NSF Award in Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences

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- **Project:** Experimentation in Political Science
- **Start Date:** June 1, 2009
- **Total Award Amount:** $94,949

How the results of this project will benefit society:
The project ensures that political science experiments approach the highest level of intellectual rigor, thereby enabling political scientists to make substantial contributions to policy-makers in the usage and interpretation of experiments (e.g., in the evaluations of social programs, policies, institutions, and mass communications).

The problem the project is trying to solve:
The rise of randomized experiments is one of the most notable methodological developments in political science over the past decade. Scholars from every subfield now regularly turn to experiments. The recent penchant for experimentation means that political scientists face a variety of distinct challenges. The design, implementation, and analysis of experiments raise a number of issues that political scientists are not historically accustomed to addressing. This is particularly the case for political science due to the breadth of the discipline, the varying contexts in which experiments are implemented (e.g., laboratory, survey, field), and the distinct methods employed (e.g., psychological or economic approaches to experimentation).

How this project will work:
In order to ensure that the discipline maximizes its return on experimental methodology, this project supports a unifying conference, “Experimentation in Political Science” and the publication of the first *Handbook of Experimental Political Science* that will contain the papers from the conference. The conference and volume include contributions from more than 25 leading political scientists. The basic goals of the conference and volume are to situate experiments in the broader discipline, to present important methodological issues, and to review the contributions of prominent experimental research. The volume serves as a reference for both teaching and research.

Another important contribution will involve student involvement in the conference. Graduate students from around the country will attend the conference and participate in a mentoring program with the faculty attendees. This provides students with a solid basis for pursuing future experimental research.

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