The Empirical Study of LGBT Politics  
(POL-UA 395.01)  
Professor Patrick Egan

What this course is about

Perhaps no issue in American politics has shifted as rapidly and profoundly in recent times as that of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights. In this seminar, we will explore how researchers are explaining the causes and consequences of these changes with empirical analyses employing quantitative data. Topics to be covered include: the meaning and measurement of LGBT identity; population estimates of those who identify as LGBT; the extent to which LGBTs’ political attitudes and behavior are distinctive from those of the general population; the measurement of Americans’ attitudes on LGBT issues and how these attitudes have changed over the past few decades; an assessment of changes in law and policies at the national, state and local levels; and the implications of these changes for the lived experience of LGBTs and their families, including health, well-being, stigma and discrimination. Our focus will be largely on the United States, although we will occasionally look at LGBT issues in other countries to broaden our understanding.

As a secondary goal, the course is designed to increase students’ ability to understand quantitative social science research, improve their understanding of research concepts such as measurement, controlled comparisons, and causal inference, and to provide hands-on opportunities to engage in original quantitative research.

Logistics

class meetings: Thursdays, 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
12 Waverly Place, L113

office hours: Wednesdays, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.  
19 W. 4th Street, Room 327

contact info: email: patrick.egan@nyu.edu

Data Fellow: Nick Haas nsh276@nyu.edu
**Prerequisites**

Successful completion of Quantitative Methods in Political Science (POL-UA 800) or Research Methods in Political Science (POL-UA 850). Successful completion of the equivalent of these courses in other social science departments at NYU is also acceptable.

**Course requirements and grading**

Four separate components of this course contribute to your grade:

- **Two lab reports** (each worth 15 percent of your grade). These structured assignments will require that you become familiar with a specific dataset regarding LGBT politics and answer questions about it using statistical analysis. They will be due on February 20 and March 20.

- **Response papers and class presentations** (each worth 10 percent). Students will be randomly assigned to write TWO brief (400-600 words) papers responding to each week’s readings. The papers will give you the opportunity to think carefully about the readings and integrate in our course. The papers will be due 24 hours before our class meeting. Students writing papers will be responsible for a brief (3 slides maximum) presentation of the readings to the class. Response papers will begin to be due on February 8. Additional instructions about these responsibilities will be distributed separately.

- **An original research project** (40 percent). In this project, you will ask an interesting question related to the course; write a thoughtful overview of what we know about this question from existing research literature; and then conduct quantitative analysis to answer the question.
  
  - A topic for the paper must be approved by Prof. Egan by March 30.
  - Students are required to meet at least once with Data Fellow Nick Haas (see below) to discuss the paper by April 20.
  - The project is due on Thursday, May 11 at 5 p.m.

- **Participation** (10 percent). Assessed on the basis of your informed and thoughtful participation in seminar or office hours. In addition:
  
  - One way that you can improve your participation grade is by submitting stories for In the News, a section of our NYU Classes site on which you can suggest stories drawn from current events that reflect concepts being discussed in class. Accepted submissions will help to boost your participation grade.
Data Fellow

In this course, we are fortunate to be participating in a new initiative at NYU called the Data Fellows Program. Our Fellow will be responsible for providing support, tutoring and hands-on help to students in this seminar with statistical concepts, data literacy, and analysis using statistical software. Our Data Fellow for this seminar is Nick Haas, who is currently earning his Ph.D. in Politics at NYU.

Statistical Software

This class will require that you make frequent use of statistical software. Because of most of you became familiar with the Stata statistical software package in POL 800 or POL 850, we will be offering tutorials and other assistance with this program throughout the semester.

Although Stata is available in many NYU computer labs, it is strongly encouraged that you purchase a copy of Stata for your own use. This is a worthwhile investment, allowing you to conduct analysis at your convenience and easily save your projects as you proceed through the course. I can guarantee that you will become more proficient with Stata if you own your own copy.

Thanks to Stata’s student pricing plans, the software is not tremendously expensive. Stata comes in many different flavors, and the “Stata/IC” version will more than suffice for our purposes. A six-month license for Stata/IC will get you through the semester; it costs $75. Visit the following website to purchase and download the software: http://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/student-pricing/

***Note: do not purchase “Small Stata,” which cannot load large datasets and therefore will be nearly useless for our class.

Schedule of Meetings, Topics and Readings

Class meetings will incorporate a mixture of lecture, discussion, and individual consultations. We’ll generally take a short break in the middle of each seminar session.

How to think about the readings: Be sure to read the readings before class on the day they are assigned. The readings for this class average about 60-100 pages per class session. Consider budgeting about two to three hours per class session to keep on top of the readings.

Readings are available either via our NYU Classes website or online (by following the hyperlinks provided here in this syllabus).
Thurs. Jan 26  Introduction to the course

Thurs. Feb. 2  Getting Our Feet Wet: Attitudes among LGB(T)s in the U.S.


Thurs. Feb. 9  Measuring LGB Identity

Thurs. Feb. 16  Social Desirability Bias, Mobilization, and the Growing Prevalence of LGBT Identity


Thurs. Feb. 23  The Meaning and Measure of Transgender Identity


Thurs. March 2  The Formation of LGB(T) Identities

Readings:


Thurs. March 9  LGBT Identity and Gender Non-Conformity

Thurs. March 23  Intersections


Thurs. March 30  The Economics and Health of LGBT Lives


Thurs April 6  U.S. Public Opinion on LGBTs


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Thurs April 13  U.S. Laws and Policies on LGBTs

- National LGBTQ Task Force Fact Sheets . Selections.


Thurs. April 20  LGBT Political Identity in Context

Readings:


- Campbell, David E. et al “Mormon Political Views.” Chapter 4 in Seeking the Promised Land: Mormons and American Politics. Cambridge University Press (2014) (available on NYU Classes)


Thurs. April 27  Student Presentations of Research Projects I

Thurs. May 4  Student Presentations of Research Projects II