

PSC 701
Research Design and Methodology
Fall 2016

Course Overview and Learning Outcomes

This course instills the skills necessary to evaluate and conduct systematic, empirical research in political science. The course is divided into three parts. Part one familiarizes students with the prospects of and limitations to a scientific study of politics, the sub-fields within the discipline of Political Science, 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 analysis, and inference). An introduction to quantitative methods (e.g., statistics) is the focus of part three. Throughout the course students will be introduced to Stata; a statistical package that will also be used in PSC 702. By the end of the course students will:

1. Develop a thorough understanding of the social scientific research process.
2. Evaluate and conduct empirical social scientific research.
3. Improve their critical thinking writing skills.
4. Strengthen their information gathering and analytical reasoning skills.

Course Material

Required

Acock, Alan C. 2016. *A Gentle Introduction to Stata*, 5th ed. College Station, TX: Stata Press.

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, H.T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. 2016. *Political Science Research Methods*, 8th ed. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Malici, Akan and Elizabeth S. Smith eds. 2013. *Political Science Research in Practice*. New York: Routledge.

Course reader and lecture notes (available via course WebCampus site).

Recommended

Moore, Will H. and David A. Siegel. 2013. *A Mathematics Course for Political & Social Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2

It is strongly recommended that students purchase a copy of Stata 14. To do so, go to <https://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/> and specify the Campus GradPlan option.

Requirements

1. Exams (30%) – Two exams. Exam one is take home in format and occurs after part two of the course and covers all material covered in parts one and two. The second exam covers part three of the course and is administered in class during finals week. Exam one counts for 20% of course grade and exam two counts for 10% of course grade.
2. Research Paper (40%) – Over the course of the semester students will be developing a paper

offering an original research design, including data collection and analysis, assessing a question of significance to the study of politics. Detailed information is forthcoming.

3. Homework (15%) – Homework assignments that are by noon on the day of class and submitted via email.

4. Participation (15%) – Determined by students' attendance, preparation, and willingness to enter into discussions as they arise.

Course Procedures

1. Students must complete all assigned work by the respective due dates in order to pass the course. Late work is not accepted.

2. This course is seminar in nature and only works if students attend and are prepared to engage course material. Thus, attendance at all class sessions is required. Repeated absences, tardiness, early departures, and other disruptions will result in significant reductions to the participation component of the course grade.

3. Students are required to turn off all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices during class. The use of laptops is allowed provided that they are used exclusively for class activity. If any student abuses this privilege, then all laptops will be prohibited from that point forward. Students are not allowed to tape record, photograph, video tape, or otherwise electronically record any of the class. Of course, respect should be shown for all other class members at all times.

4. It is expected that all assigned reading will be completed prior to class. If you do not do the reading, do not show up to class and free ride on the efforts of others. Repeated instances of failure to complete assigned reading will result in significant reductions to the participation component of the course grade.

5. All written work must utilize the *Style Manual for Political Science*. Any submitted work that uses other styles or formats will not be considered; resulting in a zero for that assignment. A copy of the *Style Manual* is available on the course WebCampus site.

6. While course work is but one component of graduate training, there is a norm in graduate school of grade inflation. Typically, grades for graduate seminars range from B+ to A with grades of B or below rare and being assigned only in cases of near total student dereliction. This provides students with a false sense of their performance and potential. Thus, grades for this course will be determined in a manner that is more in line with those in undergraduate courses with the express understanding that a grade of B or below is indicative of a failing performance

University Policies and Resources

1. 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 Student 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. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* located at: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

2. The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with 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.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

3. The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

4. Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

5. The University encourages application of the transparency method of constructing assignments for student success. Please see these two links for further information:
<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>
<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>

6. The grade of I – Incomplete – can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student's control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving "I" grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly.

Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

7. The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

8. One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.

9. By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. **Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.**

10. Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the subject librarian is https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject. UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students' access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu/>.

11. The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

Course Calendar and Reading Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading
1. 8/29	Course Overview and Introduction	
2. 9/5	Labor Day Recess	
Part I: Scientific Inquiry and Theory Building		
3. 9/12	Scientific Inquiry	Johnson et al.: Preface, chapters 1 and 2 Reader: "Book Reviews of Subjective Research" and "Rebels Whose Bold Moves Set Science Aglow" Reader: "Math Pre-Orientation"
	The Ethics of Social Research	Malici and Smith: chapter 12 Reader: "Messing With Montana," "Doubts About Study of Gay Canvassers Rattle the Field," "The Politics of Government Funded Research," "Ethical Challenges and Some Solutions for Field Experiments," and "An Obscure Academic Journal. A Memorable Peer Review Scandal"
	Overview of Political Science	Malici and Smith: chapters 1 and 2 Reader: "Field Essay: Just How Relevant is Political Science?"
4. 9/19	Formulating the Research Question	Johnson et al.: chapter 3
	Conducting the Literature Review	Reader: "Reading Journal Articles," "Doing a Literature Review," and "Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature"
	Induction and Deduction	Reader: "Overcoming Physics Envy" and "Political Scientists are Lousy Forecasters"

5. 9/26	Assumptions, Concepts, and Paradigms Causality and Parsimony	Johnson et al.: chapter 4 Reader: "Paradigms, Theory, and Research" Reader: "Occam's Razor and Parsimony," "Eat Quickly for the Economy's Sake," and "Criminal Element"
Part II: Operationalization and Research Design		
6. 10/3	Operationalization Measurement	Reader: "The Multi-Layered Impact of Public Opinion" Johnson et al.: chapter 5 Reader: "The Poverty Measure," "Bloomberg Seeks New Way to Decide Who Is Poor," and "How Do We Measure A Senator's Success"
7. 10/10	Research Design Sampling and Data Sources	Johnson et al.: chapter 6 Reader: "How Good is Good Enough? A Multidimensional, Best Possible Standard for Research Design" Johnson et al.: chapters 7, 9, and 10 Malici and Smith: chapters 7-9 Reader: "Collecting Survey Data" and "Likely Voters: How Pollsters Define And Choose Them"
8. 10/17	Experimental and Quantitative Methods	Acock: chapters 1 and 2 Malici and Smith: chapters 6, 8, 10, and 11 Reader: "Unhappy, Uninterested, or Uninformed? Understanding 'None of the Above' Voting" and "A Spiral of Cynicism for Some: The Contingent Effects of Campaign News Frames on Participation and Confidence in Government"
9. 10/24	Qualitative Methods Internal and External Validity	Acock: chapters 3 and 4 Johnson et al.: chapter 8 Malici and Smith: chapters 3-5 Reader: "Wars and American Politics" and "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research" Johnson et al.: chapter 15

Part III: Introduction to Quantitative Methods

10. 10/31	Introduction to Statistics Descriptive Statistics	Johnson et al.: chapter 11 Acock: chapter 5 Reader: "When Numbers Mislead"
11. 11/7	Probability and Statistical Significance	Johnson et al.: chapter 12
12. 11/14	Difference of Means and ANOVA	Acock: chapters 7 and 9 Johnson et al.: pages 412-420, 449-477 Reader: "Acclimation Effects for Supreme Court Justices: A Cross-Validation, 1888-1940"
13. 11/21	Correlation and Measures of Association	Acock: chapter 6 Johnson et al.: pages 421-448, 492-495 Reader: "Packin' in the Hood?: Examining Assumptions of Concealed-Handgun Research," and "Ideological Values and the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices"
14. 11/28	Regression Analysis	Acock: chapter 8 Johnson et al.: pages 478-515, chapter 14
15. 12/5	Student paper presentations	
16. 12/12		Exam 2 3:10 to 5:10

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