PSC 89101 Applied Quantitative Research
- Correlation, Comparison, Causality -

Fall term 2016
Tue 4:15pm - 6:15pm, C196.02
Prof. Till Weber

Description
Studying statistics makes your life more exciting and fulfilling.
Well, what can I say—you have just read past a course title containing the word “quantitative,” so you deserve immediate gratification. But I stand by my claim. Knowing about the powers of quantitative analysis will make you ask questions about politics you might otherwise never have considered. And with a manageable kit of quantitative research tools you can uncover structure in the political world where before was only fog or chaos. Even better, while learning all these wonderful things you will also fulfill the methods requirement of the doctoral program.

The course follows the credo that comparison is at the heart of all analysis. While this might be particularly appealing to “comparativists,” we consider comparative politics as a universal method of inference, not as a subfield of the discipline. The class is equally valuable for all substantive specializations concerned with empirical regularities and causal explanations. Distilling causality from regularity is the job of comparison. This is of course a widely shared aim, and the quantie world has some particularly neat tricks in store. You don’t need to be a math whiz to master these (this instructor is living proof).

Over the course of the semester, students will conduct their own quantitative research, present their work in class and produce a final paper. The instructor supports each project and makes sure that it builds on and advances the existing methodological proficiency of the student(s) involved.

Our approach will be hands-on and pragmatic. The course cuts across the conventional division of basic and advanced statistics to facilitate the immediate implementation of diverse quantitative designs. Everyone is welcome irrespective of prior statistical training. If you are currently conducting quantitative research, feel encouraged to bring your problems to class. If you are considering collecting your own data, use the opportunity to anticipate the challenges waiting down the road. If you believe that quantitative methods inherently reproduce capitalist exploitation, help us liberate oppressed regression coefficients from the clutches of neoliberal positivism. Or if you are just looking for something new, come along to get inspiration and pick up versatile skills.

Requirements
1) Attend class. We really need you here.
2) Do the reading assignments on Blackboard.
3) Co-teach a lesson on your term project. Don’t forget to feed your audience—it’s on the house.
4) Write a focused research paper resulting from your project. Deadline: Dec XX (by email).

Contact GC
Tuesdays (preferably by appointment)
Office: 5-211
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Contact Baruch
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Semester schedule

8/30 Introduction to the course

Part I. The quantie boot camp

9/6 Data & Stata

9/13 Correlation

9/20 Comparison

9/27 Causality

10/4 No class (Alicia Silverstone’s 40th birthday)

10/11 No class (Michelle Trachtenberg’s 31st birthday)

Part II. Applied projects

10/14 FRI Team I
10/18 Team II
10/25 Team III
11/1 Team IV
11/8 Team V
11/15 Team VI
11/22 Team VII
11/29 Team VIII

Part III. Time to get your act together

12/6 How to write (quantitative) papers, and how to get them published

12/XX RESEARCH PAPERS DUE