

POLITICAL SCIENCE (POL S) 403 B
LAW AND VIOLENCE DATA LABORATORY
ADVANCED SEMINAR IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Winter 2022

M/W 1:30pm-3:20pm

Savery Hall (SAV), Room 130

Professor: Geoffrey Wallace

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Office Hours: See course website for details.

Course Website: On Canvas (<https://canvas.uw.edu>)

“One accurate measurement is worth a thousand expert opinions.”

– Grace Hopper (computer scientist and U.S. Navy rear admiral)

“Better a little which is well done, than a great deal imperfectly.”

– Plato in *Phaedo* (On the Soul)

Overview

Why do countries comply with international treaties? Why are some groups able to resolve their differences peacefully, while others resort to military force? Why are civilians violently targeted to a greater extent in some conflicts compared to others? These and related questions have significant historical precedents, and important theoretical and policy implication in the contemporary era. However, before any of these questions can be answered, we need to have a clear sense of *what* exactly we think we should be measuring, *how* we are going to measure it, and *why* that measurement strategy is preferable to the available alternatives. For example, what is compliance and how do we know it when we see it? How should civilians be defined and what sorts of actions should be in/excluded as violent?

This seminar introduces students to some of the crucial earlier stages of the social scientific research process – including concept formation and research design, but in particular the many matters of measurement and data collection. In most courses, students are often presented with the “final products” from scholarly endeavors, usually in the form of journal articles or books (e.g., on different arguments about compliance with treaties, or targeting civilians in war). These publications are frequently the culmination of years of hard work, resulting from countless decisions large and small made along the way. But often left not fully answered are questions like the following: How did the researchers come to formulate the questions they asked? What challenges and trade-offs did they inevitably encounter in the early stages of the research process, and how did they address them? And how did they come to select particular types of methods and data for answering their questions (and perhaps just as crucially, why did they choose *not* to use others)?

In this seminar, students will address these and related questions by thinking through, and engaging with, the many steps that together form the data collection process. We will do so through an in-depth examination of different approaches to conceptualizing and measuring political and social phenomena, taking into account their empirical, methodological, cultural, and ethical implications. While these approaches are relevant across various fields, we will focus substantively on applications from the study of law and political violence – areas with particularly rich and varied methodological traditions.

To make some of these abstract principles more concrete and put them into action, this course also has a large collaborative and experiential component, where students will work individually and together on a larger data collection initiative related to violence against journalists worldwide.

All information in the syllabus, as well as additional readings and announcements can be found on the Canvas course website at <https://canvas.uw.edu> (additional materials will be posted to a shared Google Drive). It is the student's responsibility to check the website on a frequent basis, since this is where all course-related information and developments will be posted.

*****Important Note*****: By enrolling in this course, students acknowledge that they have read, understand, and agree to follow **ALL** of the requirements, policies, and procedures laid out in this syllabus.

Course Objectives

- Define and describe some of the main considerations in conceptualizing and measuring phenomena in the social sciences, including validity, reliability, and precision.
- Compare and contrast a range of data collection approaches, including archives, government and non-governmental reports, interviews and surveys, experiments, newspapers, social media, and satellite and other spatial data, among others.
- Identify and apply some of the particular dynamics involved in, and tools available for, collaborative data collection endeavors.
- Advance a larger research project on the use of violence as a strategy against journalists and other members of the media.

My hope is that this course will be enjoyable, informative, and challenging, and will give students a more comprehensive sense of the earlier formative stages of the research process in the social sciences, which may prove useful for students when deciding what to do academically or professionally going forward.

Project Description and Relationship to the Course

Data collection endeavors in the social sciences are becoming increasingly ambitious in breadth and depth, often involving large collaborative teams. As such, students will join work on a larger project related to dynamics involving various forms of violence against journalists. This component of the project focuses on the killing of members of the media through a data set on all journalist killings worldwide for the years 1992-2020. Specifically, this project seeks to identify patterns in the resort to violence against journalists: for instance, why are journalists targeted to a greater extent in some countries, or at certain periods, than others? The long-term hope is that this project will provide a firmer basis for being able to address these and related questions involving the causes and consequences of violence against journalists. But an important prerequisite for answering any of these questions is to have a comprehensive accounting of episodes of journalist killings and the different attributes and dynamics involved.

A core motivation of this laboratory course concerns the many benefits offered by an experiential approach, where “learning-by-doing” provides for a more effective and stimulating path to developing a deeper understanding of the data collection process. Following this belief, we will be integrating work related to this substantive project on violence against journalists throughout all aspects of this course to help us better think about different aspects of data collection.

Readings

There are no required books for purchase. All readings are available in electronic format and will be posted on the Canvas course website.

Course Requirements

****Important Note**:** The nature and weighting of assessments are subject to change based on possible alterations in the mode of course delivery due to Covid disruptions, university policy changes, or related health and safety concerns. Any changes will be clearly announced by the instructor.

Students are expected to attend all class meetings (see further below for health-related issues).

Final grades for the course are determined by the following components:

- Data Collection/Classification (aka “coding”) Chunks and Logs/Journaling (weekly) – 50%
- Data Presentation – 10%
- Reflective Essay – 15%
- Participation – 25%

Data Collection/Classification (aka “coding”) Chunks and Logs/Journaling

Students will be expected to devote time and effort (around 3-4 hours each week) to specific coding tasks related to the project on journalist killings. This will include keep a log and journal of the work performed weekly. All coding and logs will be due by 9am of the following Monday morning each week. More details to be provided.

Data Presentation

One of the most challenging, but rewarding, tasks is to communicate with others about data-related matters. As part of developing professionalization and visual/oral communication skills, students will work in small groups to give a data presentation on one of the “Data Features” assigned each week, putting themselves in the shoes of the investigators for the relevant project. More details to be provided.

Reflective Essay

Using their prior logs and journaling, each student will write a short critical reflective essay closer to the end of the quarter on the journalism violence research project and how it fits with one or more of the general dimensions of data collection covered in the course. More details to be provided.

Participation

Because this is a small seminar, we have a great opportunity to engage with each other and discuss the course material and issues related to data collection. In the aim of making this experience rewarding for everyone involved, full and thoughtful participation is essential. Activities will include analyzing the readings and course material, discussing the “Data Features,” raising and resolving challenging cases in the journalism violence project, and applying course themes to current events. Students will be evaluated based on the quantity *and* quality of their participation. Further details on the structure and expectations for seminar will be provided.

The following is a set of general guidelines for how participation will be assessed.

	Exemplary (3.5-4.0)	Proficient (2.5-3.4)	Developing (1.5-2.4)	Inadequate (<1.5)
Frequency of participation in class	Student initiates contributions more than once in each class.	Student initiates contribution once in each class.	Student initiates contribution at least in half of the class	Student does not initiate contribution & needs instructor to solicit input.
Quality of comments	Comments always respectful, insightful & constructive. Uses appropriate terminology. Comments balanced between general impressions, opinions & specific, thoughtful criticisms or contributions.	Comments mostly respectful, insightful & constructive. Mostly uses appropriate terminology. Occasionally comments are too general or not relevant to the discussion.	Comments are sometimes respectful, constructive, with occasional signs of insight. Lacking in appropriate terminology. Comments not always relevant to the discussion.	Comments are disrespectful or uninformative. Does not use appropriate terminology. Heavy reliance on opinion & personal taste, e.g., “I love it,” “I hate it,” “It’s bad,” etc.
Listening Skills	Student listens attentively when others present materials, perspectives, as indicated by comments that reflect & build on others’ remarks, i.e., student hears what others say & contributes to the dialogue.	Student is mostly attentive when others present ideas, materials, as indicated by comments that reflect & build on others’ remarks. Occasionally needs encouragement or reminder from instructor of focus of comment.	Student is often inattentive and needs reminder of focus of class. Occasionally makes disruptive comments while others are speaking.	Does not listen to others; regularly talks while others speak or does not pay attention while others speak; detracts from discussion; sleeps, etc.

Data Lab Principles and Expectations

Beyond formal rules of academic misconduct (see further below for general UW policies), there are also important norms guiding data collection and social science research more generally. By participating in this seminar, all students agree to the following principles.¹

1. We are a team engaged in a collective effort. Reciprocity matters, so consider how your actions affect others.
2. We are also a community. We should treat each other with respect at all times. We may sometimes disagree (in fact, this is expected), but we will try our best to leave personal judgements and attacks aside.
3. Honesty is always the best policy in all endeavors, especially when it comes to data collection. Data-related work should never be falsified or misrepresented for any reason.
4. It’s OK to make mistakes – indeed, it’s almost inevitable when doing anything worthwhile. Students will **never** get into trouble for making mistakes (and it’s better for me to know about a mistake now than not know and find out later!). What matters is being forthright, learning from mistakes, and moving forward.

¹ Hat tip to Emily Gade’s (Emory University) Oppression/Resistance Lab for informing and inspiring several of these principles.

5. To reduce mistakes, when engaged in coding give your full attention and effort. Data collection and multitasking don't mix.
6. Don't be afraid to ask questions (chances are almost certain that others feel similarly). It is by asking questions that we learn.

Class Communications

- Canvas: For most administrative or logistical questions not of a personal nature (e.g., readings for the week), please consult the website and syllabus first. General announcements will also be posted via Canvas. Please consult regularly.
- Google Drive and Docs: All your assigned files related to the research project will be stored in individual folders on a shared class Google Drive, and you will enter your data and logs/journaling there (accounts will be associated with your UW NetID). This also allows for remote backing up of your work, one of the first principles of data collection.
 - We will be primarily working with Google Docs and Sheets (here is a brief [introduction](#) to the spreadsheet software).
- Classroom Discussion: We will devote time in each class session to connecting the weekly theme to the journalist killings project, as well as answering and discussing coding-related questions and reflections related to students' logs and journaling.
- Zoom: Office hours will take place over Zoom.
 - Office hours will be an open discussion format, allowing students to bring up any other coding or course-related questions that were not covered in class.
 - Everyone is likely familiar with Zoom at this point, but here is a brief [introduction](#) to using this meeting interface.
- Email: For all other matters, feel free to email me from your @uw.edu email address with the Subject Heading: "POL S 403: ..." Expect replies within 24 hours, excluding weekends.

Grading Scale

The 4.0 scale used in this course will be posted on Canvas.

Grading Policy and Appeals

Appeals must be made at least 24 hours after, but within one week, of when an assignment was originally returned to the class, or the grade posted online. Verbal appeals, or appeals simply asking for more points, will not be considered. To make an appeal, students are required to write a typed memo (no longer than the equivalent of 1 page single-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins) clearly explaining the reasons why they feel the grade they received was inappropriate.

Religious Accommodations

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy](#). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request Form](#).

Accessibility

If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please communicate your approved accommodations to the instructor as soon as possible so we can

discuss your needs in this course. If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to: mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you should likewise contact DRS at 206-543-8924, email uwdrs@uw.edu, or online at <http://disability.uw.edu>. DRS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor, and DRS. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law.

No alternative accommodations will be granted in this course without documentation from DRS. Students interested in obtaining accommodations should thus make appropriate arrangements with DRS as soon as possible in the quarter.

Acknowledgement of Course Material Content

All of the assigned materials for this course (lectures, readings, audio-visual materials, discussion) are directly relevant to its central theme – data collection on law and violence. The assigned materials are all widely recognized as important scholarly or cultural works. Students who intend to take this class should be aware, however, that a number of the assigned works contain adult themes and language. In particular, the reports on episodes of journalist killings used in the main project may include violent and other troubling details. Students who believe that exposure to such content will detract from their ability to absorb and understand the required course materials, or complete assignments, are encouraged to reach out to the instructor to discuss their concerns, but may need to consider dropping the class. By remaining in this course, students acknowledge that the instructor has alerted them to the adult themes and language present in some of the assigned materials, and that they are responsible for all of the required materials, even those that they might find offensive.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is a serious offense at the University of Washington. All cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Arts and Sciences Committee on Academic Conduct, and may result in a grade of 0.0 for the assignment in question in addition to other potential consequences. The instructor takes instances of academic misconduct seriously, and is apt to pursue the most serious sanctions available under university guidelines.

University policies and guidelines regarding cheating and plagiarism can be found at <https://depts.washington.edu/grading/pdf/AcademicResponsibility.pdf>.

What constitutes academic misconduct? The University of Washington Student Conduct Code defines it as the following (WAC 478-120-024).

Academic misconduct includes:

- (a) **“Cheating,”** which includes, but is not limited to:
 - (i) The use of unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; or
 - (ii) The acquisition, use, or distribution of unpublished materials created by another student without the express permission of the original author(s).
- (b) **“Falsification,”** which is the intentional use or submission of falsified data, records, or other information including, but not limited to, records of internship or practicum experiences or attendance at any required event(s). Falsification also includes falsifying scientific and/or scholarly research.

- (c) **“Plagiarism,”** which is the submission or presentation of someone else’s words, composition, research, or expressed ideas, whether published or unpublished, without attribution. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:
 - (i) The use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; or
 - (ii) The unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or acquired from an entity engaging in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.
- (d) **Prohibited collaboration.**
- (e) Engaging in behavior specifically prohibited by an instructor in the course of class instruction or in a course syllabus.
- (f) **Multiple submissions** of the same work in separate courses without the express permission of the instructor(s).
- (g) Taking deliberate action to destroy or damage another’s academic work in order to gain an advantage for oneself or another.
- (h) The recording of instructional content without the express permission of the instructor(s), and/or the dissemination or use of such unauthorized records.

If you are uncertain what constitutes plagiarism, please ask the instructor. The Political Science/JSIS/LSJ/CHID Writing Center also offers guidance on plagiarism, general advice on writing, and related issues of academic integrity:
<http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/forstudents.html>.

COVID-19

We are all in this together! The health and safety of the entire University of Washington community is of the highest priority. Masks covering the nose and mouth are required in the classroom or other indoor spaces, regardless of vaccination status. Eating and drinking will not be permitted in class. The instructor and TAs have the authority to cancel class if students do not comply. Non-compliant students may be reported to the Community Standards and Student Conduct office. For further details on UW’s face covering policy, see [here](#).

If you have [symptoms](#), do not come to class and do get [tested](#). For additional information about COVID-19 and UW policies, see [here](#).

Self-Care

Undergraduate studies are hard enough in normal times, but these are unfortunately not normal times. We are currently living through a global pandemic, heightened economic uncertainty, a period of renewed attention domestically and internationally to racial injustice, and an intensely polarized political environment.

The Counseling Center and Hall Health are excellent resources on campus that many UW students utilize. Students may get help with study skills, career decisions, substance abuse, relationship difficulties, anxiety, depression, or other concerns.

- [Husky Health & Well-Being Portal](#)
- [Counseling Center](#)
- [Hall Health](#)

Course Schedule

The following is a schedule of topics and readings for the course. The schedule is subject to change based on the pace of the class. The instructor will clearly announce any changes.

What a Typical Week Looks Like

Topics are usually ordered thematically by week, meaning the two classes should be viewed as closely connected, often continuing on where the prior one left off. A general week looks like the following.

- Students submit and update their coding work and logs/journaling by 9am Monday morning for the prior week.
- Start with a general overview of the week's theme by the instructor, followed by small group exercises and/or class discussion.
- Time allotted each class to discuss work and progress on the journalist killing project, addressing specific questions/challenges, as well as connecting the project to the themes from the current or prior weeks.
- "Data Feature" presentation and discussion. This will usually occur in the second class meeting of the week, but exact timing will depend on pace and other considerations. Will be clearly announced ahead of time.

Week 1 (M 1/3; W 1/5): Introduction and Overview – Or, Why Are We Here? The Art and Science of Data Collection with an Overview of Journalist Killings Project

M 1/3: Overview of Course Content and Organization

- Hoover Green, Amelia. 2013. "How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps." (4 pgs).
 - This article provides a foundation for more effectively reading and understanding many of the subsequent readings in the course.
- International News Safety Institute (INSI). 2007. *Killing the Messenger: Report of the Global Inquiry by the International News Safety Institute into the Protection of Journalists*.
 - Read Excerpt 2-18 to get a sense of violence against journalists and one approach to studying the topic. Skim Appendix A (55-69) for a summary of some trends in journalist killings.

W 1/5: Overview of the Journalist Killings Data Collection Project

- Instructions and Codebook for Journalist Killings Data Set (On Google Drive)
 - Read entire codebook to get a sense of the full project, but concentrate on the variables listed in the accompanying "Instructions" document.

Training Note: We will be going over the basic files, organization, and tasks involved in the work involved in the journalist killings project.

Week 2 (M 1/10; W 1/12): What's the Question...but Just as Importantly What's the Story? Inquiring and Theorizing as First Steps in Data Collection

- Brancati, Dawn. 2018. *Social Scientific Research*. Thousand Oaks, C.A.: SAGE Publications. Ch.3 "Identifying a Research Question" (31-44).

Data Feature

- Eck, Kristine, and Lisa Hultman. 2007. "One-Sided Violence Against Civilians in War: Insights from New Fatality Data." *Journal of Peace Research* 44(2): 233–246.

Week 3 (W 1/19): Constructing Up or Tearing Down? Concepts as Fundamental Building Blocks

*****No Class M 1/17 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day*****

- Brancati, Dawn. 2018. *Social Scientific Research*. Thousand Oaks, C.A.: SAGE Publications. Ch.5 "Building Effective Concepts" (61-76).

Data Feature

- Cohen, Dara K. 2016. *Rape During Civil War*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. Ch.2 "Research Strategy, Cross-National Evidence (1980–2009), and Statistical Tests" (Excerpt 56-71) and Appendix "Notes on Data Collection on Wartime Rape" (201-208).

Week 4 (M 1/24; W 1/26): Getting Operational(ized) – From Concepts to Measurement

- Pollock, Philip H. 2020. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. Ch.2 "Measuring and Describing Variables" (Excerpts 34-49, 55-60, 64-65).
 - Don't get too bogged down in some of the technicalities (especially of the portions of the chapter that are not assigned). Rather, get an overall sense of different sorts of measures and their relative strengths/weaknesses.

Data Feature

- Fjelde, Hanne, and Kristine Höglund. 2022. "Introducing the Deadly Electoral Conflict Dataset (DECO)." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 66(1):162-185.

Week 5 (M 1/31; W 2/2): And from Measurement to the Collection Process – Some Best (or at Least Better?) Practices

- Lieberman, Evan S. 2010. "Bridging the Qualitative-Quantitative Divide: Best Practices in the Development of Historically Oriented Replication Databases." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 37–59.

Data Feature

- Morrow, James D., and Hyeran Jo. 2006. "Compliance with the Laws of War: Dataset and Coding Rules." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 23 (1): 91–113.

Week 6 (M 2/7; W 2/9): First, Second (and Third?) – Evaluating Primary and Secondary Sources

- Thies, Cameron G. 2002. "A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations." *International Studies Perspectives* 3 (4): 351–372.

Data Feature

- Kopstein, Jeffrey S., and Jason Wittenberg. 2018. *Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. Ch.3 "Measuring Threat and Violence" (43-56), Ch.4 "Beyond Jedwabne" (Excerpts 57-58; 64-72 for a sense of how the various data were used), and Appendix (137-142).

Week 7 (M 2/14; W 2/16): Power to the People? Asking Around about Interviews and Surveys

- Mosley, Layna. 2013. "Introduction. 'Just Talk to People'? Interviews in Contemporary Political Science." In *Interview Research in Political Science*. Layna Mosley, ed. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. (1-28).
- Pew Research Center. [Writing Survey Questions](#) (including 5-minute embedded video).

Data Feature

- Straus, Scott. 2006. *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. Ch.1 "Introduction" (Excerpt 1-6), Ch.5 "Why Perpetrators Say They Committed Genocide" (122-152), and Appendix (Excerpt 260-264).

Week 8 (W 2/23): What's Valid and/or What's "Right"? Ethical Considerations in Data Collection

*****No Class M 2/21 – Presidents' Day*****

- Desposato, Scott. 2014. "[Ethics and Research in Comparative Politics](#)." *The Monkey Cage: The Washington Post* (blog). (November 3).
- Brooks, Sarah M. 2013. "The Ethical Treatment of Human Subjects and the Institutional Review Board Process." In *Interview Research in Political Science*. Layna Mosley, ed. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press. (45-66).

Presentation and Q&A on W 2/23 from Galen Basse, Human Subjects Division, UW.

Data Feature

- Van der Windt, Peter, and Macartan Humphreys. 2016. "Crowdseeding in Eastern Congo: Using Cell Phones to Collect Conflict Events Data in Real Time." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60(4): 748-781.

Week 9 (M 2/28; W 3/2): Ethics Continued; The Trauma of Data Collection (for Participants and Researchers)

- Cronin-Furman, Kate, and Milli Lake. 2018. "Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 51(3): 607-614.
- Loyle, Cyanne E., and Alicia Simoni. 2017. "Researching Under Fire: Political Science and Researcher Trauma." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50(1): 141-145.

Data Feature

- Humphreys, Macartan, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2004. "What the Fighters Say: A Survey of Ex-Combatants in Sierra Leone June-August 2003."

Week 10 (M 3/7; W 3/9): New Technologies for Old Questions? The Future of Data Collection in the (Social) Sciences

- Zeitzoff, Thomas. 2017. "How Social Media Is Changing Conflict." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61(9): 1970-1991.

Data Feature

- Agnew, John, Thomas W. Gillespie, Jorge Gonzalez, and Brian Min. 2008. "Baghdad Nights: Evaluating the US Military 'Surge' Using Nighttime Light Signatures." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 40(10): 2285-2295.

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