PSC 214  
Spring 2014  
2:00-4:40 Wed.  
Empirical Controversies in Amer. Politics  
LeChase 181

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Office Hours: Fri. 2:00-4:00

PURPOSE
Is the mass media really biased? Does abortion lower the crime rate? Does the “No Child Left Behind” act encourage cheating? Providing convincing answers to these hot-button political issues requires good research design. Our goal is to learn the techniques behind designing research studies that allow political scientists and economists to answer exactly these kinds of questions. Our focus is on setting up the problem so that data analytic techniques, when applied, provide the right answers.

PREREQUISITES
The only prerequisite is an undergraduate course in data analysis. PSC 200 or 201 suffices for political science.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Evaluation is based on class participation (30% of your grade), two essay exams (20% each), and a 15-page research design project (30% of your grade). The exams are given as scheduled and are not given early—please make any travel plans accordingly. The research design is due during the course’s university-scheduled final period.

A web page for this course is to be found here:
http://www.rochester.edu/College/PSC/clarke/204/204.html

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Be familiar with the University’s policies on academic integrity and disciplinary action (http://www.rochester.edu/College/CCAS/AdviserHandbook/AcadHonesty.html). Violators of University regulations on academic integrity will be dealt with severely, which means that your grade will suffer, and I will forward your case to the Chair of the College Board on Academic Honesty.

Remember that the same technology that has made plagiarism easier to accomplish has also made it easier to detect. If you do not cite a source, it is plagiarism. If you do cite it, it is scholarship.
COURSE SCHEDULE

All readings are online at the course web page unless followed by a URL.

September 3: Introduction

- None (first day of class).

September 10: Explanation in the Social Sciences


September 17: Methods in the Social Sciences


September 24: Does Money Determine Elections?

October 1: Does Capital Punishment “Work”?

  http://www.csicop.org/si/show/capital_punishment_and_homicide_sociological_realities_and_econometric_illustrations
- Berk (2005), “New Claims about Executions and General Deterrence: Deja Vu All Over Again?”

October 8: Did Legalizing Abortion Affect the Crime Rate?

- Sailer, “Did Legalizing Abortion Cut Crime?”
  http://www.isteve.com/abortion.htm

⇒ Essay Exam 1

October 15: Does Democracy Lead to Peace?


October 22: Is There a Liberal Bias in the Media?

October 29: Does No Child Left Behind Encourage Cheating?

  http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n18/
- TBA.

November 5: A Taste for Discrimination?


November 12:

- TBA.

⇒ Essay Exam 2

November 19: Student Presentations

- TBA.

December 3: Student Presentations

- TBA.

December 10: Student Presentations

- TBA.

Your 15-page research design is due the last day of classes.