

PSC 302
Research Methods in Political Science
Spring 2006

Instructor: Dr. David Damore

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Location: BEH 102

Office: WRI B213; Phone: 895-3217

Time: Tu and Th 11:30 – 12:45

Office Hours: Tu and Th 1:30 – 2:30; W 4 – 5:30

Scope and Purpose:

This course provides students with the skills necessary to evaluate and conduct systematic empirical research in the social sciences. Specifically, course material 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 questions and concerns central to these areas of study, and the process of theory building. 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 political science research is the focus of third part of the course.

Course Material:

Required

Levin, Jack, and James Alan Fox. 2004. *Elementary Statistics in Social Research, The Essentials*. Boston: Pearson Education.

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

Recommended

Cronk, Brian. 2004. *How to Use SPSS: A Step-by-Step Guide to Analysis and Interpretation*. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing

Other Material

Course Reader and Lecture Notes (accessible via WebCt)

For information about SPSS:

http://wadsworth.com/sociology_d/templates/student_resources/0534630367_babbie/pri-mers/SPSS_11.0_complete/index.html#toc

Calculator

Requirements:

1. Exams (60%) – Three in class exams that occur after each section (exams are not cumulative). Exams are open note and open book. The first two exams are essay and short answer in format. The third exam occurs in finals week and consists of short answer, statistical calculations, and statistical interpretation. Highest exam score counts for 25% of course total; middle exam score counts for 20% of course total; and lowest exam counts for 15% of course total
2. Homework (30%) – A series of homework assignments made throughout the term that can be accessed via the course WebCt site. **Late work is not accepted!**
3. Classroom Contribution (10%) – Determined by students' attendance, attentiveness, and contribution to class discussions.

Policies and Miscellaneous:

1. The honor code is strictly enforced. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred to the proper authority.
2. 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. UNLV 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>).
3. 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. 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.
4. Lecture begins at 11:30 and ends at 12:45. 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 and text messaging, 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.
5. It is expected that assigned reading will be completed prior to lecture.
6. 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).

7. 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, www.unlv.edu/studentlife/les).

8. 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 Calendar and Reading Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading
January 17		Course Overview
Part I: Political Science and Scientific Inquiry		
January 19	Scientific Inquiry	Monroe: pages 1 – 3 Reader: “Why Bush Won,” “Small Inroads Make the Difference for Bush,” “Terrorism, Gay Marriage, and Incumbency: Explaining the Republican Victory in the 2004 Presidential Election”
January 24	Political Science and Political Analysis	Monroe: pages 10 – 16
January 26	Formulating the Research Question	Monroe: pages 3 – 9
January 31	Conducting the Literature Review	Reader: “Reading Journal Articles”
February 2	Inductive and Deductive Reasoning	Monroe: chapter 2
February 7, 9	Assumptions, Concepts, and Paradigms	Reader: “War and the Fate of Regimes,” “Occam’s Razor and Parsimony”

February 14		Catch-up and Review
February 16		Exam 1
Part II: Operationalization and Research Design		
February 21	Operationalization	Reader: “War and the Fate of Regimes,” “Presidential Campaigns and the Knowledge Gap,” and “The Multi-Layered Impact of Public Opinion”
February 23, 28	Measurement	Monroe: chapter four, pages 83-90
March 2, 7	Research Design	Monroe: pages 32 - 46
March 9	Sampling and Case Selection	Levin and Fox: chapter 6 Monroe: chapter 5
March 14, 16		Spring Break
March 21	Modes of Scientific Inquiry	Levin and Fox: chapter 1 Reader: “Wars and American Politics,” “War and the Fate of Regimes,” “A Spiral of Cynicism for Some: The Contingent Effects of Campaign News Frames on Participation and Confidence in Government”
March 23	Internal and External Validity	
March 28	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 House Official Takes Exxon Job,” “Review of Medical Research Turns Up Contradictory Results” and “Doonesbury”
March 30		Catch-up and Review

March 31

Drop deadline

April 4

Exam 2

Part III: Introduction to Quantitative Methods

April 6

Introduction to Statistics

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

April 11

Descriptive Statistics

Levin and Fox: chapters 3 and 4

April 13

Probability and the Normal
Curve

Levin and Fox: chapter 5

April 18

Statistical Significance

Levin and Fox: chapter 6

April 20

SPSS Lab Assignment

April 25

Difference of Means and
ANOVA

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

April 27

Correlation and Measures of
Association

Levin and Fox: chapters 9, 10, 12
Monroe: chapters 8, 9
Reader: "Packing' in the Hood?:
Examining Assumptions of
Concealed-Handgun Research,"
"Ideological Values and the Votes
of United States Supreme Court
Justices"

May 2

Bivariate Regression

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

May 4

Catch-up and Review

May 11

Exam 3, 10:10 – 12:10

This syllabus provides a general plan for the course, deviations may be necessary.