



## LABORATORY

### Experimental designs in social and political research

**Instructor:** Riccardo Ladini

**Office hours:** By appointment via email ([riccardo.ladini@unimi.it](mailto:riccardo.ladini@unimi.it))

**Description:** What is an experiment in social and political sciences? Answering this question is not trivial, as the experimental methods have been largely employed in economics and psychology but have found for a long time little room in the study of social and political phenomena. However, the awareness of the relevance of the experimental methods has recently increased. Also, their use to answer research questions has become widespread, mostly because of the growing interest in identifying causal mechanisms for explaining social phenomena. Even technological development has considerably facilitated the translation into practice of these designs.

Therefore, after an introduction to the notion of causality in the social sciences, the laboratory intends to explain what experiments are - and are not - and how to use them for answering theoretically informed research questions in social and political sciences. The laboratory also intends to illustrate the most common types of experiments - by showing and discussing examples from recent literature in sociology and political science, especially concerning the climate change issue - and classifying them by design and experimental environment. Besides explaining the main characteristics of experimental designs, the laboratory will offer practical advice regarding the design and the implementation of experiments - especially, survey experiments - and the assessment of the causal effect on the outcome of interest.

**Objectives:** By the end of the laboratory, the students will have the instruments to acknowledge which kind of research questions can be answered through experimental designs and to assess the validity of an experimental design. Also, students will have the tools for designing an experiment and analysing the results. Finally, they will be expected to critically discuss the characteristics of experimental methods in comparison with other research methods.

#### **Schedule (10 classes, 20 hours)**

- Tuesday, May 17, h.14.30-16.30 (Room 20)
- Thursday, May 19, h. 10.30-12.30 (Room 27)
- Friday, May 20, h. 10.30-12.30 (Room 20)
- Tuesday, May 24, h.14.30-16.30 (Room 20)
- Thursday, May 26, h. 10.30-12.30 (Room 27)
- Friday, May 27, h. 10.30-12.30 (Room 22)
- Thursday, June 9, h.10.30-12.30 (Room 27)
- Tuesday, June 14, h.14.30-16.30 (Room 20)
- Thursday, June 16, h. 10.30-12.30 (Room 27)
- Friday, June 17, h. 10.30-12.30 (Room 20)



**Registration to the laboratory:** Please send an email (heading: Lab Registration) to Riccardo Ladini ([riccardo.ladini@unimi.it](mailto:riccardo.ladini@unimi.it)) by Thursday, May 12, indicating your name, surname, matriculation number, name of the program, and year of study (I, II, III). The only email addresses allowed are the institutional ones ([email@studenti.unimi.it](mailto:email@studenti.unimi.it)). An email confirming the registration will be sent to the participants by Friday, May 13. The number of attendees is up to 35 students maximum. Students admitted to the laboratory will be selected according to the order of arrival of the registrations' requests, starting from the first day available for registration and up to the depletion of the number of places available. Registrations will close after having reached the maximum number of 35 students.

**Eligibility:** All the students enrolled in the GLO, IPLE and SPO programs are eligible to participate in the laboratory. Participants are expected to know the basics of methodology of social research

**Language:** English

**Credits:** 3 credits as laboratory (other activities) according to the study plan

**Assessment and credits' attribution:** Students are asked to attend at least 80% of the classes and actively participate. By the end of the laboratory, all the students are asked to present and critically discuss one paper employing an experimental design. Finally, students are expected to jointly contribute to a short note which analyses and discusses the results of a survey experiment.

**Teaching methods:** The first classes will mostly consist in frontal lessons. Next classes will combine frontal lessons, discussions on students' presentations of published articles employing experimental methods, and other group works.

### Lab syllabus

- Classes 1-2: Causation in social sciences and the logic of experimental design

#### References

- Chambliss, D. F., & Schutt, R. K. (2018). Causation and experimental design. In Chambliss, D. F., & Schutt, R. K. (Eds.) *Making sense of the social world: Methods of investigation* (pp. 120-149). Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Cook, T. D., Campbell, D. T., & Shadish, W. (2002). Experiments and generalized causal inference. In Cook, T. D., Campbell, D. T., & Shadish, W., *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference* (pp. 1-32). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin
- Druckman, J., Green, D., Kuklinski, J., & Lupia, A. (2011). Experiments: An introduction to core concepts. In J. Druckman, D. Greene, J. Kuklinski, & A. Lupia (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science* (pp. 15-26). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McDermott, R. (2011). Internal and external validity. In J. Druckman, D. Greene, J. Kuklinski, & A. Lupia (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science* (pp. 27-40). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



- Class 3: Laboratory experimental methods

#### References

Iyengar, S. (2011). Laboratory experiments in political science. In J. Druckman, D. Greene, J. Kuklinski, & A. Lupia (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science* (pp. 73-88). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Classes 4-5: Field experimental methods

#### References

Baldassarri, D., & Abascal, M. (2017). Field experiments across the social sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 43, 41-73.

Gerber, A. (2011). Field experiments in political science. In J. Druckman, D. Greene, J. Kuklinski, & A. Lupia (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science* (pp. 115-138). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Classes 6-7: Survey experimental methods

#### References

Mutz, D. (2011). Population-based survey experiments: A hybrid methodology for the social sciences. In Mutz, D. C. (2011). *Population-based survey experiments* (pp.1-22). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sniderman, P. (2011). The logic and design of the survey experiment: An Autobiography of a Methodological Innovation. In J. Druckman, D. Greene, J. Kuklinski, & A. Lupia (Eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science* (pp. 102-114). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sniderman, P. M. (2018). Some advances in the design of survey experiments. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 21, 259-275.

- Classes 8-9 : Design, implementation and analysis of an experiment: practical tools

Mutz, D. C. (2011). Execution of population-based survey experiments. In Mutz, D. C. (2011). *Population-based survey experiments* (pp.84-107). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mutz, D. C. (2011). Analysis of Population-Based Survey Experiments. In Mutz, D. C. (2011). *Population-based survey experiments* (pp.108-128). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Class 10: Comparing and integrating experiments with other research methods; final discussion

**Note:** In the first classes of the laboratory, the instructor will suggest readings on specific experiments in sociology and political science, to be presented and discussed by the students.