Monmouth COLLEGE

POLITICAL SCIENCE 415: SENIOR SEMINAR

MUSIC:
Girlpool
"Before the World was Big"

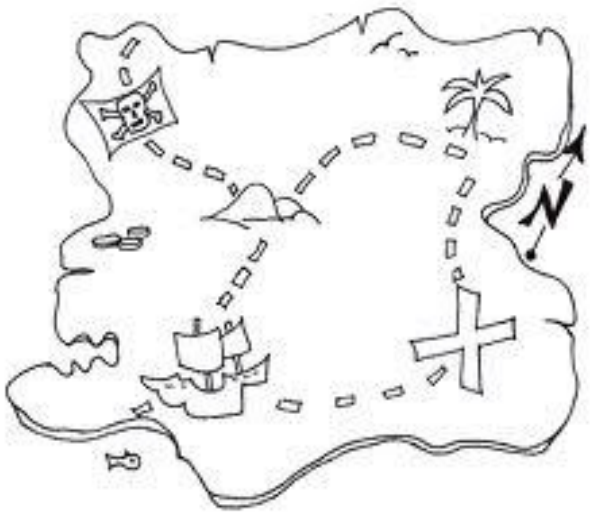
Courtney Barnett
"Sometimes I Sit and Thin, And Sometimes I Just Sit"

Recap & a Look Ahead…

Senior Seminar, Part II

Where we're headed today:

1. Quiz 6 review
2. Semester Recap
3. Looking Ahead



Hey!

Campus events, activities, or announcements?

Lit review due today by end-of-day

Don’t forget to do the course eval

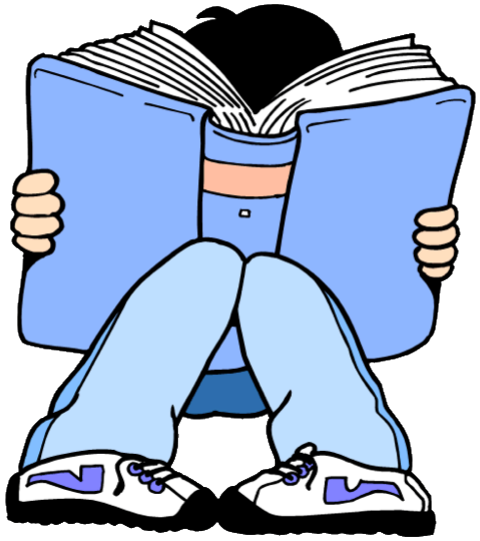
What's in the News?

What have your heard lately?

Climate talks – agreement?

DuPont & Dow Chemicals merger

GOP debate next week



Questions before we begin?

Quiz 6 Review

75%, 50%

95% sure you're finding a real difference (not just by chance) – sampling from a population

Smaller MOE as sample gets larger

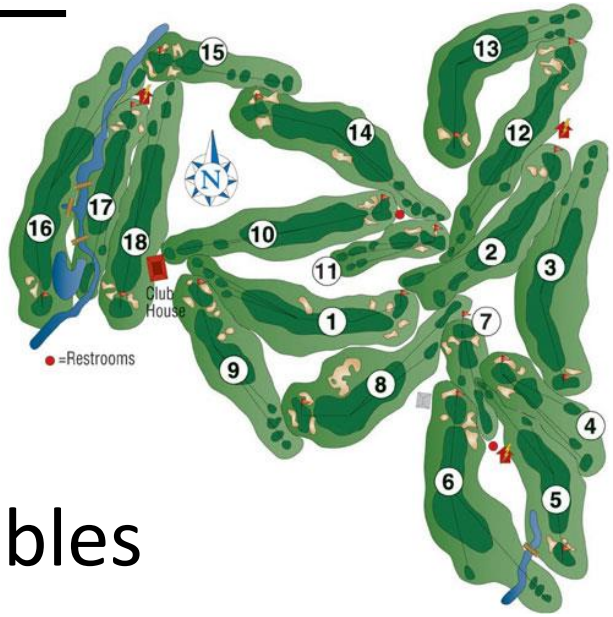
Positive: relationship rises together, neg: opposite

Not causation: reverse, 3rd factor, chance

Druckman: communicate better (strategies), avoid politicization, acknowledge uncertainty

Where we've been…

Course in Review



1. Social science research
2. Topics in PS
3. Reviewing the lit (& finding it)
4. Social science theory
5. Hypotheses & conceptual variables
6. Research designs
7. Data & operationalization
8. Proportions, probability, correlations
9. Presentation, write-up, & graphics

Science & Politics

Political Science *can* be a science:

systematic knowledge-building

2 goals: describe & explain, predict?

Important topics: do we care?

testable explanations about the universe

observable implications

transparent methods for replication & evals

3 Major Parts of (Political) Science

Theory – how do we think the world works? A systematic explanation for observations

(weeks 5-6)

Data collection – observe the world with appropriate measures & methods, informed by theory (weeks 7-8, 12)

Data analysis – see if the world conforms to our theory (informative either way)

(weeks 9-11, 13)

Building on the Past

Political science knowledge is cumulative

We build on what others have already found

To make a new contribution:

Can't say ***what's new*** **(theory/evidence)** without it

Case to make to your audience & yourself

Lit Review:

Orients the reader, informs, reminds, emphasizes

Demonstrates the importance to broader studies

Shows you've done your homework

Tips for finding good sources

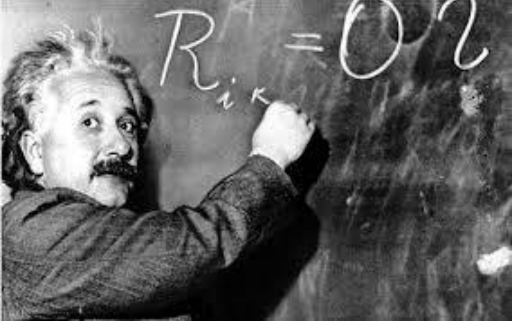
1. When you find a good source, look what it **references**

   Google Scholar has forward & backward cites

2. Go with **highly cited** sources – they're most influential (though recent work might have fewer cites)

3. Go with **recent** sources – old stuff is often good, some classics are still worth reading, but newer is state of art

4. Search for undergrad & grad **syllabi** on your topic



Theory & Hypotheses

The **theory** explains the mechanism:

What is the relation between the two concepts?

Why are they related?

How broad is your theory? How wide-ranging?

Specific testable predictions flowing directly from theory

If you can show these are true, then your theory is better supported. If not, your theory may be wrong.

Theoretical Lenses

Different ways of explaining the world:

What factors matter?

Institutions (rules), **behavior** (attitudes), or **both**?

Types of explanations:

Economic, political, psychological, biological, geographical, sociological, historical, cultural, …

Independent & Dependent Variables

Cause: Independent variable (IV)

Effect/Outcome: Dependent variable (DV)

Can have one or many causes (you explain one)

Example:

“Mandatory voting laws cause higher levels of voting”

IV: mandatory voting laws

DV: voter turnout rates

Methods Considerations

Define the population you want to infer to:

universal? Specific types, places, or situations?

What data can you collect about your RQ?

What type of analysis is appropriate for that data?

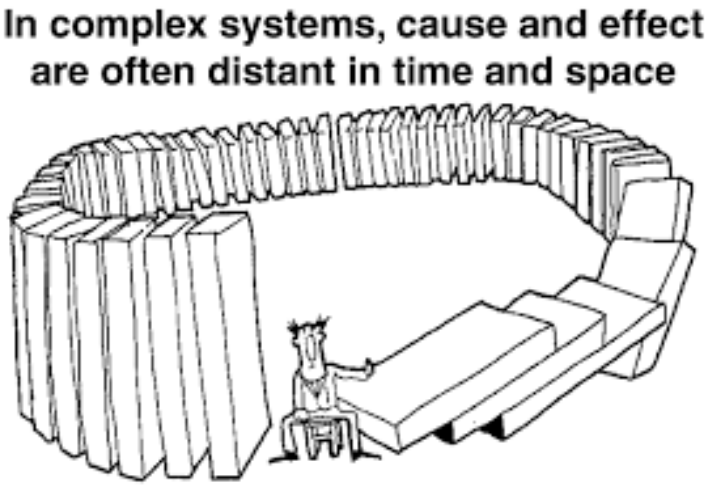
How well does the data speak to your population of interest?

How strong are your causal inferences given data & method?

Cause & Effect

Randomization & control of experimental treatments can rule out alternative explanations

Or you can take into account other factors as **statistical (or conceptual) controls**



Generalizability of Results

How well is the **population of interest**

(the one you're trying to generalize to)

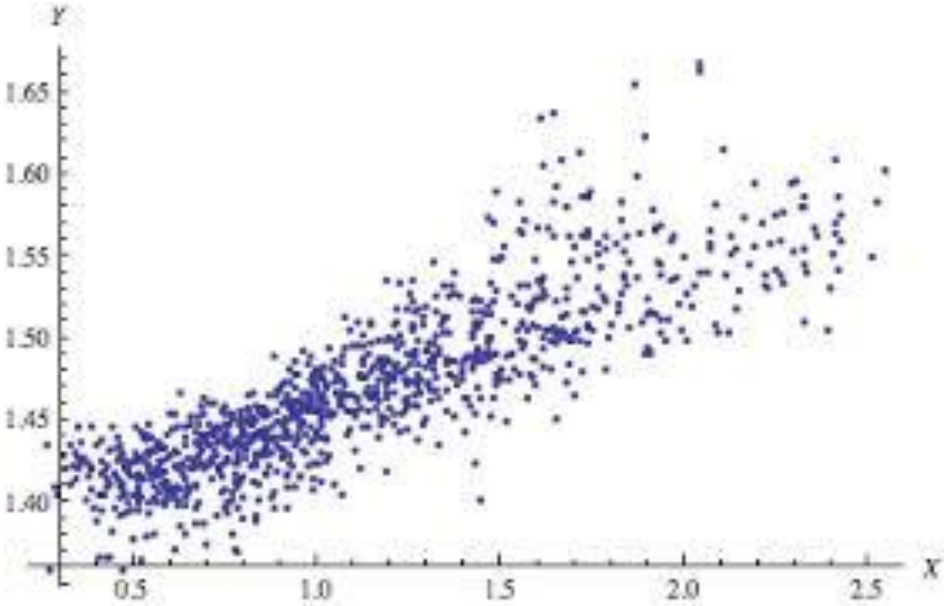
…reflected in the **cases analyzed** in your study?

How broad are the implications of your findings?

Remember: explaining ***types***, not individual cases

Correlation or Causation?

1. A really does cause B.
2. Actually, B causes A
3. Actually, a 3rd factor causes both
4. Actually, the correlation is just by chance



Math isn't Scary!

Percentages, Proportions, & Averages

Chance & Significant Differences

Correlations

For each: concepts, math, & Excel


LOOKING AHEAD

One semester to go! Almost there!

Why Senior Seminar?

Integrating much of what you've learned so far

many classes, many topics, many methods

Applying the skills you've honed over 3 years

Consolidating vital communication skills

writing & presenting are marketable as hell

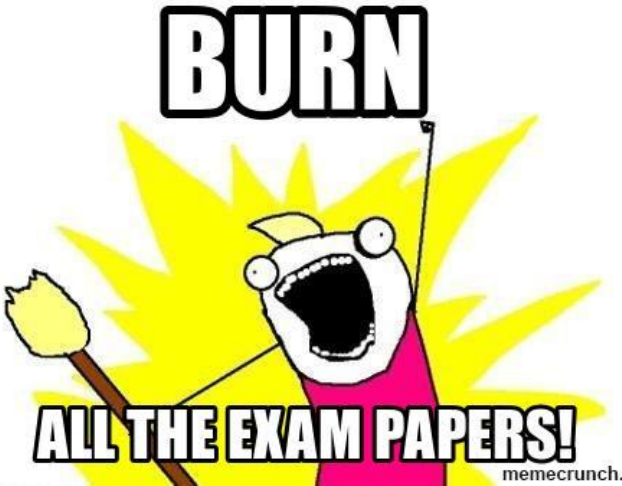
Further developing vital analytical skills

success in your career

becoming a better citizen

Requirements & Grading: No Exams!

Office visits	5%
Assignments	10%
Analysis & Results Draft	5%
Rough Draft	10%
Conference Paper	20%
Presentations	20%
Final Paper	30%



Details…

Bi-weekly office visits or 1-page summaries: Meet with me every 2 weeks with an update on your progress, or send at least one page summaries your activities (not your writing itself). **It is your responsibility to keep track of these contacts.**

Assignments: 1-page revised hypothesis & justification, abstract, peer draft feedback, practice presentation, 700-800 word summary of your changes in response to peer, professor, and conference feedback and describing your revision process.

Rough Draft: This is basically your complete paper, but it will need substantive and stylistic revision to be better.

Any questions on the rest?

Dates for Next Semester

1. Jan 22: 1 page hypothesis & justification
2. Jan 29: abstract due
3. Feb 26: Methods & results draft due
4. March 22: Draft due (add intro, discussion, & conclusion, revise other sections)
5. March 29: Peer draft feedback due
6. April 5: Submit final conference paper
7. **April 12: Practice #1 presentations & feedback**
8. **April 19: Practice #2 presentations & feedback**
   Scholar's Day posters due
9. April 26: Scholars' Day presentations
10. April 22: Illinois State conference (all-day trip)
11. May 4: Final version of paper due

Other Info

This is a challenging class, but I'm here to help!

Syllabus may be revised slightly, but I'll let you know.

College Info:

Academic Honesty Policy – don't cheat or else!

Disability Support Services – academic accommodations

Writing Center – coaching on writing skills

Counseling Services – support for all kinds of stresses

Tips for Next Semester

1. Make use of the Writing Center
2. Meet regularly with me for feedback
3. Organize your time wisely throughout term
4. Focus on your analysis, discussion, & conclusion, but also revise other parts
5. Practice your presentation
6. Keep your paper focused on PS principles (What *causes* what? How well does your analysis generalize? How do your methods help us *know*?)

Questions?

PS Writing Tips

(summarizing several sources)

PS Writing Tips

Logical & objective writing style

Important topic with a puzzle or interesting question

Describe & justify importance, clearly state question

Focus on building theories & testing hypotheses w/ data

Clear thesis about how the world works

Well-chosen, relevant evidence

Rigor in concept & methods

Objective analysis for/against: describe, evaluate, explain

Clear, persuasive argument for an answer

Address counter-arguments

Copy good practices from past work: definitions, methods

For Next Time:

There is no next time.

Have a great break!

See you next semester.