

PSC 302
Research Methods in Political Science

Scope and Purpose:

Learning Objectives

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 modes of analysis) 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. By the end of the course students will be able to:

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

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 learning modules located on the course menu.
2. The Johnson and Reynolds and Levin, Fox, and Forde texts and course readings. Course readings are accessible via the learning modules located on the course menu. Textbooks can be purchased at the UNLV Bookstore or online.
3. Web based interactions among students and instructor (details below).

Course Material for Purchase:

Levin, Jack, James Alan Fox, and David R. Forde. 2014. *Elementary Statistics in Social Research*, 12th edition. Boston: Pearson.

Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. 2012. Political Science Research Methods, 7th ed. Los Angeles: SAGE/CQ Press

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%) – 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. Students' lowest quiz scores are dropped. **There are no make-ups or extensions for quizzes.**

3. Homework (10%) – A series of homework assignments during the third part of the course. Homework assignments can be accessed repeatedly during the time period in which they are available. After the assignments have been graded, the keys will be posted,

4. Participation (10%) - Participation is based upon students' interaction with one another and the instructor. Specifically, there are three mediums through which course participation points can be earned:

a. Discussion threads. Discussion topics will be posted periodically. Students are expected to respond to the topics with original posts. All discussion postings will be contained in the main course thread for each discussion team and can be accessed via the Discussion option on the course menu. **Do not create new threads for your posts, as they will be deleted. 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 (typically, topics will be available for a week or so). Discussion postings will be assessed in terms of their 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.

c. Although this course is taught via Online Education, if students require one-on-one assistance they should plan to attend office hours or make an appointment with the instructor.

Course Policies:

1. All announcements and updates about the course are posted via the Announcements option and due dates for quizzes, exams, and homework assignments are posted on the Course Calendar.
2. 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, students need to adjust their schedule or study habits accordingly.
3. Any questions about WebCampus or Online Education, as well as technical problems that you may experience should be directed to those offices, not the instructor.
4. While the volume of reading for this class is less than what is typically assigned in upper division courses, it is far more technical than students may be accustomed to. As a consequence, it may take multiple readings to comprehend concepts presented in the readings. Similarly, it may take multiple viewings of the streaming video lectures to comprehend all of the material.
5. The successful completion of course assignments require more than simple regurgitation of course material. 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., students will need to think and apply themselves to do well in this course).
6. 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

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: <http://studentconduct.unlv.edu/misconduct/policy.html>.

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 no later than the end of the first two weeks of classes, January 29, 2016, 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 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.

6. The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The

ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Students may learn more about tutoring services by calling 702-895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at: <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>.

7. 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/>

8. 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.

9. 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.

Course Organization and Assignments	
Part I: Scientific Inquiry and Theory Building	
Week 1: January 19 – 24	
<i>Streaming Video Lectures</i>	<i>Reading</i>
1. Scientific Inquiry	Johnson and Reynolds: Preface and chapters 1 and 2 Reader: "Book Reviews of Subjective Research" and "Rebels Whose Bold Moves Set Science Aglow"
Week 2: January 25 – January 31	
<i>Streaming Video Lectures</i>	<i>Reading</i>
2. Overview of Political Science	Reader: "Field Essay: Just How Relevant is Political Science?"
3. Formulating the Research Question	Johnson and Reynolds: chapter 3
Assessments: Quiz 1	
Week 3: February 1 – 7	
<i>Streaming Video Lectures</i>	<i>Reading</i>
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	Johnson and Reynolds: pages 48–50 Reader: "Overcoming Physics Envy" and "Political Scientists are Lousy Forecasters"
Week 4: February 8 – 14	
<i>Streaming Video Lectures</i>	<i>Reading</i>
6. Assumptions, Concepts, and Paradigms	Johnson and Reynolds: chapter 4 Reader: "Paradigms, Theory, and Research"
7. Causality and Parsimony	Reader: "Occam's Razor and Parsimony," "Eat Quickly for the Economy's Sake," and "Criminal Element"
Assessments: Quiz 2	

Week 5: February 15 – 21	
*** Exam 1 February 16 – 17 ***	
Part II: Operationalization and Research Design	
<i>Streaming Video Lectures</i>	<i>Reading</i>
8. Operationalization	Reader: "The Multi-Layered Impact of Public Opinion"
Week 6: February 22 – February 28	
<i>Streaming Video Lecture</i>	<i>Reading</i>
9. Measurement	Johnson and Reynolds: chapter 5 Reader: "The Poverty Measure," "Bloomberg Seeks New Way to Decide Who Is Poor," and "How Do We Measure A Senator's Success"
Assessments: Quiz 3	
Week 7: February 29 – March 6	
<i>Streaming Video Lecture</i>	<i>Reading</i>
10. Research Design	Johnson and Reynolds: chapter 6 Reader: "How Good is Good Enough? A Multidimensional, Best Possible Standard for Research Design"
11. Sampling and Data Sources	Johnson and Reynolds: chapters 7, 9, and 10 Reader: "Collecting Survey Data" and "'Likely Voters: How Pollsters Define And Choose Them"
Week 8: March 7 – 13	
<i>Streaming Video Lecture</i>	<i>Reading</i>
12. Modes of Scientific Inquiry	Johnson and Reynolds: chapter 8 Levin, Fox, and Forde: chapter 1 Reader: "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research," "Wars and American Politics," "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"

13. Internal and External Validity	in Government" Johnson and Reynolds: chapter 15
Assessments: Quiz 4	
Week 9: March 14 – 20	
<i>Streaming Video Lectures</i>	<i>Reading</i>
14. The Ethics of Social Research	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"
*** Exam 2 March 17 – 18 ***	
Week 10: March 21 – 27 Spring Break Recess	
Part III: Introduction to Quantitative Methods	
Week 11: March 28 – April 3	
<i>Streaming Video Lectures</i>	<i>Reading</i>
15. Introduction to Statistics	Johnson and Reynolds: chapter 11
16. Descriptive Statistics	Levin, Fox, and Forde: chapters 2, 3, and 4 Reader: "When Numbers Mislead"
Week 12: April 4 – 10	
<i>Streaming Video Lectures</i>	<i>Reading</i>
17. Probability and the Normal Curve	Johnson and Reynolds: chapter 12 Levin, Fox, and Forde: chapter 5
18. Statistical Significance	Levin, Fox, and Forde: chapter 6
Assessments: Homework 1	
Week 13: April 11 – 17	
<i>Streaming Video Lectures</i>	<i>Reading</i>
19. Difference of Means and ANOVA	Johnson and Reynolds: pages 428-439,

	463-489 Levin, Fox, and Forde: chapters 7 and 8 Reader: "Acclimation Effects for Supreme Court Justices: A Cross-Validation, 1888-1940"
Assessments: Quiz 5	
Week 14: April 18 – 24	
<i>Streaming Video Lectures</i>	<i>Reading</i>
20. Correlation and Measures of Association	Johnson and Reynolds: pages 440-462, 503-506 Levin, Fox, and Forde: chapters 9, 10, 12 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	
Weeks 15 and 16: April 25 – May 7	
<i>Streaming Video Lectures</i>	<i>Reading</i>
21. Regression Analysis	Johnson and Reynolds: pages 490-526, chapter 14 Levin, Fox, and Forde: chapters 11 and 13
Assessments: Homework 3 and Quiz 6	
*** Exam 3 May 9 – 10 ***	
This syllabus provides a general plan for the course, deviations may be necessary.	