

PSC 302
Research Methods in Political Science
Summer Session II 2008

Instructor: Dr. David F. Damore
Contact Information: Course internal email
Office Hours: Tu and Th 5:30 to 7 pm and by appointment
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 text 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*, 2nd 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 (75%) – 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 30% of course grade; middle exam score counts for 25% of course grade; and low exam score counts for 20% of course grade. **Exams may not be made up or taken other than during the time period for which they are available.**

2. Quizzes (15%) – Six quizzes 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.** Students' lowest quiz score is dropped.

3. 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. I will post one or two discussion topics per week that you may respond to. Because of the large number of students taking the course this term, students will be placed into Discussion Teams (details forthcoming). All discussion postings will be contained in the main course thread and can be accessed via the Discussion option on the course menu. **You will only receive credit for postings made within your team's thread during the time period in which the topic is available. Students are encouraged to respond to comments made by other students so as to facilitate dialogue.** 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.

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/studentilife/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: June 9-June 15

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

1. Scientific Inquiry
Monroe: pages 1-3
Reader: "Book Reviews of Subjective Research"
2. Overview of Political Science
Monroe: pages 10-16
3. Formulating the Research Question
Monroe: pages 3-9

Assessments

Quiz 1

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

4. Conducting the Literature Review
Reader: "Reading Journal Articles"
"Doing a Literature Review," and "Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature"
5. Inductive and Deductive Reasoning
Monroe: chapter 2
6. Assumptions, Concepts, and Paradigms
Reader: "War and the Fate of Regimes,"

Assessments

Quiz 2

Week 2: June 16-22

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

7. Causality and Parsimony
Reader: "Occam's Razor and Parsimony"

Assessments

Exam 1 (June 17-18)

Week 2 (continued): June 16-22

Part II: Operationalization and Research Design

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

8. Operationalization

Reader: “The Multi-Layered Impact of Public Opinion”

9. Measurement

Monroe: chapter 4, pages 83-90

Reader: “The Poverty Measure”

Assessments

Quiz 3

Week 3: June 23-29

Streaming Video Lecture

Reading

10. Research Design

Monroe: pages 32-46

11. Sampling and Data Sources

Monroe: chapter 5

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 4

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”

Week 4: June 30-July 6

Assessments

Exam 2 (June 30-July 1)

Part III: Introduction to Quantitative Methods

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

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|--------------------------------------|---|
| 15. Introduction to Statistics | Levin and Fox: chapter 2
Monroe: chapters 6, 7 |
| 16. Descriptive Statistics | Levin and Fox: chapters 3, 4 |
| 17. Probability and the Normal Curve | Levin and Fox: chapter 5 |
| 18. Statistical Significance | Levin and Fox: chapter 6 |

Assessments

Quiz 5

Week 5: July 7-11

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

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|---|--|
| 19. Difference of Means and ANOVA | Levin and Fox: chapters 7, 8
Reader: “Acclimation Effects for Supreme Court Justices: A Cross-Validation, 1888-1940” |
| 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” |

Week 5 (continued): July 7-11

Assessments

Quiz 6

Streaming Video Lectures

21. Bivariate Regression

Reading

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

Assessments

Exam 3 (July 10-11)