

PSC 302
Research Methods in Political Science
Fall 2007

Instructor: Dr. David F. Damore
Time: Tu Th 1:00 – 2:15
Location: BEH 102

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Office Hours: Tu Th 3:45 to 5:15
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Scope and Purpose:

This course examines the research design process and the application of quantitative methods to the study of political phenomena. The course is divided into three parts. Part one serves as an introduction by familiarizing students with the sub-fields within the discipline of Political Science, the prospects of and limitations to a scientific study of politics, and the process by which social scientific theories are developed. Part two examines the research design process in detail (e.g., hypothesis formulation, measurement, data collection, and inference) and the ethics of social research. An introduction to quantitative methods (e.g., statistics) used in social science research is the focus of part three.

Course Material:

Levin, Jack and James Alan Fox. 2007. *Elementary Statistics in Social Research, The Essentials*, 2nd ed. Boston: Pearson.

Monroe, Alan D. 2000. *Essentials of Political Research*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Course Reader and Lecture Notes, available via the course WebCampus site.

Calculator with a square root function.

For information about SPSS:

http://www.wadsworth.com/sociology_d/templates/student_resources/0534519040_babbie/primers/SPSS_11.0_complete/index.html

Requirements:

1. Exams (60%) – Three exams that occur after each section of the course (exams are not cumulative). Exams are open note and open book and are administered in class primarily through WebCampus. High exam score counts for 25% of course grade; middle exam score counts for 20% of course grade; and low exam score counts for 15% of course grade.
2. Quizzes (20%) – Six quizzes during the first two parts of the course that are open note and open book, timed, and are administered in class via WebCampus.

3. Homework (10%) – Four homework assignments during the third part of the course.
4. Participation (10%) – Determined by students' attendance, attentiveness, and willingness to enter into discussions as they arise.

Policies and Miscellaneous:

1. Any concerns or questions about WebCampus should be directed to that office, not the instructor.
2. The honor code is strictly enforced. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred for investigation.
3. UNLV requires all members of the university community to be familiar with the honor code and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. To familiarize you with copyright and fair use policies, visit UNLV's copyright web page:
<http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright>.
4. Make-ups are granted for documented illnesses or deaths in the immediate family (documented as well) only and are administered in the afternoon of the last day of the semester, December 7, 2007 (no exceptions). If the assignments for this course conflict with other obligations, plan ahead and either adjust your schedule or study habits accordingly. If you need to miss class because of observance of a religious holiday or because you represent UNLV at any official extracurricular activity you must notify me no later than week three of the semester.
5. Lecture begins at 1:00 and ends at 2:15. If you choose to attend lecture, plan to do so for its duration. Do not disrupt class by showing-up late, leaving early, or talking. Repeated interruptions, including ringing cell phones and pagers, will adversely affect your final grade. It is your choice to take this course; if the subject matter is not of interest to you or you are unable to meet its expectations, do not enroll in this course.
6. While the amount of reading for this class is less than what is typically assigned in upper division courses, it is far more technical and dense than students may be accustomed to. As a consequence, it may take multiple readings to comprehend concepts presented in the readings. It is expected that all reading assignments will be completed prior to the lecture for which they are assigned.
7. The successful completion of course assignments require more than simple regurgitation of material presented in lecture and readings. Rather, students are expected to synthesize course material in a coherent and succinct manner that demonstrates both the depth and breadth of their understanding (e.g., you will need to think and apply yourself to do well in this course).

8. If you have a documented disability that requires assistance, you need to contact Disability Service (DS) for coordination of your academic accommodations (the DS is located within the Learning Enhancement Services office in the Student Services Complex, Room 137, 895-0866, <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>).

9. If you need assistance developing studies skills or other academic assistance, please visit Student Academic Success Support Organizations at http://tlc.unlv.edu/student_success.htm.

10. Cut-offs for final grades:

A = 100–93 A- = 92–90 B+ = 89–87 B = 86–83 B- = 82–80 C+ = 79–77
 C = 76–73 C- = 72–70 D+ = 69–67 D = 66-63 D- = 62-60 F = 59-0

Course Calendar and Reading Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading
August 28	Course Overview and Introduction	
Part I: Scientific Inquiry and Theory Building		
August 30	Scientific Inquiry	Monroe: pages 1-3 Reader: “Book Reviews of Subjective Research”
September 4	Overview of Political Science	Monroe: pages 10-16
September 6		Quiz 1
September 6	Formulating the Research Question	Monroe: pages 3-9
September 11	Conducting the Literature Review	Reader: “Reading Journal Articles” “Doing a Literature Review,” and “Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature”
September 13		Quiz 2
September 13	Inductive and Deductive Reasoning	Monroe: chapter 2
September 18	Assumptions, Concepts, and Paradigms	Reader: “War and the Fate of Regimes,”

September 20		Quiz 3
September 20	Causality and Parsimony	Reader: “Occam’s Razor and Parsimony”
September 25		Exam 1
Part II: Operationalization and Research Design		
September 27	Operationalization	Reader: “The Multi-Layered Impact of Public Opinion”
October 2, 4	Measurement	Monroe: chapter 4, pages 83-90 Reader: “The Poverty Measure”
October 9		Quiz 4
October 9, 11	Research Design	Monroe: pages 32-46
October 16	Sampling and Data Sources	Levin and Fox: chapter 6 Monroe: chapter 5
October 18		Quiz 5
October 18	Modes of Scientific Inquiry	Levin and Fox: chapter 1 Reader: “Wars and American Politics,” “War and the Fate of Regimes,” and “A Spiral of Cynicism for Some: The Contingent Effects of Campaign News Frames on Participation and Confidence in Government”
October 23	Internal and External Validity	
October 25		Quiz 6
October 25	The Ethics of Social Research	Reader: “The Politics of Government Funded Research,” “Fingerprint Science on Trial,” “Official Played Down Emissions’ Link to Global Warming,” “Former White Official Takes Exxon Job,” and “Doonesbury”

Part III: Introduction to Quantitative Methods

November 1	Introduction to Statistics	Levin and Fox: chapter 2 Monroe: chapters 6, 7
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November 2	Drop Deadline	
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November 6	Descriptive Statistics	Levin and Fox: chapters 3, 4
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November 8	Probability and the Normal Curve	Levin and Fox: chapter 5
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November 13	Statistical Significance	Levin and Fox: chapter 6
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Homework 1 Assigned

November 15, 20	Difference of Means and ANOVA	Levin and Fox: chapters 7, 8 Reader: “Acclimation Effects for Supreme Court Justices: A Cross-Validation, 1888-1940”
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Homework 2 Assigned

November 27, 29	Correlation and Measures of Association	Levin and Fox: chapters 9, 19, 12 Monroe: chapters 8, 9 Reader: “Packin’ in the Hood?: Examining Assumptions of Concealed-Handgun Research,” “Ideological Values and the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices”
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Homework 3 Assigned

December 4, 6	Bivariate Regression	Levin and Fox: chapters 11, 13 Monroe: chapter 10
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Homework 4 Assigned

December 11	Exam 3 (1:00 – 3:00)	
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This syllabus provides a general plan for the course, deviations may be necessary.