

# **POLI210: Political Science Research Methods**

## Lecture 1: Introduction

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## Plan for today

- Introducing myself
- What this course is about
- Syllabus and requirements
- Why do you need this course?
- Questions?

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- Decline of local news and attitudes toward trade

## Empirical vs normative

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## **Normative**

Focuses on: “shoulds” – on how things ought to be

Character: Value-based and prescriptive

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## **Normative**

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Character: Value-based and prescriptive

Methods: Persuasion, logic

## **Empirical**

Focuses on: Measuring and observing how things are

Character: Observational, descriptive, predictive

Methods: Collect evidence from the real world and process that evidence using the scientific method

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From the normative statement: “Men and women need equal representation in legislatures”...

1. Does gender equality in legislatures lead to more family-friendly policies?
2. Do quotas mandating a minimum proportion of women in legislatures decrease the quality of legislative output?

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# Descriptive inference

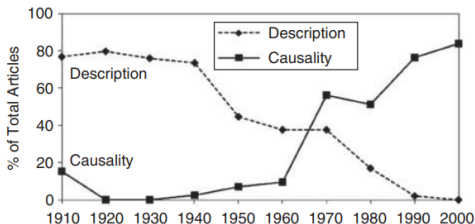


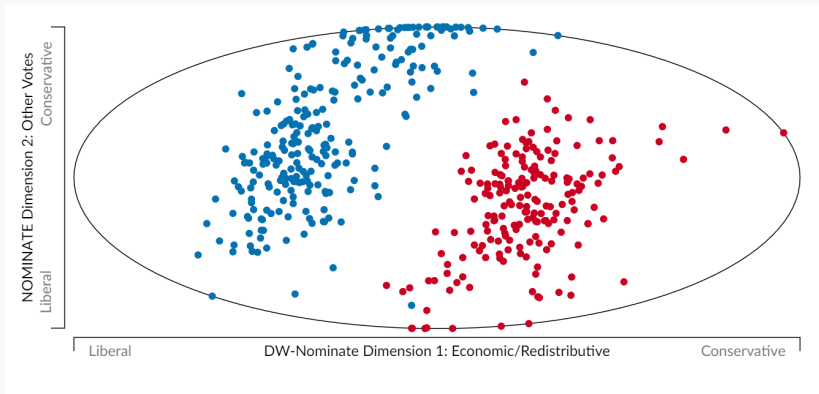
Fig. 3. *American Political Science Review*, 1910–2000

Note: The share of all articles whose principal argument is *descriptive* (generalizing or non-generalizing) or *causal* within the *American Political Science Review*. Coding includes all articles published within a given year, at decadal intervals – a total of 42 issues and 330 articles. Excludes book reviews, editorials, presidential addresses, personal notes and correspondences, short research notes, symposia of non-regular articles, and notes on current legislation.

Source: Gerring (2012)

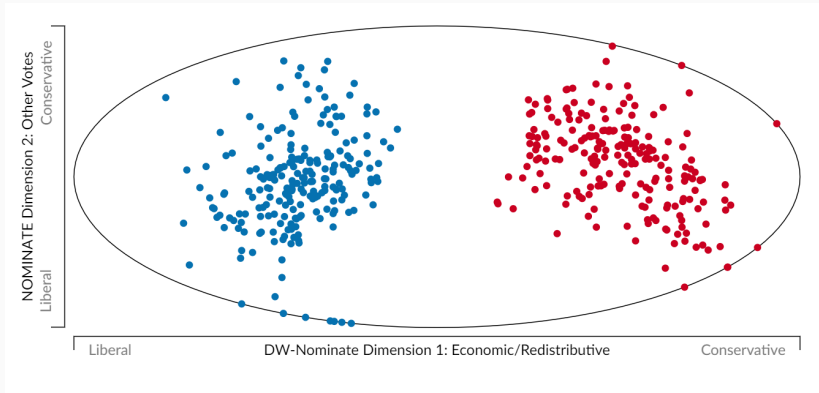
New: [Journal of Quantitative Description](#)

## Descriptive inference: DW-NOMINATE scores



DW-NOMINATE scores for the 90th Congress (1967-1969)

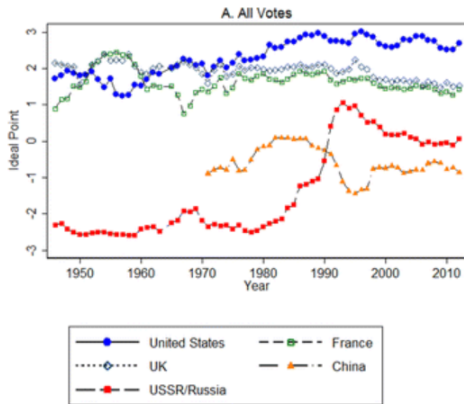
## Descriptive inference: DW-NOMINATE scores



DW-NOMINATE scores for the 117th Congress (current)

See here: [VoteView](#)

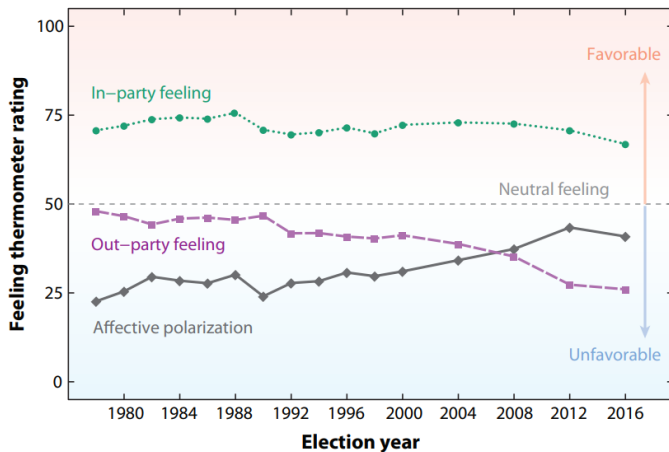
# Descriptive inference: UN voting



**Figure 3.** Ideal points of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P-5) in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

Source: Bailey, Voeten and Strezhnev (2017)

# Descriptive inference: affective polarization



Source: Iyengar et al. (2019)

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- For my own benefit: Giving out cookies during course evaluations causes better evaluations! (Hessler et al. 2018)



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Sometimes all I want to do is be able to predict

- For instance, political campaigns must decide which voters to target during a campaign
- They want to target persuadable voters who are on the fence
- They build models predicting turnout and vote choice

**Why make me do this?**

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- Engaging with broader scientific debates and controversies
- Because I need this course for my degree...

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- But claims exist on continuum of plausibility
- Give you tools to assess credibility of claims

## How are we feeling?

POLLING QUESTION: FEELING

EXCITED/OVERWHELMED/CURIOUS/ANXIOUS



## A note on learning methods

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- Don't hesitate to reach out

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Let's look at the syllabus now

## References i

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