

Foundations of American Politics

RESEARCH ARTICLE WORKSHOP

Summer 2026

bgpopescu.net/teaching/research_workshop/research_american_gov.html

Details

Instructor: Bogdan Popescu

Program Duration: 15 Weeks (9 mentor meetings)

Structure: Nine one-on-one, remote weekly sessions for 1 hour

Course Description

This course is an intensive, hands-on introduction to writing a research article in the social sciences, with a focus on political science, sociology, or economics. By the end of the course, students will have developed and refined a complete research paper through a series of iterative assignments and structured feedback. The course integrates methodological training, substantive readings, and practical writing skills. Course content is divided into weekly units covering both technical skills and theoretical content. This course is demanding, but it's designed to give you the tools to write your first publishable article. I am here to guide you every step of the way.

This course introduces students to the core areas of American politics through four thematic modules: the foundations of voting behavior, race and partisan realignment, Latino politics and demographic change, and the consequences of expanding the franchise. Students begin by examining competing explanations of how Americans form partisan attachments and choose candidates through Campbell et al., Achen and Bartels, and Bartels, then trace the transformation of the American electorate—from the one-party South through the civil rights realignment to today's racially polarized voting—using Key, Kuziemko and Washington, and Kuriwaki et al. The course then explores how immigration and demographic change are reshaping electoral coalitions, engaging both theoretical and quantitative perspectives from Fraga, Barreto, Abrajano and Hajnal, and the most recent evidence on Latino partisan shifts from Fraga, Velez, and West. It concludes with the study of suffrage, turnout, and representation through Miller, Cascio and Washington, and Box-Steffensmeier, De Boef, and Lin. Throughout, students acquire foundational quantitative skills in R and apply them to electoral and survey data, culminating in an empirical research paper that connects theories of voting behavior to real-world political outcomes.

Assessment will be based on the progressive development of a research project, including submission of a research question, proposal, outline, draft, and final paper, as well as in-class presentations. No prior experience with coding or statistics is required, but students should be ready to engage with challenging material in a supportive, step-by-step environment.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course the students will be able to:

- Develop a research question and transform it into a publishable paper.
- Master essential academic tools including reference managers (e.g., JabRef), markdown-based word processing, and professional presentation software.
- Write each section of a paper: abstract, introduction, argument, methods, literature review, findings, discussion, and conclusion.
- Conduct basic quantitative analysis in R, including data merging, regression modeling, and visualization.
- Understand and apply core methods in social science research, including qualitative methods, difference-in-differences (DiD), and regression discontinuity design (RDD).
- Create a personal academic website using GitHub Pages to showcase their work.

Weekly Presentations

Students will deliver a 20-minute presentation on a topic assigned in advance. Presentations should include a clear introduction, main points, and conclusion. Use visual aids (e.g., slides) effectively, ensuring text is legible and visuals are relevant. Practice beforehand to stay within the time limit and maintain a confident, professional tone. Be prepared to answer 2-3 questions from peers or the instructor during and after the presentation. Remember to cite your sources and avoid reading verbatim from slides or notes.

In addition to summarizing the key arguments or findings, your presentation should include critical analysis of the material. Highlight what the author does not address, the limitations of their research, or potential problems in their analysis or methodology. Think about how the research could be improved, expanded, or connected to broader themes discussed in class, and incorporate these insights into your presentation.

Each week, you will give a short presentation on that week's readings. You can download the [template for the paper presentation at this link](#).

How weekly homework works: after each meeting, your homework has two components: (1) the slide decks listed under the current week, and (2) the readings listed under the *following* week. The readings must be completed before the next meeting — they are the basis of your weekly presentation and of our discussion.

Research Paper

The research paper should provide an extensive background on the topic and a clear contribution to the literature. The analysis should include some quantitative analysis to test hypotheses. The statistical part of the research project involves using data (collect and prepare the data to run quantitative analyses and produce graphs) and specialized software (R). For American politics topics, rich publicly available data include the American National Election Studies (ANES), the Cooperative Election Study (CES), and county-level election returns.

The final paper should be approximately 15–20 pages double-spaced (somewhat shorter or longer is acceptable depending on the target journal's requirements) and should engage critically with the literature, citing at least 5–10 papers in the field.

Research Paper Template

Use the following as a starting point for writing your own research paper:

- [Research Paper Template](#) | [Replication](#)

Research Paper Examples

This section provides two complete examples of finished research papers and presentations. These are not templates to copy, but illustrations of different research designs. Use them to see how arguments, methods, and findings can be structured and communicated in practice.

- **Quantitative Example**
 - [Research Paper \(Quantitative\)](#) | [Replication Files](#)
 - [Presentation \(Quantitative\)](#) | [Replication Files](#)
- **Qualitative Example**
 - [Research Paper \(Qualitative\)](#) | [Replication Files](#)
 - [Presentation \(Qualitative\)](#) | [Replication Files](#)

Recommended Optional Books

Writing Articles

Coppedge, M. 2012. *Democratization and Research Methods*. Cambridge University Press.

Halperin, S., & Heath, O. (2012). *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Punch, K. F. 2014. *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Van Evera, S. 1997. *Guide to methods for students of political science*. Cornell University Press.

Statistics

Cunningham, Scott. 2021. *Causal Inference: The Mixtape*. Yale University Press. <https://mixtape.scunning.com>.

Ismay, Chester, and Albert Y. Kim. 2019. *Statistical Inference via Data Science: A Modern Dive into R and the Tidyverse*. Chapman and Hall / CRC. <https://moderndive.com/>.

Huntington-Klein, Nick. 2021. *The Effect: An Introduction to Research Design and Causality*. Boca Raton, Florida: Chapman and Hall / CRC. <https://theeffectbook.net/>.

Llaudet, Elena and Imai, Kosuke. 2023 *“Data Analysis for Social Science.”* Princeton: Oxford University Press.

Warne, Russel T. 2018. *“Statistics for the Social Sciences. A General Linear Model Approach.”* London: Cambridge University Press.

Causal Inference

Bauer, Paul C. and Dennis Cohen. 2023. *Applied Causal Analysis (with R)* <https://bookdown.org/paul/applied-causal-analysis/>.

Keyes, David, R for the Rest of Us: 2025. *A Statistics-Free Introduction* <https://book.rfortherestofus.com>. No Starch Press

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Lovelace, Robin, Nowosad, Jakub, and Jannes Muenchow. 2021. *Geocomputation with R*. <https://bookdown.org/robinlovelace/geocompr/>.

Mieno, Tara. 2023. *R as GIS for Economists*. <https://tmieno2.github.io/R-as-GIS-for-Economists/>.

Week 1

- Intro to the Course - 2026-06-06

Homework 1: Research Design and Presentation: Go over:

- [The Topic and Research Question Slides](#)
- [Quarto Presentations Slides](#)

Homework 2: Statistics and R Programming: Go over:

- [Operations and Objects in R Slides](#)
- [Intro to Statistics Slides](#)

Homework 3: Readings: Read the Week 2 readings (listed below) and prepare a short presentation on them for the Week 2 meeting.

Week 2

Foundations of American Voting Behavior - 2026-06-11

- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: Wiley. C6 - The Impact of Party Identification [[PDF](#)]
- Achen, Christopher H., and Larry M. Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. C1 [[PDF](#)]
- Bartels, Larry M. 2000. "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952–1996." *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (1): 35–50. [[PDF](#)]

Homework 1: Research Design and Presentation: Go over:

- [Essential Tools for Writing a Paper Slides](#)

- [The Abstract and the Argument Slides](#)

Homework 2: Statistics and R Programming: Go over:

- [Working with Data in R Slides](#)
- [Dplyr and Basic Visualization Slides](#)

Homework 3: Readings: Read the Week 3 readings (listed below) and prepare a short presentation on them for the Week 3 meeting.

Deadline: Syllabus - 2026-06-12

Deadline: Research Question - 2026-06-19

Week 3

Race, Realignment, and the American Electorate - 2026-06-20

- Key, V. O., Jr. 1949. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. C1 [[PDF](#)]
- Kuziemko, Ilyana, and Ebonya Washington. 2018. "Why Did the Democrats Lose the South? Bringing New Data to an Old Debate." *American Economic Review* 108 (10): 2830–2867. [[PDF](#)]
- Kuriwaki, Shiro, Stephen Ansolabehere, Angelo Dagonel, and Soichiro Yamauchi. 2024. "The Geography of Racially Polarized Voting: Calibrating Surveys at the District Level." *American Political Science Review* 118 (2): 922–939. [[PDF](#)]

Homework 1: Research Design and Presentation: Go over:

- [Literature Review Slides](#)
- [Writing the Research Proposal:](#) question, hypotheses literature, methods

Homework 2: Statistics and R Programming: Go over:

- [Visualizing Data Distributions in R Slides](#)
- [Modeling Relationships Between Variables Slides](#)

Homework 3: Readings: Read the Week 4 readings (listed below) and prepare a short presentation on them for the Week 4 meeting.

Deadline: Research Proposal - 2026-06-26

Week 4

Latino Politics and Demographic Change - 2026-06-27

- Fraga, Bernard L. 2018. *The Turnout Gap: Race, Ethnicity, and Political Inequality in a Diversifying America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. C5 - *The Political Geography of the Turnout Gap* [PDF]
- Barreto, Matt A. 2007. “¡Sí Se Puede! Latino Candidates and the Mobilization of Latino Voters.” *American Political Science Review* 101 (3): 425–441. [PDF]
- Abrajano, Marisa, and Zoltan L. Hajnal. 2015. *White Backlash: Immigration, Race, and American Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. C1 [PDF]
- Fraga, Bernard L., Yamil R. Velez, and Emily A. West. 2025. “Reversion to the Mean, or Their Version of the Dream? Latino Voting in an Age of Populism.” *American Political Science Review* 119 (1): 517–525. [PDF]

Homework 1: Statistics and R Programming: Go over:

- [Interpreting Binary and Multivariate Regression Models Slides](#)
- [Differences-in-Differences Slides](#)
- [Data Visualization in R - 1 Slides](#)

Homework 2: Readings: Read the Week 5 readings (listed below) and prepare a short presentation on them for the Week 5 meeting.

Deadline: Research Paper Outline - 2026-07-03

Week 5

Suffrage, Turnout, and Representation - 2026-07-04

- Miller, Grant. 2008. “Women’s Suffrage, Political Responsiveness, and Child Survival in American History.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123 (3): 1287–1327. [PDF] [Appendix]
- Cascio, Elizabeth U., and Ebonya Washington. 2014. “Valuing the Vote: The Redistribution of Voting Rights and State Funds following the Voting Rights Act of 1965.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129 (1): 379–433. [PDF]
- Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M., Suzanna De Boef, and Tse-Min Lin. 2004. “The Dynamics of the Partisan Gender Gap.” *American Political Science Review* 98 (3): 515–528. [PDF]

Homework 1: Research Design and Presentation: Go over:

- [Methods Slides](#)
- Writing the Paper Outline

Homework 2: Statistics and R Programming: Go over:

- [Regression Discontinuity Design Slides](#)

- [Data Visualization in R - 2 Slides](#)
- [Data Visualization in R - 3 Slides](#)

Week 6

Replication: Difference-in-Differences - 2026-07-11

Homework 1: Research Design and Presentation: Go over:

- [Findings, Discussion, Intro, and Conclusion Slides](#)
- [Making a website on GitHub: `username.github.io`](#)

Deadline: Milestone - 2026-07-17

Week 7

Replication: Regression Discontinuity Design - 2026-07-18

Homework: Write:

- Work on Research Design, Data, Research Methodology

Week 8

Paper Development - 2026-07-25

Homework: Write:

- Work on Research Design, Data, Research Methodology
- Finish First Draft

Deadline: First Draft - 2026-07-31

Week 9

Paper Feedback - 2026-08-01

- Writing an academic CV and publishing on your personal website
- CV template:

– [tex file](#) (open the tex file in quarto and compile after updating it with personal details)

– [pdf file](#)

Homework: Write:

- Revise Paper: Methods
- Write academic CV and post on website

Week 10

Paper Development - 2026-08-08

Deadline: Revised Final Paper - 2026-08-21