

PSC 302
Research Methods in Political Science
Summer II 2006

Instructor: Dr. David Damore
Office Hours: Via course internal email and by appointment
Office: WRI B213

Scope and Purpose:

This course provides students with the skills necessary to evaluate 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 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. However, due to time constraints part three is not covered during summer session.

Course Content:

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

1. Streaming video lectures and the accompanying lecture notes.
2. The Monroe text and course readings.
3. Web based interactions among students and instructor.

Be sure to pay attention to the course calendar, which provides information about discussion topics and assignments, as well as updates and other course information.

Readings:

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

Course Reader, available via the course WebCt site.

Requirements:

1. Exam (50%) – Two exams that occur after parts one and two of the course (exams are not cumulative). Exams are open note and open book and consist of essay questions, short answers and identifications, and applications. High exam score counts for 30% of course grade and low exam score counts for 20% of course grade.

2. Homework (15%) - Two homework assignments. Due dates for each assignment are posted on the course calendar. Homework assignments can be accessed repeatedly during the time period that they are available. **Late work is not accepted!**

3. Quizzes (25%) – Six quizzes. Your lowest quiz is dropped. Quizzes are timed, may be accessed only once during the time period that they are available, and consist of 15 multiple choice and true false questions. **If you miss a quiz you will not be allowed to make it up!**

4. Participation (10%) - Participation is based upon students' interaction with one another and the instructor.

There are two primary mediums through which course participation points can be earned (both are assessed via the course Discussion page and email options on the Course Menu):

a. Discussion threads. I will post one or two discussion topics per week that you may respond to. All discussion postings will be contained in the main course thread. **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. Because of the number of students taking the course this term, students will be assigned to a discussion team (information forthcoming). Discussion postings will be assessed in terms of the quality and depth of their content, as well as their use of proper grammar and spelling.

b. E-mail interactions between the instructor and students. I strongly encourage you to email with me regularly whenever questions arise.

In addition, if you are taking classes on campus, feel free to stop by my office so that I can put a face with a name.

Policies and Miscellaneous:

1. All announcements and updates about the course are posted on the course calendar (so be sure to check it regularly).

2. 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.

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. 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>).

4. 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.
5. 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.
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 in your academic accommodations (the DS is located within the Learning Enhancement Services office in the Reynolds Student Services Center, room 317, 895-0866, www.unlv.edu/studentlife/les).
8. Cut-offs for final grades are as follows:

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 5-11

<i>Streaming Video Lectures</i>	<i>Reading</i>
1. Scientific Inquiry	Monroe: pages 1-3 Reader: “Why Bush Won,” “Small Inroads Make the Difference for Bush,” and “Terrorism, Gay Marriage, and Incumbency”
2. Overview of Political Science	Monroe: pages 10-16

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| 3. Formulating the Research Question | Monroe: pages 3-9 |
| 4. Conducting the Literature Review | Reader: “Reading Journal Articles”
“Doing a Literature Review,” and “Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature” |

Assignments

Familiarize yourself with course material and introduce yourself to your discussion team.

Quiz 1

Quiz 2

Week 2: June 12-18

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

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| 5. Inductive and Deductive Reasoning | Monroe: chapter 2 |
| 6. Assumptions, Concepts, and Paradigms | Reader: “War and the Fate of Regimes,” |
| 7. Causality and Parsimony | Reader: “Occam’s Razor and Parsimony” |

Assignments

Homework 1

Quiz 3

Week 3: June 19-25

Exam 1 (June 19-20)

Part II: Operationalization and Research Design

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

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| 8. Operationalization | Reader: “War and the Fate of Regimes”
and “The Multi-Layered Impact of Public Opinion” |
| 9. Measurement | Monroe: chapter 4, pages 83-90
Reader: “The Poverty Measure” |

Assignments

Quiz 4

Week 4: June 26-July 2

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”

Assignments

Homework 2

Quiz 5

Week 5: July 3-July 9

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

13. Internal and External Validity

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”

Assignments

Quiz 6

Exam 2 (July 6 and 7)