

PSC 302 Research Methods in Political Science  
Spring 2007  
Monday, Wednesday 4 – 5:15pm  
Room CBC C125

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Office Hours: MW 10-11:30am and by appointment.

### **Class Description**

This course will introduce students to a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods utilized by political scientists. Upon completion of the course, students will have an appreciation of social science research and will be critical consumers of social scientific literature in general. In addition, the course will provide students a basic grasp of statistical methods and research tools. Students will complete the course with the knowledge needed to effectively conduct their own research, whether in their subsequent undergraduate courses, graduate studies, or in the workforce. Finally, students will gain familiarity with Excel and SPSS, two popular statistical software packages.

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Required Texts**

Earl R. Babbie, *The Basics of Social Research* 4th edition (Thomson Wadsworth Publishing, 2008)

Jack Levin & James A. Fox, *Elementary Statistics in Social Research: The Essentials* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Allyn & Bacon, 2006)

#### **Additional Readings/Resources**

Any additional readings for the course, helpful web links, and other info will be posted on the course website on WebCT/WebCampus.

The Babbie text has a useful companion website that, while not required, has a lot of helpful information:

<http://sociology.wadsworth.com/babbie/basics4e>

Your Babbie textbook should include an SPSS guide and data CD. In addition, a number of print guidebooks to SPSS are also available. There are a number of decent options out there that a search of Amazon will reveal. Two options are:

Brian Cronk, *How to Use SPSS: A Step-by-Step Guide to Analysis and Interpretation*. (Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing, 2002) Designed for SPSS v11.

Darren George & Paul Mallery, *SPSS for Windows Step by Step: A Simple Guide and Reference 14.0 Update* (Boston: Pearson, 2007)

UNLV has a writing center with well-trained tutors who help students of all skill levels in all disciplines. All services are free for enrolled students. The Writing Center is located at FDH 240 and can be reached at 895-3908. More details at <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>  
A calculator that can find the square and square root of a number will also be useful.

### **Assessment**

*Exams* (50%): Two midterm exams (15%) and one cumulative final (20%) will be given during the semester.

*Quizzes and Homework Assignments* (40%, 8 quizzes/assignments @ 5% each): You must be in class on the day of the quiz to take the quiz. There will be no make-up quizzes except in very extraordinary circumstances. Homework assignments will be posted on WebCT a week in advance. Homework must be submitted in person at the beginning of class on the day it is due. I will not accept any late assignments or assignments submitted by email except in very extraordinary circumstances. The lowest quiz or homework grade will be dropped and the best grade will be counted twice.

*Attendance/Participation* (10%): Exit surveys of political science majors consistently show that this is one of the most difficult courses they take at UNLV. We will be covering a lot of fairly dense material in a relatively short period of time. Therefore, attendance is important. If you miss a class, be sure to check with a classmate as to what you missed. Students who expect to miss class because of the observance of a religious holiday will have an opportunity to make up missed work provided that the instructor has been notified in writing regarding the anticipated absence by the last day of late registration. Students who expect to miss class due to an officially sanctioned, UNLV activity (e.g., intercollegiate athletics) must notify the instructor in writing at least 7 days prior to the anticipated absence and provide written verification of participation. Good participation involves coming to class with reading assignments completed and prepared to discuss the material.

A word of caution – we are in a computer lab. Do not succumb to the temptation to play with the computer on non-course related things. We will not have time to repeat what you miss. The classroom will be an environment in which everyone is treated with respect. Keep interruptions to a minimum. Cell phones and pagers should be turned off, late arrivals and early departures avoided, and no “sidebar” conversations held.

*Final Grades*: The points for each of these elements totals to 100. Translated into letter grades, course grades will be determined by the following: A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (87-90); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-89); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D+ (67-69); D (63-67); D- (60-62); F (below 60).

*Grading Notes:* Incompletes will only be offered when requested in writing on behalf of a student by the Chair of the Department of Political Science or the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. All grade disputes must be in writing and must be submitted within one week of the assignment or exam being returned to you.

Ordinarily no makeups will be given for missed assignments or exams. However, if extraordinary circumstances require one, then students must do the following in order to qualify: (1) inform the instructor of the problem at some time prior to the exam itself and/or (2) provide documentation of the issue (e.g. doctor's note, police report) that necessitated your absence. All make-up exams will be scheduled immediately upon your return to class.

Extra credit will not be offered.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. For details on the Student Conduct Code, see <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/judicial/misconductPolicy.html>. The instructor reserves the right to have students' assignments submitted electronically and assessed by plagiarism detection software. The University requires all members of the University Community to be familiar with and to follow copyright and fair use laws. **YOU ARE INDIVIDUALLY AND SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR VIOLATIONS OF COPYRIGHT AND FAIR USE LAWS. THE UNIVERSITY WILL NEITHER PROTECT NOR DEFEND YOU NOR ASSUME ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR EMPLOYEE OR STUDENT VIOLATIONS OF FAIR USE LAWS.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability as well as disciplinary action under University policies. To help familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, the University encourages you to visit its copyright page at [www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright](http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright). Plagiarism in any form will result in a failing grade for the course and the instructor will file a case with the Office of Student Conduct.

### **Student Accommodation**

UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, offering reasonable accommodations to qualified students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to let me know within the first two weeks of the semester and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137, and the contact numbers are: VOICE (702) 895-0866, TTY (702) 895-0652, FAX (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>

## **Student Support**

The Teaching and Learning Center has collected a number of resources to help you succeed at [http://tlc.unlv.edu/student\\_success.htm](http://tlc.unlv.edu/student_success.htm)

## **Course Schedule** (subject to change)

January 23: Introduction

January 28 & 30: Basics of Scientific Inquiry

Reading: Babbie Chapter 1, Elster *Explaining Social Behavior* (WebCT)

February 4 & 6: Paradigms, Theory, Research Design and Hypothesis Formulation

Readings: Babbie Chapter 2 & 4

**1<sup>st</sup> Quiz on February 6**

February 11 & 13: Statistics and Social Research/Concepts, Measures, and Variables

Readings: Levin & Fox Chapter 1 & 2, Babbie Chapter 5

**2<sup>nd</sup> Quiz on February 13**

February 18: President's Day – No Class

February 20: Statistics and Data Analysis with SPSS/Measures of Variability

Readings: Levin & Fox Chapter 3-4

February 25 & 27: Indexes, Scales, and Typologies/Probability and the Normal Curve

Readings: Babbie Chapter 6, Levin & Fox Chapter 5

**Homework 1: Measures of Variability/ Probability and the Normal Curve Due February 27**

March 3: **Midterm 1**

March 5: Samples and Populations/Case Selection and Sampling

Readings: Levin & Fox Chapter 6, Babbie Chapter 7

March 10 & 12: Experiments/Difference of Means Tests

Readings: Babbie Chapter 8, Levin & Fox Chapter 7, NYT Magazine (WebCT)

**Homework 2: Samples and Populations Due March 10**

March 17 & 19: Spring Break – no class

March 24 & 26: ANOVA/ Correlation

Readings: Levin & Fox Chapter 8 & 10

**Homework 3: Difference of Means Tests/ANOVA Due March 26**

March 31 & April 2: Correlation/Regression

Readings: Levin & Fox Chapter 11

**3<sup>rd</sup> Quiz on April 2**

April 7 & 9: Regression & dummy variables

Readings: TBA

**Homework 4: Correlation/Regression Due April 9**

April 14 **Midterm 2**

April 16: Multivariate regression (z factors and multicollinearity)

Readings: TBA

April 21 & 23: Qualitative and Survey Research

Readings: Babbie Chapters 9 & 10

**Homework 5: Regression Due April 21**

April 28 & 30: Evaluation Research and Ethics in research

Readings: Babbie Chapters 3, 11 & 12

May 5 & 7: Reading and Writing Social Research & Wrap-up and review

Readings: Babbie Chapter 15

**May 12<sup>th</sup> 6pm Final Exam**