

Research Scope & Methods (Graduate)
PSCI 5340.001
Prof. Andrew Enterline
Exercise #2
September 2, 2008

Instructions

Working with the primary elements of the scientific process reflected in the assigned in Johnson, Reynolds & Mycoff for weeks #2 and 3 of the seminar, your task is to work with your group to develop a research project on an assigned topic. By “primary elements,” I mean that each group is assigned the task of developing the following as they pertain to an assigned topic:

1. Develop a research question;
2. Investigate the relevant literature; and
3. Develop a theory that might explain behavior relating to your research question; and
4. Derive hypotheses from your theory, and in doing so carefully identifying and relate your concepts.
5. Establish a research design (or designs) to test your hypothesis (or hypotheses), and in turn evaluate your theory;
6. Test your hypotheses and sum your findings in terms of your theory; and
7. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of your project.

Each group is assigned a general research topic. The groups is free to develop a research question, theory, etc., from this topic as the group sees fit, though recall that central to your role as political scientists is the *explanation of political behavior*. As such, make sure to locate a political dimension relevant to the topic assigned, generate an appropriate research question, theory, and so forth.

The research topic for each group follow:

Group 1. Congressional influence over the President in foreign policy;

Group 2. Ethnicity and interstate conflict;

Group 3. Race and anti-terrorism policy;

Group 4. Democracy in the Middle East; and

Group 5. AIDS in Africa.

Groups are free to consult with me, though I might resist your entreaties if I am confident that you can resolve, or discover, the answer to your question yourself (so don't be offended.)

For next week's seminar (September 9), each group is responsible for developing a presentation of the first components of your research project. In doing so, you are required to produce a "project summary." Your project summary should contain the following elements:

1. A title page containing the title, as well as the names and email addresses of your group members;
2. A statement of the research topic and the research question that you identified;
3. A summary of the research to date;
4. A discussion of your theory and a declaration of the hypotheses that you derive from the theory.
5. A discussion of your research design;
6. Operationalization of your variables and justification of their compatibility with concepts embedded in hypotheses;
7. Test of hypotheses; and
8. Assessment of theory, given tests, followed by assessment of study (i.e., the strengths and weaknesses of your approach to the research question, and now you might do things differently given a second chance.)

The project summary should be sent to Enterline and *all* of the seminar participants in electronic form (a PDF, rather than an MS-Word document) 5 pm on September 8, and the group should bring hard copies for the seminar participants on September 9. As a group, you should appoint a presenter or two to present the fruits of your labors. The presentation by each group should be brief, about 15 minutes long, and each group is free to avail yourself of the computer/projection system available in WH211, and/or alternatively the white board and markers. Following each presentation, the seminar will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of a given project.