

## GOV 385M Conceptualization and Measurement | Fall 2010

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### Course Description

This course introduces students to the challenges of developing meaningful social science concepts and identifying and evaluating appropriate measures of these concepts. These are challenges that arise, explicitly or not, in nearly every social science inquiry. Topics include the following. What makes for a “good” concept? How do we determine the defining characteristics of concepts? How can we build measures of concepts and evaluate their reliability and validity? How can we measure concepts comparably across different contexts (both geographic and historical)? The objective of the course is highly pragmatic. Students will develop a familiarity with a varied set of methodological tools that are useful with both qualitative and quantitative data. As such, the course requirements will include applied exercises and analyses. The course will entail both “interpretive” and statistical components, although prior coursework in methodology of any sort is not required or expected.

### Course Materials

*Online.* Information for this course will be posted on the class Blackboard site. There you will find updates to this syllabus, electronic copies of selected readings, instructions for uploading assignments, and regular announcements. If you have any problems with your password or accessing Blackboard, contact ITS. If you can access Blackboard, but cannot access any material from this course, please contact Professor Elkins by email.

*Print.* The following books are available for purchase at the UT Co-op or from online bookstores at your convenience. All other readings will be available on the course website.

Carmines, Edward J. and Richard A. Zeller. 1979. *Reliability and Validity Assessment*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Goertz, Gary. 2006. *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[Recommended, but expensive] Bollen, Kenneth A. 1989. *Structural Equations With Latent Variables*. Wiley, 1989

*Software.* For several units in the course, we will employ various software packages, all of which are available on the apps.austin.utexas.edu server. If you do not already have an account on that server, you should acquire one from ITS.

### Requirements and Grading

Discussion of the written material is a central component of the course, and the expectation is that you read carefully and share your reactions to, and questions about, the readings. Your grade will be based on the following components:

- (1) *Reaction papers and problem sets (50%).* Most (but not all) weeks you will be responsible for a short assignment related to the week's theme. Typically, you will be asked to write a short reaction paper (roughly two pages, double spaced), in which you reflect on some aspect(s) of the reading. For

some of these weeks, I will ask that you address a particular topic or question in your reaction paper and for some I will give you a short problem set in lieu of the reaction paper. Unless otherwise noted, the reaction papers are due by 10 PM on the Tuesday prior to class.

(2) *Research Paper (50%)*. You will be expected to produce a short (15 page) research paper on one of the themes of the course. The paper is due Friday, December 10 at 5PM.

### **Policy for Missed Deadlines**

*Reaction papers*. The intent of the reaction papers is for you to reflect upon the readings prior to our discussion of them. Accordingly, late reaction papers will not be accepted.

*Late Research Papers and Incompletes*. Barring extenuating circumstances, I will not accept any late research papers nor grant any incompletes.

### **Office Hours**

WF 1:30-3:00 PM in 4.120, Batts Hall. Most weeks I will post a signup sheet on my door in case you would like to reserve a time.

### **Accommodations**

*Disabilities*. Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

*Religious Observance*. By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to abide by University regulations with respect to academic honesty as described herein: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint\\_student.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php).

## TOPICS AND READINGS

### 1. *Introduction: The Centrality of Concepts and Measures.*

#### 2. *Motivating Exemplars (some close to home)*

Burnham, Walter Dean. 1991. "Critical Realignment: Dead or Alive?" In Byron E. Shafer, ed., *The End of Realignment? Interpreting American Electoral Eras*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Cain, Bruce and John Ferejohn. 1981. "Party Identification in the United States and Great Britain." *Comparative Political Studies* 14(1): 31-47.

Luskin, Robert C. 2003. "The Heavenly Public: What Would a Fully Informed Citizenry Be Like?" In Michael B. MacKuen and George Rabinowitz, eds., *Electoral Democracy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Weyland, Kurt. 2001. "Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics." *Comparative Politics* 34 (1): 1-22.

Kinder, Donald and David Sears. 1981. "Prejudice and Politics: Symbolic Racism Versus Racial Threats to the Good Life." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40: 414-431.

### 3. *Concept Formation: General Guidelines*

Goertz, Gary. 2006. *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 3.

Sartori, Giovanni. 1984. *Social Science Concepts*. Beverly Hills: Sage. Chapter 1.

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Pp. 109-112 ("Maximize Concreteness")

#### RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER READING:

\*Gerring, John. 2001. *Social Science Methodology*. Cambridge. Chapter 3.

\*Jones, Charles. 1974. "Doing Before Knowing: Concept Development in Political Research." *APSR* 18: 215-228.

### 4. *Typologies and Classification*

Goertz, Gary. 2006. *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2

Collier, David, Jody Laporte, and Jason Seawright. 2008. "Typologies: Forming Concepts and Creating Categorical Variables." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, Box-Steffensmeier, Brady, and Collier (eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Colin Elman, "Explanatory Typologies in Qualitative Studies of International Politics." *International Organization* 59:2 (Spring 2005), pp. 293-326

Gould, Stephen Jay. 1990. "Bully for Brontosaurus: A Minor Victory Snatched from the Jaws of Taxonomic Triviality." *Natural History* 2: 16-24

Collier, David and Steven Levitsky. 1997. "Democracy with adjectives: Conceptual innovation in comparative research." *World Politics*.

RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER READING:

\*Ragin, Charles. 2008. "Measurement versus Calibration: A Set-theoretic Approach." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, Box-Steffensmeier, Brady, and Collier (eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**5. Reliability and Validity: Standard Approaches (with a glimpse at Democracy)**

Carmines, Edward J. and Richard A. Zeller. 1979. *Reliability and Validity Assessment*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Section 5.1

Goertz, Chapter 4.

Elkins, Zachary. 2000. "Gradations of Democracy? Empirical Tests of Alternative Conceptualizations." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(2): 287-294.

Bollen, Kenneth. "Liberal Democracy: Validity and Method Factors in Cross National Measures." *American Journal of Political Science* 37(4): 1207-30.

RECOMMENDED FOR FUTURE READING:

\*Tinsley, Howard E.A.; David J. Weiss. 1975. "Inter-rater Reliability and Agreement of Subjective Judgments." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 22, 358-76.

\*Traub, Ross E. 1994. *Reliability for the Social Sciences: Theory and Applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

\*Duncan, Otis Dudley. 1984. *Notes on Social Measurement: Historical and Critical*. New York: Russell Sage.

\*Judd, Charles M.; Gary H. McClelland. 1998. "Measurement." In D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske, and G. Lindzey (eds), *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (Boston: McGraw-Hill).

**6. Validity and Reliability: Interpretive and Mixed-method Approaches**

Adcock, Robert, and David Collier. 2001. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *American Political Science Review* 95:529-46.

Wolcott, Harry F. 1994. "On Seeking – and Rejecting – Validity in Qualitative Research." In *Transforming Qualitative Data*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Kirk, Jerome and Marc L. Miller. 1986. *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

David Collier, "Data, Field Work, and Extracting New Ideas at Close Range," *APSA -CP Newsletter* Winter 1999 pp. 1-6.

## 7. Measurement Across Contexts

- Elkins, Zachary and John Sides. "The Vodka is Potent but the Meat is Rotten." Manuscript.
- Przeworski, Adam and Henry Teune. 1970. *The Logic of Comparative Inquiry*. New York. [Part II: Measurement]
- Giovanni Sartori. 1970. "Concept Mis-formation in Comparative Politics." *American Political Science Review* 64: 1033-1053.
- Paxton, Pam. 1999. "Is Social Capital Declining in the United States: A Multiple Indicator Assessment." *American Journal of Sociology* 105: 88-127.
- Locke, Richard M. and Kathleen Thelan. 1995. "Apples and Oranges Revisited: Contextualized Comparisons and the Study of Comparative Labor Politics." *Comparative Political Studies* 23: 337-367.

### RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER READING:

- \*Zelditch, Morris. 1971. "Comparability." In Ivan Vallier, ed., *Comparative Methods in Sociology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- \*Weber, Max. 1978. "On Understanding." In Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- \*Blalock, H. 1982. *Measurement in the Social Sciences*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- \*David Collier and James Mahon. 1993. "Conceptual Stretching Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis." *American Political Science Review*: 845-855.

## 8. Evaluating Measurement Models, Part I: Exploratory Factor Analysis

- Kim, Jae-on and Charles Mueller. 1978. *Factor Analysis: Statistical Methods and Practical Issues*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications. [Available as an ebook on the UT Library Catalog]

### RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER READING:

- Stevens 1986
- Zeller and Carmines. 1980.

## 9. Evaluating Measurement Models, Part II: Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Item Response Theory (and related methods)

- Long, J. Scott. 1983. *Confirmatory Factor Analysis*. Sage.
- Jackman, Simon. 2008. "Measurement." In the *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*.
- Bollen, Kenneth A. and Burke D. Grandjean. 1981. "The Dimension(s) of Democracy: Further Issues in the Measurement and Effects of Political Democracy." *American Sociological Review* 46: 651-569.
- Green, Donald Philip and Jack Cirtrin. 1994. "Measurement Error and the Structure of Attitudes: Are Positive and Negative Judgments Opposites?" *American Journal of Political Science* 38: 256-281.

Defigueiredo, Rui and Zachary Elkins. 2003. "Are Patriots Bigots? An Inquiry into the Vices of In-group Pride." *American Journal of Political Science* 47: 171-188.

Review the following articles from earlier weeks:

Bollen, Kenneth. "Liberal Democracy: Validity and Method Factors in Cross National Measures." *American Journal of Political Science* 37(4): 1207-30.

Paxton, Pam. 1999. "Is Social Capital Declining in the United States: A Multiple Indicator Assessment." *American Journal of Sociology* 105: 88-127.

RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER READING:

\*Bollen, Kenneth A. 1989. *Structural Equations With Latent Variables*. Wiley.

### 10. Scaling, Levels of Measurement, and Index Construction

Bollen, Kenneth and Richard Lennox. 1991. "Conventional Wisdom on Measurement: A Structural Equation Perspective." *Psychological Bulletin* 2:305-314.

Bollen, Kenneth. 1984. "Multiple Indicators: Internal Consistency or No Necessary Relationship." *Quality and Quantity* 18: 377-85.

Jacoby, William G. 1999. "Levels of Measurement and Political Research: An Optimistic View." *American Journal of Political Science* 43, 271-301.

Judd, Smith, and Kidder. 1991. "Scaling" in *Research Methods in Social Relations*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

RECOMMENDED:

Duncan, Otis Dudley. 1984. *Notes on Social Measurement: Historical and Critical*. New York: Russell Sage.

Diamantopoulos, A. and HM Winklhofer. 2001. "Index construction with formative indicators: an alternative to scale development." *Journal of Marketing Research*.

Velleman, Paul F.; Leland Wilkinson. 1993. "Nominal, Ordinal, Interval, and Ratio Typologies are Misleading." *American Statistician* 47, 65-72.

### 11. The Art and Science of Asking Questions

Bradburn, Norman M. 1983. "Response Effects." In *Handbook of Survey Research*, Peter Rossi, James D. Wright, and Andy B. Anderson (eds.). New York: Academic Press.

Putnam, Robert D. 1973. "Studying Elite Political Culture: The Case of 'Ideology'." *American Political Science Review* 65: 651-681.

Bradburn, Norman M., Lance J. Rips, and Steven K. Shevell. 1987. "Answering Autobiographical Questions: the Impact of Memory and Inference on Surveys." *Science*, 235: 157-161.

Bishop, George F., Robert W. Oldendick, Alfred J. Tuchfarber, and Stephen E. Bennett. 1989. "Pseudo-Opinions on Public Affairs." In *Survey Research Methods*, eds. Eleanor Singer and Stanley Presser. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 425-436.

Converse, Jean M. and Howard Schuman. 1974. *Conversations at Random: Survey Research as Interviewers See It*. New York: Wiley. Ch. 2.

Aberbach, Joel D. and Bert A. Rockman. 2002. "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35: 673-676.

## **12. Creative Measurement**

Webb, Eugene J., Donald T. Campbell, Richard D. Schwartz, Lee Sechrest, and Janet Belew Grove. 1981. *Nonreactive Measures in the Social Sciences*. 2nd edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.