

SPA 300: Experimenting with Violence

Joe Young

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Office Hours: W 09:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

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Class Hours: Wed 05:30-08:00 p.m.

Class Room: *online*

Course Description

Across the social sciences, experiments have become the gold standard for identifying how a treatment influences an outcome. From understanding how voter canvassing leads to changes in voting behavior to how watching violent media influences support for violence, more scholars/researchers are using experimentation to unravel these puzzles. In this course, students will read about classic experiments, contemporary experiments, and cutting-edge experiments, with an emphasis on violence both as a treatment and outcome. Students will learn the basic implementation and analysis of experiments using the statistics program R and will conduct original experiments applying what they've learned from the past and present.

Course Objectives

I have three main objectives for this course. First, after taking this course, you should know the history and ethics involved in conducting experiments on humans. Second, you will be able to read, critique and apply insights from classic and contemporary experiments to produce your own research and make suggestions about appropriate public policies. Third, you will gain the skills necessary to produce an original experiment and the ability to use R to collect, modify, and analyze data.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the strengths and limitations of experiments
- Know the history and ethical considerations around human experimentation
- Perform and analyze an original experiment
- Produce an original research paper applying the techniques learned in the course
- Read and critique experimental research
- Learn how to use statistical software (R) for data manipulation and analysis

Required Materials

Books

Gohmert, Elizabeth, Quan Li, and Douglas Wise (2020). *Easy R: Access, Prepare, Visualize, Explore Data, and Write Papers*. SAGE Publications.

Kearns, Erin M. and Joseph K. Young (2020). *Tortured Logic: Why Some Americans Support the Use of Torture in Counterterrorism*. Columbia University Press.

R

- Free download of R (select Mac or Windows) <https://www.r-project.org>
- Free download of Rstudio (do not buy the pro version, not needed) <https://rstudio.com/products/rstudio/>

Evaluation

The grading scale for this class is as follows:

A	= 94+	C	= 74-76
A-	= 90-93	C-	= 70-73
B+	= 87-89	D+	= 67-69
B	= 84-86	D	= 64-66
B-	= 80-83	D-	= 60-63
C+	= 77-79	F	= 59 & below

Participation (20%):

You should think about class as a time for exploration; for figuring out what the readings mean; for critically evaluating arguments made by various authors, by other students, and by me; for connecting the assigned materials to other things you think are relevant and important. A number of things follow from this:

Attendance is required. There is no way to recreate this process of discussion by yourself. It is not enough to understand the readings or to get notes from a fellow student. Since we meet once a week, I expect you will be at every class. Without proper documentation, an absence will count against the participation grade. Students who miss more than three classes for any reason may not be able to pass the course.

Careful reading is essential. Students must strategically read all assignments, noting questions or points that they want to raise in class. You will receive a discussion grade for each class period. This grade will be based on your contributions to class discussion, any oral presentations, group projects, or short written assignments that contribute to class discussion. Quizzes, both pre-announced and not, could occur and would be factored into this discussion grade. Finally, you will do some problem sets in R that will be included in this grade as well.

Special COVID considerations. If you are unable to make a class for any reason, I can record the session. With that said, you miss the interactive piece that cannot be replicated. Too many of these instances may lead to a reduction in your grade.

Midterm Exam (30%):

On October 7th, you will receive a take-home mid-term exam covering the theoretical foundations learned in the first half of the semester. This test will be open-note and you may use any materials on the Internet. All questions will be essay style that require analysis and synthesis of course material. You may not consult your peers or anyone else. You will also be asked to do simple tasks in R. The exam will be due by 5:00 pm to Blackboard on October 9th.

Research Paper (40%):

Detailed instructions are on Blackboard for this assignment. In short, you will need to do an original experiment, ask a research question, do a critical literature review, collect data, analyze the data, and turn in on the last day of class, December 9th.

Research Presentation (10%):

During the final exam period for class, each student will present their research using powerpoint or equivalent (RMarkdown). You will also field questions from the instructor and other class members.

Academic Integrity Code

Students should be aware of the contents of the AU Academic Integrity Code. I regard violations of this code seriously and will immediately refer the matter to the Dean, should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the code either in general or as they apply to particular requirements of this course.

Additional Support Services

If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please do not hesitate to contact me. In addition to the resources of the school, a wide variety of services are available to help you in your efforts to meet the requirements of the course.

- Academic Support Center (x3360, MGC 243): offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, and services for students with learning disabilities.
- Writing support is available in the ASC Writing Lab or in the Writing Center, Battelle 228.
- Counseling Center (x3500, MGC 214): offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.
- Disability Support Services (x3315, MGC 206): offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical, medical or psychological disabilities.

If you qualify for accommodations due to a disability, please notify me in a timely manner with a letter from the ASC or DSS so that we can make arrangements to address your needs.

Classroom Courtesy

Classroom courtesy is an essential component of creating an effective learning environment. All students have the right to learn without unnecessary distractions. These distractions include: cell phones, talking during lectures (unless recognized by the instructor), reading newspapers, falling asleep, etc. If you need a cell phone for emergency purposes, leave it on vibrate. Entering and leaving are also significant sources of distraction. It is your responsibility to be on time and to stay for the entire period. In circumstances where you need to leave early, tell the instructor beforehand. Repeated disruptions of class will lead to a reduction in your final grade.

Special Zoom considerations: mute your mic when you are not speaking. Have your camera on unless you need to step away for a moment. Focus on class activities, not instagram, twitter, your email, etc.

Most importantly, class discussions of the issues as they relate to violence, can lead to strong feelings and heated debate. Because this is a college classroom, all discussion must be respectful and scholarly.

Scholarly Comments

- are respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement
- are related to class and/or the course material
- focus on advancing the discussion about issues related to the course and/or course material rather than personal beliefs, and
- are delivered in normal tones and a non-aggressive manner.

Unacceptable Comments

- are personal in nature. This includes attacks on a person's appearance, demeanor, or political beliefs.
- include interrupting the instructor or other students and not allowing people to speak.
- often use the discussion to argue for political positions and/or beliefs. If political discussions arise, they must be discussed in a scholarly way (see above).
- may include using raised tones, yelling, engaging in arguments with other students and being threatening in any manner.
- include ignoring the instructor's authority to maintain the integrity of the classroom environment.

Class Schedule

Read the following before Wednesday's class session. *Important:* class readings are subject to change given changing circumstances. Any adjustments to this schedule will be posted in a revised syllabus on Blackboard.

Week 01, 08/26: Introductions, What is an experiment?

1. Druckman, James N, Donald P Green, James H Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia (2011). "An introduction to core concepts". In: *The Cambridge handbook of experimental political science*.
2. Druckman, James N, Donald P Green, James H Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia (2011). "Experimentation in political science". In: *Cambridge handbook of experimental political science*, pp. 3–11.
3. Jackson, Michelle and David R Cox (2013). "The principles of experimental design and their application in sociology". In: *Annual Review of Sociology* 39, pp. 27–49.
4. McDermott, Rose (2002). "Experimental methods in political science". In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 5.1, pp. 31–61.
5. Intro to R and R studio, <https://moderndive.netlify.app/1-1-r-rstudio.html>, Do section 1-1.5

Week 02, 09/02: Classic Experiments

1. Milgram, Stanley (1963). "Behavioral study of obedience." In: *The Journal of abnormal and social psychology* 67.4, p. 371.
2. Watch the original Milgram experiments <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdrKCilEhC0>
3. Zimbardo, Philip G, Craig Haney, and William C Banks (1973). "A Pirandellian prison". In: *New York Times Magazine* 8, p. 38ff.
4. Whitbourne, Susan Krauss. 2013. The Rarely Told True Story of Zimbardo's Prison Experiment. Psychology Today. July 20. (<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/fulfillment-any-age/201307/the-rarely-told-true-story-zimbardo-s-prison-experiment>)
5. Watch the Bobo Doll experiments <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqNaLerMNOE>
6. Robbers Cave Experiment <https://www.thoughtco.com/robbers-cave-experiment-4774987>

Week 03, 09/09: Ethics and IRBs

1. Gil, Eleanor F and Sheila Bob (1999). "Culturally competent research: An ethical perspective". In: *Clinical Psychology Review* 19.1, pp. 45–55.
2. Humphreys, Laud (1970). "Tearoom trade". In: *Trans-action* 7.3, pp. 10–25.
3. Dana, Jason and George Loewenstein (2003). "A social science perspective on gifts to physicians from industry". In: *Jama* 290.2, pp. 252–255.
4. Krugman, Saul (1986). "The Willowbrook hepatitis studies revisited: ethical aspects". In: *Reviews of infectious diseases* 8.1, pp. 157–162.

5. Nix, Elizabeth (2017). "Tuskegee Experiment: The infamous syphilis study". In: *History.com*.
6. Gubler, Joshua R and Joel S Selway (2015). "Considering the Political Consequences of Comparative Politics Experiments". In: *Ethics and Experiments*. Routledge, pp. 185–196.

Week 04, 09/16: Choosing a sample, randomization

1. Different ways to randomly sample <https://www.statisticshowto.com/randomization-experimental-design/>
2. Overview of randomization from NIH <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3136079/>
3. Gerber, Alan S and Donald P Green (2012). *Field experiments: Design, analysis, and interpretation*. WW Norton. Chapter 4
4. Learn how to randomly assign units to treatment and control using R https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/randomizr/vignettes/randomizr_vignette.html
5. Factorial Experimental Designs <https://www.methodology.psu.edu/ra/most/factorial/>

Week 05, 09/23: Concepts and Validating Instruments

1. Tips for building surveys <https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/10-tips-for-building-effective-surveys/>
2. Mistakes in building surveys <https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/writing-survey-questions/>
3. Clark, Lee Anna and David Watson (1995). "Constructing validity: Basic issues in objective scale development." In: *Psychological Assessment* 7.3, p. 309.
4. Gerring, John (1999). "What makes a concept good? A criterial framework for understanding concept formation in the social sciences". In: *Polity* 31.3, pp. 357–393.
5. Developing an experimental protocol <https://thomasleeper.com/surveyexpcourse/activities/protocol.pdf>

Week 06, 09/30: Lab Experiments

1. Kearns, Erin M. and Joseph K. Young (2020). *Tortured Logic: Why Some Americans Support the Use of Torture in Counterterrorism*. Columbia University Press. Chapter 2
2. Nordgren, Loran F, Mary-Hunter Morris McDonnell, and George Loewenstein (2011). "What constitutes torture? Psychological impediments to an objective evaluation of enhanced interrogation tactics". In: *Psychological science* 22.5, pp. 689–694.
3. Boettcher III, William A (2004). "The prospects for prospect theory: An empirical evaluation of international relations applications of framing and loss aversion". In: *Political Psychology* 25.3, pp. 331–362.
4. Overconfidence in war games <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1634904/>
5. Falk, Armin and James J Heckman (2009). "Lab experiments are a major source of knowledge in the social sciences". In: *science* 326.5952, pp. 535–538.

6. White, Ismail K, Chryl N Laird, and Troy D Allen (2014). "Selling Out?: The politics of navigating conflicts between racial group interest and self-interest". In: *American Political Science Review* 108.4, pp. 783–800.

Week 07, 10/07: Survey Experiments I

1. Rai, Tage S, Piercarlo Valdesolo, and Jesse Graham (2017). "Dehumanization increases instrumental violence, but not moral violence". In: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114.32, pp. 8511–8516.
2. Abrahms, Max (2013). "The credibility paradox: Violence as a double-edged sword in international politics". In: *International Studies Quarterly* 57.4, pp. 660–671.
3. Blattman, Christopher (2009). "From violence to voting: War and political participation in Uganda". In: *American political Science review*, pp. 231–247.
4. Dorff, Cassy (2017). "Violence, kinship networks, and political resilience: Evidence from Mexico". In: *Journal of Peace Research* 54.4, pp. 558–573.
5. How to do survey experiments in qualtrics

<https://bookdown.org/markhoff/css/surveys-and-survey-experiments-with-qualtrics.html>

Week 08, 10/14: Survey Experiments II

1. Huff, Connor and Joshua D Kertzer (2018). "How the public defines terrorism". In: *American Journal of Political Science* 62.1, pp. 55–71.
2. Kearns, Erin M. and Joseph K. Young (2020). *Tortured Logic: Why Some Americans Support the Use of Torture in Counterterrorism*. Columbia University Press. Chapter 1
3. Findley, Michael G, Brock Laney, Daniel L Nielson, and JC Sharman (2017). "External validity in parallel global field and survey experiments on anonymous incorporation". In: *The Journal of Politics* 79.3, pp. 856–872.
4. Piazza, James A (2015). "Terrorist suspect religious identity and public support for harsh interrogation and detention practices". In: *Political Psychology* 36.6, pp. 667–690.
5. Zvobgo, Kelebogile (2019). "Human rights versus national interests: Shifting US public attitudes on the international criminal court". In: *International Studies Quarterly* 63.4, pp. 1065–1078.

Week 09, 10/21: Field Experiments I

1. Humphreys, Macartan and Jeremy M Weinstein (2009). "Field experiments and the political economy of development". In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 12, pp. 367–378.
2. Gerber, Alan S and Donald P Green (2008). "Field experiments and natural experiments". In: *The Oxford handbook of political science*.
3. Allred, Brent B, Michael G Findley, Daniel Nielson, and JC Sharman (2017). "Anonymous shell companies: A global audit study and field experiment in 176 countries". In: *Journal of International Business Studies* 48.5, pp. 596–619.

4. Paluck, Elizabeth Levy, Hana Shepherd, and Peter M Aronow (2016). "Changing climates of conflict: A social network experiment in 56 schools". In: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113.3, pp. 566–571.

Week 10, 10/28: Field Experiments II

1. Harris, Adam S and Michael G Findley (2014). "Is ethnicity identifiable? Lessons from an experiment in South Africa". In: *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58.1, pp. 4–33.
2. Cohen, Dov and Richard E Nisbett (1997). "Field experiments examining the culture of honor: The role of institutions in perpetuating norms about violence". In: *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 23.11, pp. 1188–1199.
3. Buntaine, Mark T, Ryan Jablonski, Daniel L Nielson, and Paula M Pickering (2018). "SMS texts on corruption help Ugandan voters hold elected councillors accountable at the polls". In: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115.26, pp. 6668–6673.
4. Lyall, Jason, Yang-Yang Zhou, and Kosuke Imai (2020). "Can Economic Assistance Shape Combatant Support in Wartime? Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan". In: *American Political Science Review* 114.1, pp. 126–143.
5. Paluck, Elizabeth Levy and Donald P Green (2009). "Deference, dissent, and dispute resolution: An experimental intervention using mass media to change norms and behavior in Rwanda". In: *American political Science review*, pp. 622–644.

Week 11, 11/04: Asking Sensitive Questions, List and Endorsement Experiments

1. Kuklinski, James H, Michael D Cobb, and Martin Gilens (1997). "Racial attitudes and the New South"". In: *The Journal of Politics* 59.2, pp. 323–349.
2. Kearns, Erin M. and Joseph K. Young (2020). *Tortured Logic: Why Some Americans Support the Use of Torture in Counterterrorism*. Columbia University Press. Chapter 4
3. Blair, Graeme, Kosuke Imai, and Jason Lyall (2014). "Comparing and combining list and endorsement experiments: Evidence from Afghanistan". In: *American Journal of Political Science* 58.4, pp. 1043–1063.
4. Rosenfeld, Bryn, Kosuke Imai, and Jacob N Shapiro (2016). "An empirical validation study of popular survey methodologies for sensitive questions". In: *American Journal of Political Science* 60.3, pp. 783–802.
5. https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/ask-sensitive-questions-surveys/?program=7013A000000mwutm_bu=CR&utm_campaign=71700000059189235&utm_adgroup=58700005410222821&utm_content=39700049736551248&utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=adwords&utm_term=p49736551248&utm_kxconfid=s4bvpi0ju&gclid=CjwKCAjw4MP5BRBtEiwASfwAL_oybvDHqetr4qaQpMK_Tjepsrr9pGwm5BFX0ArVwOe4p-TCNyE9RoCGJMQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds
6. <https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/how-to-get-the-truth-when-asking-survey-questions-about-sensitive-t>

Week 12, 11/11: Natural Experiments

1. Kearns, Erin M. and Joseph K. Young (2020). *Tortured Logic: Why Some Americans Support the Use of Torture in Counterterrorism*. Columbia University Press. Chapter 3
2. Posner, Daniel N (2004). "The political salience of cultural difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are allies in Zambia and adversaries in Malawi". In: *American Political Science Review*, pp. 529–545.
3. Dunning, Thad (2008). "Improving causal inference: Strengths and limitations of natural experiments". In: *Political Research Quarterly* 61.2, pp. 282–293.
4. A natural experiment study of the effects of imprisonment on violence in the community <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7062231/>
5. COVID-19 as a natural experiment

<https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.120.047538>

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/04/social-scientists-scramble-study-pandemic-real-time>

Week 13, 11/18: Quasi-Experiments

1. Exogenous shocks

Getmansky, Anna and Thomas Zeitzoff (2014). "Terrorism and voting: The effect of rocket threat on voting in Israeli elections". In: *American Political Science Review*, pp. 588–604.

2. Instrumental variables/instruments

Ritter, Emily Hencken, Courtenay R Conrad, and others (2016). "Preventing and responding to dissent: The observational challenges of explaining strategic repression". In: *American Political Science Review* 110.1, pp. 85–99.

3. Differences in Differences

Weintraub, Michael (2016). "Do all good things go together? Development assistance and insurgent violence in civil war". In: *The Journal of Politics* 78.4, pp. 989–1002.

4. Propensity Score Matching

Gunter, Whitney D and Kevin Daly (2012). "Causal or spurious: Using propensity score matching to detangle the relationship between violent video games and violent behavior". In: *Computers in Human Behavior* 28.4, pp. 1348–1355.

Week 14, 11/25: Replication, Registration

1. Desroches, Frederick J (1990). "Tearoom trade: A research update". In: *Qualitative Sociology* 13.1, pp. 39–61.
2. EGAP Registration of Field Experiments <https://egap.org/registry/>
3. Open Science Framework <https://osf.io>

4. Burger, Jerry M (2009). "Replicating Milgram: Would people still obey today?" In: *American Psychologist* 64.1, p. 1.
5. Kulig, Teresa C, Travis C Pratt, and Francis T Cullen (2017). "Revisiting the Stanford Prison Experiment: A case study in organized skepticism". In: *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 28.1, pp. 74–111.
6. King, Gary (1995). "Replication, replication". In: *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28.3, pp. 444–452.
7. Is withholding data bad science or misconduct? <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2015/07/03/data-secrecy-bad-science-or-scientific-misconduct/#author>
8. Dunning, Thad, Guy Grossman, Macartan Humphreys, Susan D Hyde, Craig McIntosh, Gareth Nellis, Claire L Adida, Eric Arias, Clara Bicalho, Taylor C Boas, and others (2019). "Voter information campaigns and political accountability: Cumulative findings from a pre-registered meta-analysis of coordinated trials". In: *Science advances* 5.7, pp. 1-10.

Week 15, 12/02: Limits of Experiments/Alternatives

1. Dunning, Thad (2016). "Transparency, replication, and cumulative learning: What experiments alone cannot achieve". In: *Annual Review of Political Science* 19, pp. S1–S23.
2. Fraud

<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-two-grad-students-uncovered-michael-lacour-fraud-and-a-way-to-c>

3. Kuipers, Kathy J and Stuart J Hysom (2014). "Common problems and solutions in experiments". In: *Laboratory experiments in the social sciences*. Elsevier, pp. 145–177.
4. Lucas, Jeffrey W (2003). "Theory-testing, generalization, and the problem of external validity". In: *Sociological Theory* 21.3, pp. 236–253.

Week 16, 12/09: Final Exam/Presentations, Final Paper Due