Washington Post* Poll, June 1986
- 8718 CBS News/*New York Times* National and Local Surveys, 1987
- 8849 ABC News/*Washington Post* Poll, August 1987
- 8891 ABC News/*Washington Post* Poll, September 1987
- 8888 ABC News/*Washington Post* Poll Bork Vote Poll, October 1987
- 8885 ABC News Ginsburg Poll, November 1987
- 9234 CBS News/*New York Times* Monthly Poll, April 1989
- 9488 CBS News/*New York Times* Abortion Poll, July 1989

9489 CBS News/*New York Times* Drug Poll, September 1989

9491 CBS News/*New York Times* Abortion Polls, September -October 1989

9462 ABC News/*Washington Post* Souter Nomination Poll, July 1990

9758 ABC News Poll, July 1991

9767 ABC News/*Washington Post* Clarence Thomas Hearing Poll, September 1991

9781 CBS News/*New York Times* Clarence Thomas Nomination Poll, September-October 1991

9766 ABC News/*Washington Post* Clarence Thomas Vote Delay Polls, October 1991

9755 ABC News/*Washington Post* Poll #1 October 1991

9801 CBS News/*New York Times* October Politics Survey, October 15-17, 1991

6075 CBS News/*New York Times* Monthly Poll, March 1992

6026 ABC News/*Washington Post* Poll, December 1992

9909 National Health Interview Survey, 1990: AIDS Knowledge and Attitudes Supplement