

**PSC 302**  
**Research Methods in Political Science**  
**Spring 2008**

Instructor: Dr. David F. Damore  
Office Hours: Tu 2 – 3:30 and W 4 to 5:30  
Office: WRI B213

**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 Content:**

The course content consists of three distinct, but interrelated components:

1. Streaming video lectures and the accompanying lecture notes, both of which are accessible via the Media Library link on the course menu or via the learning modules located on the course home page.
2. The Monroe and Levin and Fox texts and course readings, which are accessible via the Media Library link on the course menu or via the learning modules.
3. Web based interactions among students and instructor (details below).

Be sure to pay attention to the Calendar and Announcements links on the course menu, which provide information about discussion topics and assignments, as well as updates and other course information.

**Course Material:**

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

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

Course Readings, available via the course WebCampus site.

**Requirements:**

1. Exams (60%) – Three exams that occur after each section of the course (exams are not cumulative). Exams are accessed via the Assessments link on the course menu. 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. **Exams may not be made up or taken other than during the time period for which they are available.**
2. Quizzes (20%) – Eight quizzes during that are open note and open book, timed, and are accessed via the Assessments link on the course menu. Quizzes may be accessed only once during the time period that they are available and consist of multiple choice and true false questions. **There are no make ups or extensions for quizzes.**
3. Homework (10%) – A set of homework assignments during the third part of the course.
4. Participation (10%) - Participation is based upon students' interaction with one another and the instructor. More specifically, there are two mediums through which course participation points can be earned:
  - a. Discussion threads. A number of discussion topics will be posted during each week that students may respond to. Old topics will be removed after a new topic has been posted. Discussion postings will be assessed in terms of quality and depth, as well as the use of proper grammar and spelling. I expect students to make two to three quality postings to the course discussion board each week.
  - b. E-mail interactions between the instructor and students. I strongly encourage you to e-mail with me regularly whenever questions arise. E-mail can be accessed via the Mail option on the course menu.

#### **Policies and Miscellaneous:**

1. All announcements and updates about the course are posted via the Announcements option and assignments due dates post on the course calendar.
2. Any concerns or questions about WebCampus or Distance Education should be directed to those offices, not the instructor.
3. The honor code is strictly enforced. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred to the university for investigation.
4. 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. The University will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations

of fair use laws. To familiarize you with copyright and fair use policies, visit the University's copyright web page (<http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright>).

5. Make-ups are granted for documented illnesses or deaths in the immediate family (documented as well). If the assignments for this course conflict with other obligations, plan ahead and either adjust your schedule or study habits accordingly.
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 you may be accustomed to. As a consequence, it may take multiple readings to comprehend concepts presented in the readings. Also, it may take multiple viewings of the streaming video lectures to comprehend all of the material.
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. Learning Enhancement Services (LES) houses Disability Services, Tutoring Services, and Learning Strategies. If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you need to contact the LES for coordination in your academic accommodations. LES is located in Reynolds Student Services Complex, Suite 317. The phone number is 895-0866. You may also visit their website at <http://www.unlv.edu/studentlife/les>.
9. Cut-offs for final grades:

A = 100–93.0	B = 86.9–83.0	C = 76.9–73.0	D = 66.9–63.0
A- = 92.9–90.0	B- = 82.9–80.0	C- = 72.9–70.0	D- = 62.9–60.0
B+ = 89.9–87.0	C+ = 79.9–77.0	D+ = 69.9– 67.0	F = 59.9-0

### **Course Organization and Assignments**

#### **Part I: Scientific Inquiry and Theory Building**

##### **Week 1: January 22 – January 27**

###### *Streaming Video Lectures*

###### *Reading*

###### 1. Scientific Inquiry

Monroe: pages 1-3  
Reader: “Book Reviews of Subjective Research”

###### *Assessments*

###### Quiz 1

**Week 2: January 28 – February 3**

*Streaming Video Lectures*

*Reading*

- |                                      |                     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 2. Overview of Political Science     | Monroe: pages 10-16 |
| 3. Formulating the Research Question | Monroe: pages 3-9   |

*Assessments*

Quiz 2

**Week 3: February 4 - 10**

*Streaming Video Lectures*

*Reading*

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 4. Conducting the Literature Review  | Reader: “Reading Journal Articles”<br>“Doing a Literature Review,” and<br>“Process and Text: Teaching<br>Students to Review the Literature” |
| 5. Inductive and Deductive Reasoning | Monroe: chapter 2   |

**Week 4: February 11 - 17**

*Streaming Video Lectures*

*Reading*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 6. Assumptions, Concepts, and Paradigms | Reader: “War and the Fate of<br>Regimes,” |
| 7. Causality and Parsimony              | Reader: “Occam’s Razor and<br>Parsimony”  |

*Assessments*

Quiz 3

**Week 5: February 18-24**

**\*\*\* Exam 1 (February 19)\*\*\***

**Part II: Operationalization and Research Design**

*Streaming Video Lectures*

*Reading*

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 8. Operationalization | Reader: “The Multi-Layered Impact<br>of Public Opinion” |
|-----------------------|---|

**Week 6: February 25 – March 2**

*Streaming Video Lectures*

*Reading*

9. Measurement

Monroe: chapter 4, pages 83-90  
Reader: “The Poverty Measure”  
Reader: “Bloomberg Seeks New  
Way to Decide Who Is Poor”

*Assessments*

Quiz 4

**Week 7: March 3 – March 9**

*Streaming Video Lecture*

*Reading*

10. Research Design

Monroe: pages 32-46

11. Sampling and Data Sources

Monroe: chapter 5

*Assessments*

Quiz 5

**Week 8: March 10 - 16**

*Streaming Video Lecture*

*Reading*

12. Modes of Scientific Inquiry

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”

13. Internal and External Validity

*Assessments*

Quiz 6

**Week 9: March 17 – 23  
(Spring Break)**

**Week 10: March 24 – 30**

*Streaming Video Lectures*

*Reading*

14. The Ethics of Social Research

“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”

**\*\*\* Exam 2 (March 27) \*\*\***

**Part III: Introduction to Quantitative Methods**

**Week 11: March 31 – April 6  
(April 4 is the Drop Deadline)**

*Streaming Video Lectures*

*Reading*

15. Introduction to Statistics

Levin and Fox: chapter 2  
Monroe: chapters 6, 7

16. Descriptive Statistics

Levin and Fox: chapters 3, 4

**Week 12: April 7 – April 13**

*Streaming Video Lectures*

*Reading*

17. Probability and the Normal Curve

Levin and Fox: chapter 5

18. Statistical Significance

Levin and Fox: chapter 6

*Assessments*

Homework 1

**Week 13: April 14 – 20**

*Streaming Video Lectures*

*Reading*

19. Difference of Means and ANOVA

Levin and Fox: chapters 7, 8  
Reader: “Acclimation Effects for Supreme Court Justices: A Cross-Validation, 1888-1940”

*Assessments*

Quiz 7

**Week 14: April 21 – 27**

*Streaming Video Lectures*

*Reading*

20. 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”

*Assessments*

Homework 2

**Week 15 and 16: April 28 – May 9**

*Streaming Video Lectures*

*Reading*

21. Bivariate Regression

Levin and Fox: chapters 11, 13  
Monroe: chapter 10

*Assessments*

Homework 3

Quiz 8

**Finals Week: May 12 – 16**

**\*\*\* Exam 3 (May 12, 13) \*\*\***