Course Description: A research-intensive seminar that gives students the opportunity to collaboratively conduct original research in Canadian and comparative politics using quantitative data & statistical software.

Prerequisites and/or Course Restrictions: Good performance in POLI380 and comfort with Stata.

Format of the course: Weekly seminar sessions. The course consists of 3 four-week topical modules, where:

Week 1 begins with an in-depth discussion of one or perhaps two article-length studies. This will be a very, very slow, careful reading of the article. It must be read in advance, carefully. You'll write about it before class. In the last hour of the class we will discuss and negotiate how you will proceed, in groups of three or four, to do a data analysis project using the the research design and techniques in that article to answer a different question on a different dataset.

Week 2 is a working session in class, with the instructor available for consultation.

Week 3 is for analysis, discussion of findings, and building a presentation.

Week 4 is for sharing the presentations, asking questions, sharing best practices.

Required and Recommended Reading and Materials:

- Required: very FEW articles or chapters. See schedule below. 3 in fact. but... You should read everyting TWICE !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I'll make it easy for you this time: You should read everything TWICE or Three times !!!!!!! In fact, for the tables, you shouldn't even think of it as reading - it's a different skill.

- Stata software. You may purchase the student package for the current version. An older version may be provided by the instructor. Details to follow.

Course Assignments, Due dates, and Grading:

For each module:

In week 1s... you will read the readings and write a 500-1000 commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of the research design and execution of the analysis. More details at the very end of this syllabus. Due Monday noon before the Tuesday class. (3 X 10% =30%). (I won't have much time to look at these because I teach 5-7pm Monday nights, but I'll try.).

In week 2s... You will be working together in your group in class to get and manipulate your data. You'll try to get to a point where you've settled on the statistical analysis you will be doing. You will continue this work mostly electronically between weeks 2 and 3.

In week 3s... You will do some final analysis and as a team prepare your presentation, discussing what you want to highlight and what you can reasonably claim to have found and what exhibits you want to put in the slides. Then after class, you'll make and submit a recording of your 5-slide presentation, maximum 10 minutes. Individually. That is, everyone will do this on their own even though the slides will be the same, prepared in the group. You'll record a powerpoint or keynote or google slides show as a video with your voice over it and submit it (details later). (3 20% = 60%). The presentation must be a maximum of 5 minutes. You will probably have to practice it, time it, and get it down to 5 minutes.

In week 4s... We will do team presentations and discuss results. Then Fred will do an intro to the next module.

Oral contribution and team work, judged by the instructor, is worth 10% of the final grade. This includes contributions to the smooth and successful running of the course in this format.

There is no Final Exam.
Policies:

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available here (https://senate.ubc.ca/policiesresources-support-student-success)

Late assignments:
Without prior approval or medical certification, late submissions of work will be penalized 10%/day.

Learning Objectives

1. Respectful collaboration. You will get practice working in groups with new people and all the give-and-take that that requires to produce good work. The aim is to learn to strike a balance between commitment to your own ideas and practices, and listening to and integrating others’ ideas and ways of working.

2. Teamwork. You’ve all been on some kind of team or group before. It’s not like the implicitly competitive, zero-sum world of grades in a university class, is it? Well, in this course, you’ll get more practice at teamwork in a more professional setting, where a group of people needs to deliver the best product, together.

3. Adaptability. Each week will bring new challenges, surprises, and relationships. I hope you will learn strategies that will allow you to adapt to these dynamics. Those strategies will be very personal because we all have different reactions to change.

4. Research design. You will be working with existing data but in each module you and your team will be designing a research study. You will get practice specifying an empirical model and then a statistical model that will test hypotheses.

5. Stata (statistical software). Your ability to use statistical software to manipulate data and get results from data will improve throughout the course.

6. Presenting research design and data analysis. You will do 5-minute presentations with slides for each of the research study modules. You will improve your ability to clearly and concisely communicate empirical social science research findings.
Introduction

Instructor/Facilitator/Coach Bio and Introduction:
I’m Fred Cutler. I grew up in Ottawa, went to U of T, then Michigan for my PhD. I came to UBC in 2001. I have done research in political behaviour, public opinion, elections, and federalism. I have taught POLI380 a lot. And the graduate version of the same thing: POLI572. That’s the standard bio. But it’s other stuff that informs the design of this class.

One other thing is that I coach a lot of youth sports. Mostly soccer and baseball. What an amazing lab to see how people learn. After about five years of teaching the ‘normal’ way (readings, lectures, exams, papers), I shifted to do all my course design in the service of students learning actively. Learning by doing. Prioritizing skills over knowledge. POLI380 bears a lot of that thinking in the course design. But it’s far from perfect in that regard.

In 2013 I was asked to lead the Arts Instructional Support and IT unit. In that role, I had to learn a lot about learning; and the thing that is apparently supposed to cause learning: Teaching. The main thing I’ve learned is that Teaching doesn’t cause learning. What is much more likely to be causing learning is creating a structure (environment, context, plan) that allows learners to do things that more permanently burns knowledge into their brains and, more importantly, to do things that broaden or deepen their skills – what they can do in new situations.

I also had to stay current with everything in the world of learning technology. That is, technology that aims to facilitate better learning. This was good for my inner geek. And it got me involved with a Faculty of Arts project to build a video platform for learning. Some of you may have been exposed to it. At UBC it’s called CLAS. Two years ago, three colleagues from Arts ISIT and I spun off a tech startup from UBC with that software. It’s now called WeVu. We have a few paying customers, but we’re not growing fast because in education, educators generally don’t spend money to improve learning.

The importance of this for your experience in this class is threefold:

1. **Startup thinking**. I now value all the things you need for success in creating and selling a new product that solves a problem people have. These include: collaboration, strategy, persuasion, rapid iteration, continuous integration, feedback.

2. **Using lots of Edtech and collaboration tools**. We’ll use some electronic tools for collaboration, just like you do in everyday life. And we’re going to use CLAS/WeVu in this course for your presentations and discussion of them.

3. **What is this all for?** I’m no longer oriented to the production of published political science research. Don’t get me wrong – I think quantitative political science research is important and the techniques you’ll practice here even more important. I just don’t the current model based on print publication is the best way for that research to contribute to overall welfare. Instead, my objective is for you to learn and refine and develop skills in this class that you can use in all kinds of ways.

I hope this class is a significant departure from what you’re used to!

Fred
Course Schedule
(updated Canvas version is authoritative)

Prior to first class:

1.
Get Stata on your computer if you don’t have it already.
If you don’t, do this: Get the Windows and Mac installers from: http://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/fcutler/s/
(These files are BIG.)
Install it and make sure you select IC as the version to be installed.
Then launch it and enter the following codes. WHEN IT ASKS IF YOU WANT TO REGISTER, DO NOT DO SO.
Serial number: 301306234360
Code: 4y6L p3fl ry36 9dfl c9f3 vn$d 4w
Authorization: Lifb

2.
Complete a Stata online learning module.
It is at https://libguides.library.nd.edu/data-analysis-stata/overview
Do it from the start (Overview) down to and including Loops. The other topics, down to Maps, are very optional.
But look at the FAQ section too for some useful tips.
Note: in this tutorial when they tell you to use the use command with an http://, you will need to change it to https://.
DO THIS EXERCISE CAREFULLY, THOUGHTFULLY.
You may copy and paste some of the longer commands from the website to your Stata window, but it’s better if you type most of them, look at the results, and then just re-do it immediately and talk yourself through it so it really burns into your head.

Sept 10:
Introduction. Purpose and design of the course.
Real introductions. (Portfolios)
Edit the Syllabus together. (I’m strongly suggesting this plan as identified in this syllabus. But I want you to own it, so tell us now if you have other ideas or suggestions, or if you strongly believe that some part of this plan won’t work.)

Regression

Module 1: Sept 17 & 24 & Oct 1, 8th – Inference from Change in Causal Forces over Time

Remember that your review of the article is due on Monday the 16th at noon. See Canvas for guidelines.

Module 2: October 15, 22, 29, Nov 5 –

Module 3: Nov 19, 26, December 3 –
Lawrence Ezrow and Goergios Xezonakis. 2014. “Satisfaction with democracy and voter turnout: A temporal perspective”

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Guidelines for the Module Weeks and Assignments
read this page carefully and consult it often

This course will take at least 9 hours per week of your time. Three hours in class and 6+ outside of class. If you make this class a low priority, fail to live up to your group work commitments, are hard to contact, or miss classes, the impact will be much greater than in a ‘normal’ class. If you don’t have 10 hours per week for each class you’re taking, you shouldn’t be taking a class like this and (if you’re paying domestic tuition rates) you’re wasting taxpayers’ dollars.

If you think you are likely to have any of these problems, please find another course to take.

Also, if you think a good university learning experience consists of being told information very clearly (lecture, textbook, etc.), doing a one or two pieces of work of some kind, and being asked to show that you have mastered that information, I would strongly suggest you not take this course.

P.S. I wish this class were at Quest University. Then you could focus on it!

Week 1s

Before Week 1

Read the reading very very very carefully and slowly. Take 2 hours with the article. (How long would it take you to read a typical 4th year course’s readings for a given week?) Extract from the article:

1. the stated or implied research question,
2. the research design,
3. a very very brief version of the theory behind the design,
4. the logic of how the data will answer the question,
5. the choice of analysis,
6. and the key choices in the presentation of the analysis.

Key learning objective: To dissect the design of a quantitative research project. The design is how the author will use the data to answer the research question.

Write a focussed, 700 (500-1000) word summary, with the following headings;
Question, Design, Theory, Datasource(s), Logic that goes from theory to the analysis, Analysis, Presentation.

You must (MUST!) have a little bit at the end that explains an idea (or two) about how the author’s approach could be applied to a different question. If you can find a dataset that you want to work on to tackle that question, that’s great.

Feel free to work together discussing these before and as you write.

Submit your work in Canvas to the assignment called “Summary [Module number]” by noon on the Monday.

Each module Week 1 Class Session

Hours 1-2: When we meet for Week 1, have your summary in front of you. We will walk through the article and have it up on the screen and we’ll discuss what you extracted from it. This will be straightforward, because you’ll already have done the work.

Hour 3: Here’s where you self-organize into groups and decide on a question and probably a dataset. This is going to be a bit chaotic and tricky. I want you to have an open mind about what questions and data you want to explore. One goal is to work with almost everyone in the class at some point, over the three modules. Working with new people, getting comfortable quickly, is a learning objective in this class.
**Week 2s**

*Before Week 2*

Work in your online forum to divide up tasks and try to get the data and do some data manipulation so you’re prepared to start running analyses. At this point you’re going to explore the data so you know it well. You should set goals and provide continuous updates on your Mattermost channel and associated Google docs. You can get together or do work independently. You could even carve up work on the dataset and then at some point integrate your Stata code to produce your working dataset. The goal here is to have something to work with. Not perfection.

ALWAYS use a .do file that you can check, share, and integrate with others.

Key learning objective: Have the experience of hurried, chaotic collaboration and produce something before class.

*Week 2 Class Session*

Fundamentally, you’ll be doing work in your groups. That’s why we have a classroom like this. You will be working and consulting with me to try to get to a point where you’ve done the analysis, or at least got the data in shape and your statistical model identified so you can do the stats analysis very quickly over the next week.

**Week 3s**

*Before Week 3*

You’ll work electronically or perhaps occasionally in person to finalize the analysis and produce some graphics.

*Week 3 Class Session*

Week 3 is about discussing your work in groups, making it presentable, getting rid of junk that’s floating around, and preparing your 5-slide presentation. You will try to figure out what can be highlighted, whether your hypotheses were supported or not, what you can reasonably argue about the processes behind your data. Then, when you’re done this, people can go off on their own and individually record a powerpoint/keynote video. That’s the presentation on your screen with you talking over it and powerpoint/keynote.

I need to find the best technology for you to do this easily with manageable file sizes. Stay tuned.

You’ll submit that presentation to the appropriate assignment area in our class CLAS video-sharing site (clas.ubc.ca/prod) by Monday at 11am.

**Week 4s**

*Before Week 4*

You’ll record your presentation and upload it. *Week 4 Class Session*

Discussion. We’ll take each project in turn and discuss what worked, what didn’t, and what questions we still have. Then we’ll share best practices and clear up uncertainties.

Finally, Fred will point out what to watch/read for in next module’s reading.
Guide for summary of research article

**Question:** What is the research question that is being addressed in the article. If it’s stated explicitly, provide it in your summary. But also ask if that’s really the question that the research design and analysis speaks to. If not, does the author acknowledge the slippage from the question to the actual data and analysis. Do the conclusions really answer the question?

**Design:** What does the author do to address the question? What data is brought to bear so that the question(s) can be answered? What are the steps the author takes along the way to get to the analysis of results? Is the design of the research such that the author has to demonstrate multiple things to reach conclusions? What quantitative analysis is proposed to address the question. What are the specifics of the statistical model? (By that I mean not just “multiple regression”, but rather what variables are included and what functional form links them to the dependent variable. [Look up ‘functional form statistical model’ if you aren’t familiar with this]).

**Datasources:** What is the data? What level is it at? Is it a sample or a population? Are the variables good measurements of what the author needs, given the research design? Has there been any merging or combination of data?

**Theory:** In just a sentence or two, what is the key theoretical proposition that the author is testing OR what theoretical AND established empirical claims is the author relying on to justify the design. (Here, I don’t want citations – I just want a clear statement of what the author proposes is going on to create the mechanism that produces the effects he/she observes.)

**Logic:** This is the logic that will connect certain numerical results to an answer to the research question. You can basically restate what the author says about what will be concluded if a given relationship in the data is strong or not strong. For example, “if the coefficient on [variable x₂] is significant and greater than 10, then we can conclude that x₂ is a determinant of [Y], which means that...”

**Analysis:** What techniques are used? In other words, how does the author get the results?

**Presentation:** How are the results presented? Are the key results easy to understand? Does the author use tables, graphics, and text together in an efficient way? Are there problems with the presentation?