

Homework #2 (Theories, Hypotheses, Research Design)
POS 3713 - Spring 2007 (Dr. Hensel)

This homework assignment is due at the beginning of class (i.e., before lecture starts) on **Tuesday, January 30**. Any work turned in after lecture begins that day (even if only a few minutes into class) will be assessed a late penalty. Also, note that all work must be your own -- students found to have copied their answers from other students (or to have had their answers copied by other students) will receive automatic zero grades on this assignment, and may face further disciplinary action.

Please type your responses to each question.

For the purposes of this assignment, assume that you are a political scientist interested in studying the causes of voting.

1. Suggest one simple (two variables) research hypothesis about an individual's decision to vote (or not vote) in an election.
2. Explain which variable in your hypothesis is the independent variable, and which is the dependent variable.
3. Present a theoretical story about *why* your hypothesis works the way that it does. (Why does this independent variable cause this dependent variable? What are the individuals thinking when they decide whether or not to vote, or how/why do these influences make them more likely to vote?)
4. If you were to test this hypothesis, what would be the null hypothesis?
5. Discuss a second implication of your theory. That is, if your theoretical story is correct, what is one other prediction that it would make (i.e., one other testable hypothesis) about the world, besides the original hypothesis about a factor that makes individuals more or less likely to vote?
6. Suggest one possible way that your hypothesized relationship could be spurious rather than causal (i.e., one other factor that might make the variables correlated, but only because they are each associated with this factor); be sure to indicate the logic of why both of your variables might be related to the other factor.
7. Suggest one alternative rival hypothesis that might also be able to explain the same dependent variable that is covered by your hypothesis, and offer a theoretical explanation for this rival hypothesis.
8. Discuss how your hypothesis could be tested using an experimental design. What would the "treatment" be that you would administer to the experimental group, and what would the "placebo" be that you would administer to the control group? What outcome would you expect to observe for each group?
9. Discuss how such an experimental design could help us gain confidence in your hypothesized relationship, while ruling out the alternative rival hypothesis that you suggested in question #7.
10. Discuss one potential weakness of testing your hypothesis experimentally (i.e., one reason to doubt that the results of the experiment would accurately characterize decisions to vote).