POLSCI 114 - Introduction to Political Attitudes, Groups and Behaviors

AUTHOR
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AFFILIATION
Duke University

Lectures

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:05AM to 11:20AM

Perkins LINK 087 (Classroom 3)

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Course Description

Why do group identities become salient in politics, and how do they shape political attitudes and behavior? This introductory course focuses on ethnicity, religion, partisanship, race and place-based identities in democracies across the world. The semester is split into four components: first we conceptualize political groups and behavior; next, we examine various ways in which group behaviors can be measured; then understand why some group groups become politically salient; and finally, consider the impact of those groups on political behavior, policy preferences, social trust, and discrimination.

Goals

This course is designed with four goals or objectives in mind: (1) to introduce key concepts and debates in comparative political behavior; (2) to understand group identities in different countries and contexts; (3) to develop reading skills, specifically how to critically read social science research papers; (4) to make original arguments and connections across readings.

Grading

There are four components to the final grade in this course:

1. **Attendance and Conceptual Learning** (50% = 25 lectures x 2 points): Attendance at bi-weekly lectures is **compulsory**. Before or in each class, I will post a short question quiz based on the reading for that class and the material covered in my lecture. You get one point for physically submitting the quiz at the end of class; and

another point for correctly answering the question. We have 27 lectures this semester. For the purposes of this calculation, I am excluding the first class (introduction) and last class (review of concepts).

2. **Short Assignments** (10% = 4 components x 2.5 points): At the end of each component, I will post a short writing assignment (250 to 300 words) that requires you to review the material, make connections across readings or case studies, and say something original. Each assignment is worth 2.5 points.

   (**Note:** Saying something "original" implies not summarizing someone else's arguments or criticisms, or using AI-based tools to come up with arguments.)

3. **Class Presentation** (10%): Groups will present one of the books to the entire class. The presentation will identify the research question, main argument, evidence presented in support of the claims, and major critiques of the piece. The presentation should be for 25 to 30 minutes. At the end of the presentation, the group will share a one to two page summary of the book with the class. Use the template in Appendix A as a guide to write this summary. Here are the list of books for this task:

   1. **Week 6**: Lupu, Noam. (2016) *Party Brands in Crisis: Partisanship, Brand Dilution, and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
   2. **Week 7:** Wilkinson, Steven (2004) *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
   3. **Week 8**: Ternullo, Stephanie (2024) *How the Heartland Went Red: Why Local Forces Matter in an Age of Nationalized Politics*. Princeton University Press.
   4. **Week 11**: Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel N. Posner, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. (2009) *Coethnicity: Diversity and the Dilemmas of Collective Action*. Russell Sage Foundation.
   5. **Week 13**: Choi, D.D., Mathias Poertner, and Nicholas Sambanis (2022) *Native Bias: Overcoming Discrimination Against Immigrants*. Princeton University Press.

4. **Final Exam** (30%): A final exam will test your understanding of concepts and knowledge of case studies introduced during the course of the semester.

Grading Scale: Typical A-F grading scale where 90+ is the A-range, 80 to 89 the B-range, 70 to 79 the C-range and so on.

Course Policies

Please familiarize yourself with course-related policies and available resources. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me and discuss them. It is better to clarify policy or support-related questions early in the semester.

1) Readings

This course does not rely on a textbook. This is a considered decision. The idea is to introduce you to cutting-edge and cannonical social science writing, whether that be research papers or book chapters, and practice how to read them in a time-efficient manner. In my experience, this is a skill that we acquire with practice and repetition. I'd like to begin that process in this introductory class, where the stakes are lower and the amount of reading material more manageable. The are a few key things to remember:

1. Be an **active** (rather than passive) reader. You should not be reading chapter-and-footnote. Reading needs to be purposeful, i.e. you come to it with clear questions and points of inquiry. To start us off, I will introduce a template for how to approach this task. With time, you will develop your own template, or at least that should be a goal!

2. **Do not be mired in details**. Focus on the main argument and evidence in a reading. You are not being tested on your intricate knowledge of readings (e.g. what is in an obscure footnote, or some peripheral statistic). At this stage, focus on the main question, literature review, theory and conclusion of the paper. Leave out the statistical components of papers. I will introduce and explain those in lectures. As you gain familiarity with social scientific writing and take econometric or statistics courses, you can (in subsequent courses) start reading the research design and results section.

2) Attendance

Attendance in bi-weekly lectures is compulsory. Absences from class may be excused if a written request is made, ideally with sufficient advance notice. Please follow Duke's rules and policies regarding excused absences, including but not limited to personal emergencies, illnesses, religious observances and university-level sports competitions. If you have any questions or special circumstances that are not covered by existing rules, please reach out to me and we can discuss suitable accommodations.

3) Assignment Deadlines

Short assignments are due at the end of each section. The syllabus contains the question(s) you need to answer for each assignment. As we approach the end of each section, I will post the assignment on Canvas with a deadline. You must submit your response on Canvas by the stated deadline. Since the assignments are known at the start of the semester and well in advance of the deadline, I expect you to submit assignments on time. There is a grade penalty for late submissions: 5% for every extra day, i.e. -0.125 points for a five-point assignment for every extra day taken. If you have any special circumstances that prevent you from submitting the assignment on time, please try to reach out to me well in advance of the deadline and we can discuss suitable accommodations.

4) Writing Practices

The short assignments are an opportunity to review all the material on a topic, make connections across readings, and say something original. These assignments are **not** a test of *how much you know* but rather *how you think*. This is why assignment topics are shared with you well in advance. You have plenty of time to reflect on the questions, develop your responses, and discuss them with me (if need be). Your responses are subject to the University's academic honesty code (see details below).

5) Academic Conduct

Duke takes academic honesty and proper conduct very seriously. As the *University's Community Standards* (available here: https://students.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/DCS-Guide-2023-2024.pdf-1.pdf) specify,

> "To uphold the Duke Community Standard:
>
> - I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors;
> - I will conduct myself honorably in all my endeavors; and
> - I will act if the Standard is compromised"
>
> (Duke Community Standard, p7)

You are responsible for knowing the University's policies on academic honesty and proper conduct. Please familiarize yourself with these guidelines. Any instance of lying, cheating (including plagiarism), stealing, and disrespectful or improper conduct will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards, and result in a fail grade.

I want to draw your attention specifically to three things:

- Duke's policies on cheating, specifically **plagiarism** (definition and examples on Page 10 of the *Duke Community Standard*). You are **not permitted** to "present any information, ideas, or phrasing of another as if they were [your] own and/or not give appropriate credit to the original source" (Duke Community Standard, p10).
- The use of artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT are not permitted, and constitute academic dishonesty for the purposes of this course.
- As colleagues, it is our responsibility to create a learning environment in which there is **mutual respect and concern for all**. The classroom is a **space for learning, discussion and debate, often on contentious issues or topics, without being disrespectful**. Please familiarize yourself with and be in compliance of Duke's policies on disruptive behavior (Pages 19 to 22); discrimination, harassment and related misconducts (https://oie.duke.edu/policies-procedures-and-statements/policy-prohibited-discrimination-harassment-and-related/).

In case you experience or know of somebody experiencing harassment, discrimination or related misconducts, please immediately report it, referring to the Office of Institutional Equity's list of confidential and non-confidential reporting options. Duke faculty are mandatory reporters, i.e. they are required to report any instances of harassment, discrimination or misconduct. Furthermore, if you have any concerns in this regard, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

6) Resources

Duke provides several student support services, some of which I have detailed here. Please do not hesitate to reach out to these offices, or to me if you need any additional resources or support this semester.

- The Academic Resource Center (ARC) offers services to support students academically during their undergraduate careers at Duke. The ARC can provide support with time management, academic skills and strategies, course-specific tutoring, ADHD/LD coaching, and more. Contact: (919) 684-5917 or theARC@duke.edu
- Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) services include individual and group counseling services, psychiatric services, and workshops. Contact: (919) 660-1000. You may also consider DuWell's Moments of Mindfulness, and TimelyCare, an online platform providing mental health support.
- If you are a student with a disability and need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Disability Access Office (SDAO) and provide them with documentation of your disability. SDAO will work with you to determine what accommodations are appropriate for your situation. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and disability accommodations cannot be provided until a Faculty Accommodation Letter has been given to me. For more, contact: sdao@duke.edu.
- For any library assistance, please contact Ryan Denniston (ryan.denniston@duke.edu), Duke's librarian for Political Science.

Timeline

Note: Please read the paper(s) with an asterisk(⋆) before coming to lecture.

Introduction: Reading Social Science Papers

Week 1

Tuesday (August 26)

> Structure of social science papers and how to read them.

I will describe the typical structure of a research paper, and where to find what information. I will then introduce a template on how to read and assess research papers (see Appendix A *Reading Summary Template*). We will then fill out the template for Corno et al. (2022).

⋆ Corno, Lucia, Eliana La Ferrara, and Justine Burns. 2022. "Interaction, Stereotypes, and Performance: Evidence from South Africa." *American Economic Review*, 112 (12): 3848-75.

Part I: Concepts

Thursday (August 28)

> Political attitude formation: System 1 and 2 Cognition, Directional and Accuracy Motivations, Zaller's Elite Cues Model.

⋆ Zaller, John (1992) *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press.

- Chapter 2 (Information, Predispositions, and Opinion)
- Chapter 3 (How Citizens Acquire Information and Convert It Into Public Opinion)

Jerit, Jennifer, and Cindy D. Kam. 2023. "Information Processing", in Leonie Huddy et al. (eds),*The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*

Week 2

Tuesday (September 2)

> Determinants of political behavior: Downs' rational choice model, Riker and Ordeshook's critique, free-rider problem, Kuran's "revolutionary cascades".

⋆ Downs, Anthony (1957) *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Addison Wesley (Boston MA).

- Chapter 3 (The Basic Logic of Voting)

Riker, William and Peter C. Ordeshook. "A Theory of the Calculus of Voting." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 62, No. 1, 1968, pp. 25–42.

Thursday (September 4)

> What is identity?

Fearon, James. 1999. What is Identity (As We Now Use The Word)?

⋆ Chandra, Kanchan. 2006. 'What is Ethnic Identity and Does it Matter?' *Annual Review of Political Science*

Abdelal, R. *et al.* (2006) 'Identity as a Variable', *Perspectives on Politics*, 4(4), pp. 695–711.

McClain, Paula et al. (2009) 'Group Membership, Group Identity, and Group Consciousness: Measures of Racial Identity in American Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science*.

Week 3

Tuesday (September 9)

> Are identities permanent or changing?

Egan, Patrick J. "Identity as Dependent Variable: How Americans Shift Their Identities to Align with Their Politics." *American Journal of Political Science* 64, no. 3 (2020): 699–716.

⋆ Davenport, Lauren (2020) 'The Fluidity of Racial Classifications', *Annual Review of Political Science*.

> **Assignment 1: Connecting Behavior With Identity**
>
> Does identity affect voting behavior through "system 1" responses or "system 2" responses? Focus on one identity and one way in which it might affect voting behavior to illustrate your argument.
>
> Instructions: Write 250 to 300 words; please do not use -isms, -izations and academic jargon; do not summarize scholarly works; try to make an original argument or connection; focus on one point or argument.
>
> Deadline: September 16, 2025 on Canvas.

Part II: Measurement

Week 3

Thursday (September 11)

> Survey-based measurement of identity preferences: implicit v. explicit measures, social desirability bias, observer effects.

Huddie, Leonie and Feldman, Stanley (2009) 'On Assessing the Political Effects of Racial Prejudice', *Annual Review of Political Science*.

Berinsky, Adam J. "The Two Faces of Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 4 (1999): 1209–30.

⋆ Mashail Malik and Niloufer Siddiqui (2024) "Third Party Presence and the Political Salience of Ethnicity in Survey Data" *American Journal of Political Science,* 86(1), 364-368

Week 4

Tuesday (September 16)

> Racial priming experiments, behavioral games, and social psychology tasks

⋆ Fowler, James H., and Cindy D. Kam. "Beyond the Self: Social Identity, Altruism, and Political Participation." *The Journal of Politics* 69, no. 3 (2007): 813–27

Blum, A., Hazlett, C. and Posner, D.N. (2021) 'Measuring Ethnic Bias: Can Misattribution-Based Tools from Social Psychology Reveal Group Biases that Economics Games Cannot?', *Political Analysis*, 29(3), pp. 385–404

> **Assignment 2: Critiques of Measurement**
>
> You've probably heard a lot of people say, "the polls got it wrong, AGAIN." Say you are a pollster interested in measuring how group identities affect voting behavior. How would you improve the accuracy of public opinion surveys?
>
> Instructions: Write 250 to 300 words. Focus on the impact of any one group identity. Identify the main problem affecting the accuracy of polls. Propose the best measure that you think overcomes this problem, evaluating both its strengths and weaknesses. Try to provide an original evaluation of the measurement strategy, rather than summarizing existing research.
>
> Deadline: October 3, 2025 on Canvas.

Part III: Causes of Identity Salience

Week 4

Thursday (September 18)

> Material factors: instrumental model of ethnic voting, economic inequality and group identities.

⋆ Chandra, K. (2004) 'Patronage-Democracy, Limited Information, and Ethnic Favoritism', in *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics), pp. 47–81.

Huber, J.D. and Suryanarayan, P. (2016) 'Ethnic Inequality and the Ethnification of Political Parties: Evidence from India', *World Politics*, 68(1), pp. 149–188

Week 5

Tuesday (September 23)

> Technological factors: irrigation and rural conservatism in America; cash crops, print technologies and ethnicity in Africa.

Dasgupta, Aditya and Ramirez, Elena. (2024) 'Explaining Rural Conservatism: Political Consequences of Technological Change in the Great Plains', *American Political Science Review*, pp. 1–23.

⋆ Pengl, Y.I., Roessler, P. and Rueda, V. (2022) 'Cash Crops, Print Technologies, and the Politicization of Ethnicity in Africa', *American Political Science Review*, 116(1), pp. 181–199.

Thursday (September 25)

> Cognitive factors: minimal group paradigm, social identity theory

⋆ Tajfel, H., Billig, M.G., Bundy, R.P. and Flament, C. (1971) 'Social categorization and intergroup behaviour' European Journal of Social Psychology 1: 149-178.

Huddy, L. (2001), 'From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory'. *Political Psychology*, 22: 127-156

Week 6

Tuesday (September 30)

> Psychological factors: brands and echo chambers

Lupu, Noam. (2013) Party Brands and Partisanship: Theory with Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Argentina. *American Journal of Political Science*, 57: 49-64.

⋆ Broockman, David E., and Joshua L. Kalla. (2025) "Consuming cross-cutting media causes learning and moderates attitudes: A field experiment with Fox News viewers." *The Journal of Politics* 87, No. 1: 246-261.

Thursday (October 2)

> Psychological factors: dignity, self-respect and recognition as motivations; role of personal experiences

Varshney, Ashutosh (2003) 'Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Rationality', *Perspectives on Politics*, 1(1), pp. 85–99.

⋆ Lupu, N. and Peisakhin, L. (2017), The Legacy of Political Violence across Generations. *American Journal of Political Science*, 61: 836-851.

Week 7

Tuesday (October 7)

> Environment: climate, social exposure to immigrants

⋆ Choi, D.D., Poertner, M. and Sambanis, N. (2023) 'Temperature and outgroup discrimination', *Political Science Research and Methods*, 11(1), pp. 198–206.

Fouka, V. and Tabellini, M. (2022) 'Changing In-Group Boundaries: The Effect of Immigration on Race Relations in the United States', *American Political Science Review*, 116(3), pp. 968–984.

Thursday (October 9)

> Political factors: group size and political competition, frozen cleavages

⋆ Posner, Daniel N. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *The American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (2004): 529–45.

Wilkinson, Steven (2004) *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics).

> **Assignment 3: Causes of Identity Salience**
>
> Are new technologies like artificial intelligence making some identities more or less salient in U.S. politics? Focus on the impact of any one new technology and type of identity.
>
> *OR*
>
> What would be one effective step to reduce partisan differences between ordinary Americans? In making your suggestion, focus on a cause of partisan polarization and how your suggestion maps back to it.
>
> Instructions: Write 250 to 300 words; please refrain from using complex words and academic jargon; do not summarize scholarly works; focus on one argument, substantiated with an example, rather than provide a laundry list of reasons and examples.
>
> Deadline: October 21, 2025 on Canvas.

Part IV: Impact of Identities

Week 8

Thursday (October 16)

> Voters' evaluation of politicians: selective attribution of blame.

⋆ Graham, Matthew and Singh, Shikhar. (2024) 'An Outbreak of Selective Attribution: Partisanship and Blame in the COVID-19 Pandemic', *American Political Science Review*, 118(1), pp. 423–441.

Claire Adida, Jessica Gottlieb, Eric Kramon and Gwyneth McClendon (2017), "Reducing or Reinforcing In-Group Preferences? An Experiment on Information and Ethnic Voting", Quarterly Journal of Political Science: Vol. 12: No. 4, pp 437-477.

Week 9

Tuesday (October 21)

> Vote choice: the case of rural consciousness in America

⋆ Kramer-Walsh, Catherine (2012) 'Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective', *American Political Science Review*, 106(3), pp. 517–532.

Stephanie Ternullo (2024) "Place-Based Partisanship: How Place (Re)produces Americans' Partisan Attachments." *American Journal of Sociology.*

Thursday (October 23)

> Vote choice: gender-based preferences and the "double bind" for female politicians

Schwarz, Susanne and Coppock, Alexander (2022) What Have We Learned about Gender from Candidate Choice Experiments? A Meta-Analysis of Sixty-Seven Factorial Survey Experiments, *Journal of Politics* 84(2), pp 655-668

⋆ Teele, D.L., Kalla, J. and Rosenbluth, F. (2018) 'The Ties That Double Bind: Social Roles and Women's Underrepresentation in Politics', *American Political Science Review*, 112(3), pp. 525–541.

Week 10

Tuesday (October 28)

> Policy preferences: support for redistribution

⋆ Shayo, Moses. (2009) 'A Model of Social Identity with an Application to Political Economy: Nation, Class, and Redistribution', *American Political Science Review*, 103(2), pp. 147–174.

Thursday (October 30)

> Policy preferences: within-household gender based differences, ethnic marginalization and support for globalization

⋆ Khan, Sarah (2021) "Count Me Out: Women's Unexpressed Preferences in Pakistan" *Working Paper*

Gaikwad, Nikhar and Suryanarayan, Pavithra. 2023. "Attitudes Toward Globalization in Ranked Ethnic Societies". *Working Paper*

Week 11

Tuesday (November 4)

> Ethnic diversity and public goods provision

⋆ Habyarimana, J. *et al.* (2007) 'Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?', *American Political Science Review*, 101(4), pp. 709–725.

Thursday (November 6)

> Nationalism and public goods provision; ethnic homogeneity and under-provision

⋆ Miguel, E. (2004) 'Tribe or Nation? Nation Building and Public Goods in Kenya versus Tanzania', *World Politics*, 56(3), pp. 327–362.

Kustov, A. and Pardelli, G. (2018) 'Ethnoracial Homogeneity and Public Outcomes: The (Non)effects of Diversity', *American Political Science Review*, 112(4), pp. 1096–1103.

(With references to: Pardelli, G. and Kustov, A. (2022) 'When Coethnicity Fails', *World Politics*, 74(2), pp. 249–284.)

Week 12

Tuesday (November 11)

> Politicians' behavior: intrinsic v. instrumental motivations

⋆ Broockman, David E. (2013) "Black Politicians Are More Intrinsically Motivated to Advance Blacks' Interests: A Field Experiment Manipulating Political Incentives." *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 3: 521–36.

Adida, C. L., Combes, N., Lo, A., & Verink, A. (2016).The Spousal Bump: Do Cross-Ethnic Marriages Increase Political Support in Multiethnic Democracies? *Comparative Political Studies*, *49*(5), 635-661

Goyal, Tanushree (2024) Local Political Representation as a Pathway to Power: A Natural Experiment in India *American Journal of Political Science*

Thursday (November 13)

> Public officials' behavior: bureaucrats and judges

⋆ Seim, B. and Robinson, Amanda Lea (2020) 'Coethnicity and Corruption: Field Experimental Evidence from Public Officials in Malawi', *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 7(1), pp. 61–66.

Choi, Danny D., Harris, J.A. and Shen-Bayh, F. (2022) 'Ethnic Bias in Judicial Decision Making: Evidence from Criminal Appeals in Kenya', *American Political Science Review*, 116(3), pp. 1067–1080.

Week 13

Tuesday (November 18)

> Cross-cutting or intersecting identities, immigration policy

⋆ Pérez, E., Robertson, C. and Vicuña, B. (2023) 'Prejudiced When Climbing Up or When Falling Down? Why Some People of Color Express Anti-Black Racism', *American Political Science Review*, 117(1), pp. 168–183.

Choi, D.D., Poertner, M. and Sambanis, N. (2023), The *Hijab* Penalty: Feminist Backlash to Muslim Immigrants. *American Journal of Political Science*, 67: 291-306.

(With reference to Choi, D.D., Mathias Poertner, and Nicholas Sambanis (2022) *Native Bias: Overcoming Discrimination Against Immigrants*. Princeton University Press.)

Thursday (November 20)

> Spatial dynamics: the case of ethnic geography

⋆ Enos, Ryan D. (2017) *The Space between Us: Social Geography and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 1, "The Red Line")

Thanksgiving Week

Tuesday (November 25) - Class Cancelled, Thanksgiving Break

Thursday (November 27) - No Classes, Thanksgiving Break

Week 14

Tuesday (December 2)

> Contact hypothesis: accumulated evidence, limitations of existing research and next-steps

⋆ Mousa, Salma (2020) 'Building social cohesion between Christians and Muslims through soccer in post-ISIS Iraq'.*Science* **369**, pp. 866-870

Zhou, Yang-Yang, and Jason Lyall. (2025) "Prolonged contact does not reshape locals' attitudes toward migrants in wartime settings." *American Journal of Political Science* 69, No. 1: 210-222.

Lowe, Matt. (2025) 'Has Intergroup Contact Delivered?', *Annual Review of Economics*.

Assignment 4: Impact of Identities

How might group identities affect attitudes toward climate change? Focus on any one identity, and how it affects voters or politicians' perspective on climate change.

OR

Is in-person contact necessary to reduce out-group prejudice? Reflect on Allport's contact hypothesis in an era of digital interactions, with particular focus on the scope conditions of the hypothesis.

OR

Can you think of a cross-cutting identity that blunts the impact of partisanship? Why does this identity reduce the salience of partisanship in politics?

Instructions: Write 250 to 300 words; refrain from summarizing scholarly works; focus on one argument and substantiate it with the most compelling example; engage with possible alternative explanations.

Deadline: December 2, 2025 on Canvas.

Thursday (December 4)

Review of concepts for final examination

Week 15

Important

Final examination (December 11, 2:00 PM, Perkins LINK 088 Classroom 4)

Appendix A: Reading Summary Template

> **Note on Active Reading**
>
> Skim through a research paper and familiarize yourself with what it is about, its structure and what is where. Next, fill out this template by going to the relevant sections of the paper, reading them with the objective of answering the question in the template, and summarizing what you find in the template document. Spend more time thinking about the material rather than memorizing details.
>
> 🎓 = more relevant for graduate students

Question:

What is the main question or puzzle that this paper seeks to address?

Theory:

What is the answer to the main question? Write a brief, one sentence summary of the main argument or theoretical claim of the paper.

Observable Implication(s):

If the argument is right, what should we observe in the real world? What are the "hypotheses" that flow from the theory?

Alternative Explanations:

Are there other answers to the main question or possible explanations of the puzzle?

(🎓) *Have the authors identified these alternative explanations?*

Scope Conditions:

What are the key assumptions made by the authors so that their theory holds?

(🎓) *Do the authors provide any evidence in support of these assumptions?*

Focusing on the key assumptions, what are some boundaries we can place on the argument. Think about necessary conditions for the argument to hold. If those conditions are not met, the argument may not apply or hold. These are the "scope conditions" for this argument.

(🎓) *Are all the scope conditions stated or discussed in the paper?*

Research Design:

How do the authors propose to evaluate the observable implications of their theory?

What is the outcome (dependent variable) and explanatory or independent variable?

(🎓) *Is there any exogenous variation in the explanatory variable?*

(🎓) *What quantity (estimand) does this research design tell us about?*

(🎓) *Does the research design provide a good test of the theory?*

(🎓) *What are the assumptions supporting the research design? Are they tenable?*

Results:

(🎓)*What is the evidence?*

(🎓) *Is it compelling in that it validates the core argument or claim of the paper?*

Limitations:

(🎓) *What does the evidence **not** tell us? What are the limitations of the findings?*

Extensions:

(🎓) *Knowing what we do from this paper, if you had to study the same question, would you go about it in a different way?*

(🎓) *Are there new questions that arise from this paper's findings that are intriguing or interesting?*

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