

PSC 701: Research Design and Methods

Professor:

Contact Info:

Office Hours:

Description

This is the introductory course in political science research design and research methods. This course is designed to be part of a series of courses providing you with the basic tool kit required to understand and produce original social scientific research in political science. The skills you will learn in this course will be a foundation upon which you will build in most of the rest of your courses in the program. Furthermore, this course will begin to provide you with skills you can apply in jobs outside of academia.

NOTE ON PANDEMIC VERSION OF THE COURSE:

This course will be held online. As much as possible I will try to make this as close to an in person course as possible. I will be holding seminars via WebEx every week at the originally scheduled timeslot for this course (Tuesdays at 5:30pm to 8:15pm). Participation in these video seminars is expected. I will record them and post them but if you cannot make it to one of them, please let me know in advance so we can prepare for and compensate for your absence.

If you will have difficulty with the online format due to equipment needs or time conflicts, please let me know as soon as possible.

A note on how to be successful in this course

Many undergraduate students can “get away” with neglecting a class for a period of time then “cramming” to get caught up at the end of the semester or just before some assignment. I have never seen this be a successful strategy in a graduate program. This is doubly true in courses, like this one, that involve particularly technical material. A successful student will keep up with the readings and assignments, completing readings BEFORE the classes in which they are discussed and completing assignments on time.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course you will have achieved three major goals:

First, you will have an introductory understanding of the professional practice political science. You will learn how graduate school differs from undergraduate programs. You will learn how the social scientific analysis of political phenomena differs from journalistic, humanities or polemic approaches.

Second, you will have mastered the basic research skills needed to explore original research questions in political science. You will learn how to prepare and write a political science research paper from start to finish.

Third, you will have established a basic, the foundation of the vast majority of social scientific research, including political science. This will include an introduction to statistical analysis software (STATA). This will only be an introduction. You will not be prepared to engage in quantitative analysis properly until you have completed PSC 702 (the next course in the series)

Course requirements:

25% of the grade will be 5 assignments (5 points each). These assignments will consist of stages of writing an article length research paper that include every step except actually writing the paper. These assignments will refer to “the paper” but this paper is largely hypothetical. You will not actually write an entire paper. These assignments, however, will guide through all the processes you will need to set up a research paper if you were to actually write one (which you won’t for this class). **EACH ASSIGNMENT WILL BE DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS THE WEEK IT IS DUE IN THE SYLLABUS.**

40% of the grade will be 8 **in class** quizzes on applied statistical techniques in STATA (5 points each). If you are going to miss a class with a quiz you must contact Professor Jensen 24 hours in advance to arrange an alternative. If you miss class without prior contact with the professor, you will receive a zero for the quiz unless you have a reasonable excuse (out of your control and unexpected) for missing the class.

25% of the grade will be a final exam (25 points). The final exam will focus on the concepts behind the applied techniques examined in the homework assignments and in class quizzes.

10% of the grade will be participation (10 points). In graduate school, full attendance is not a special achievement but rather assumed to be part of the minimum level of effort. Students who expect full points for participation will have completed all assigned readings BEFORE the class meetings in which they will be discussed. If you have difficulty understanding something, come to the professor sooner rather than later. Putting things off will lead to disaster because the material is too dense and demanding to permit last minute “cramming” approaches to studying. If you must miss a class, contact Professor Jensen 24 hours in advance.

Course Materials:

A note about laptops: The course requires a considerable amount of work that must be done on a computer. Much of this work will be done *in class* (quizzes). The department owns a number of laptops and keeps them in the conference room where the seminar will be held. The department also maintains a computer lab space (WRI B 219). These computers will have all the necessary software. The university also provides loaner laptops. It is unlikely you will be able to complete the course with only a tablet or smart phone. Most of your graduate courses will require a lot of computer work. Procuring your own laptop is strongly encouraged.

The following books are required for the course.

Used and new copies are all available on your favorite Internet sites. We will also put a copy of each book on reserve at the library. The remaining readings are available either through J-Stor (articles) or through the course website (book chapters), unless otherwise noted. All of these books will be useful throughout your graduate career. You are strongly encouraged to purchase (not rent) them and keep them (don’t sell them back).

King, G., Keohane, R. O., & Verba, S. (1994). *Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton university press. [Referred to below as KKV]

Acock, A. C. (2008). *A gentle introduction to Stata*. Stata press. [Referred to below as Acock]

Johnson, J. B., Reynolds, H. T., & Mycoff, J. D. (2015). *Political science research methods*. CQ Press. [Referred to below as JRM]

Strongly Recommended:

The latest version of STATA: <https://www.stata.com/order/gradplan-sites/> Many computers on campus have STATA loaded on them. However, access to these is limited and you may need to work at home often and having STATA on your home computer or laptop will help you in course and future courses.

An alternative is to use “R” (<https://www.r-project.org/>) which is free and increasingly popular with scholars and private sector employers. However, I am not experienced with using R and I will be using STATA in class and in the assignments. So while R is a legit alternative, I can be more supportive if you use STATA. Learning STATA will help you learn R later if that’s what you want to do.

There are a number of ways to get help with STATA. First, you could ask your professor. Other than that, there are numerous websites and teaching modules posted online. UCLA has a particularly good online presence (with free access). I often type my question into a web based search engine, like GOOGLE, with the words “STATA” and “UCLA” and find a link to a useful answer pops up on my screen. There is also a STATA youtube chanel with useful videos showing you how to do things. I’ve used it myself.

Many political science graduate students have not taken a math course in a long time and have not kept their math skills fresh (this was certainly true for me when I started graduate school!). I therefore recommend spending some time refreshing your math training, paying particular attention to those areas of math that have applications in political science. Here is a book designed to help you do just that:

Moore, W. H., & Siegel, D. A. (2013). *A mathematics course for political and social research*. Princeton University Press.

For PSC 701 you may want to pay particular attention to Section I, Chapters 1,2 and 3 and Section III.

For PSC 702 and 703, you will want to review section IV

If you develop an interest in game theory or other formal modeling techniques, you’ll want to review Section II and Section V.

Course Schedule:

Week	Date	Subjects	Readings
Week 1		Graduate Studies and Social Science	READINGS: KKV Chapter 1 (pp 3-32) JRM Chapters 1 and 2 (1-73) http://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/political-science/

Week	Date	Subjects	Readings
Week 2		The Research Question/Level and Unit of Analysis QUIZ 1	READINGS: KKV Chapter 2 (pp 34 – 66) JRM Chapters 3 and 4 (pp 74-127) Acock Chapter 1 (pp 1-20)
Week 3		Paradigm, Theory and Hypothesis/Types of data Assignment 1 Due Today Quiz 2 at end of class	READINGS: KKV Chapter 3 (pp 75-114) JRM Chapter 5 (pp 128-165) Geddes, B. (2003). Paradigms and sand castles: Theory building and research design in comparative politics. University of Michigan Press. Chapter 1 (pp 1-26) SUGGESTED READINGS: Kuhn, T. S. (1975). The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: 2d Ed., enl. University of Chicago Press.
Week 4		Causality, Parsimony and Operationalization/Writing Abstracts and Starting the literature review Assignment 2 DUE THIS WEEK: Meet with Professor Jensen about your research questions with the goal of finalizing a research question for the remaining assignments. This meeting is mandatory.	READINGS: KKV Chapter 4 (pp 115-149) https://guides.library.yale.edu/politicalscience/litreviews https://politicalscienceguide.com/what-is-research/the-literature-review/ Jensen’s advice about writing political science papers (see website).
Week 5		Operationalization and Measurement	READINGS: (review) JRM Chapter 5 (pp 128-165) JRM Chapter 6 (pp 166-211) Lewis-Beck, Michael S. and Mary Stegmaier. 2013. “The VP-Function revisited: A Survey of the literature on vote and popularity functions after over 40 years” Public Choice 157: 367-385.
Week 6		Research design/Sampling and Data Sources	READINGS: Acock Chapter 2 (pp 21-48) JRM Chapters 7 (pp 212-242) SUGGESTED READINGS:

Week	Date	Subjects	Readings
			JRM Chapter 8, 9 and 10
Week 7		<p>Experimental, Comparative and Qualitative research</p> <p>Assignment 3 Due Today: Submit the research question you have chosen, a list of 3 potential data sources related to that research question (complete URL or bibliographic reference) and at least 12 preliminary scholarly sources related to the research question (complete bibliographic references, NOT URLs). Email the document to Christian.jensen@unlv.edu</p> <p>QUIZ 3 AT END OF CLASS</p>	<p>READINGS:</p> <p>Geddes, B. (1990). "How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics." <i>Political analysis</i>, 2, 131-150.</p> <p>Druckman, J. N., Green, D. P., Kuklinski, J. H., & Lupia, A. (2006). "The growth and development of experimental research in political science." <i>American Political Science Review</i>, 100(4), 627-635.</p> <p>Karpowitz, C. F., Monson, J. Q., & Preece, J. R. (2017). How to Elect More Women: Gender and Candidate Success in a Field Experiment. <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 61(4).</p> <p>Lijphart, A. (1971). "Comparative politics and the comparative method." <i>American political science review</i>, 65(3), 682-693.</p> <p>Review KKV sections on qualitative methods (especially pp 60-61 and 82-85)</p> <p>SUGGESTED READINGS:</p> <p>Dion, D. (2003). "Evidence and inference in the comparative case study." <i>Comparative Politics</i> 30(2): 95-112.</p> <p>Lau, R. R., & Redlawsk, D. P. (1997). "Voting correctly". <i>American Political Science Review</i>, 91(3), 585-598.</p> <p>Gerring, J. (2004). "What is a case study and what is it good for?." <i>American political science review</i>, 98(2), 341-354.</p>
Week 8		Quantitative Methods/Validity	<p>READINGS:</p> <p>Pantoja, A.D. and S.A. Gershon. (2013). "Chapter 6: Statistical Research: To Naturalize or Not to Naturalize?" in Malici, Akan and Elizabeth S. Smith eds. <i>Political Science Research in Practice</i>. NY, NY: Routledge. (pp 76-92)</p> <p>Acock Chapter 4 (pp 77-92)</p> <p>Suggested Reading:</p> <p>Riker, W. H. (1982). <i>The two-party system and Duverger's law: an essay on the history of</i></p>

Week	Date	Subjects	Readings
			<p>political science. American Political Science Review, 76(4), 753-766.</p> <p>PBS NOVA on statistical analysis: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/physics/prediction-numbers.html</p> <p>Money Ball Clips: 1) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtumW0sgFXc 2) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LugIVfL6FbU</p>
Week 9		<p>Introduction to Statistics/Descriptive Statistics</p> <p>QUIZ 4 AT END OF CLASS</p>	<p>READINGS: JRM Chapter 11 (pp 348-388) Acock Chapter 5 (pp 93-121)</p>
Week 10		<p>Probability and Statistical Significance</p> <p>Assignment 4 Due Today: Submit a table of summary statistics about at least 3 key variables you intend to explore in your “final paper”. Include a codebook for your variables (see Acock table 2.1 on p 26 or the Gijs et al codebook for an example) and a 1 discussion of your summary statistics table (Email the document to Christian.jensen@unlv.edu).</p> <p>QUIZ 5 AT END OF CLASS</p>	<p>READINGS: Be sure to be able to access your data set from Assignment 4 (thumb drive or online) in class so you can complete Quiz 5</p> <p>JRM Chapter 12 (pp 388-410) Acock Chapter 6 (pp 123-149)</p>
Week 11		<p>Difference of Means and ANOVA</p> <p>Assignment 5 Due Today: Submit an outline of an original research paper (your “final writing</p>	<p>READINGS: Acock Chapter 9 (pp 215-266)</p> <p>Be sure to be able to access your data set from Assignment 4 (thumb drive or online) in class so you can complete Quiz 6</p>

Week	Date	Subjects	Readings
		assignment"). See course webpage for example of how to write an outline. Email the document to Christian.jensen@unlv.edu QUIZ 6 AT END OF CLASS	
Week 12		Correlation and Measures of Association QUIZ 7 AT END OF CLASS	READINGS: Acock Chapter 8 (pp 189-214) JRM Chapter 13 (pp 412-515) Be sure to be able to access your data set from Assignment 4 (thumb drive or online) in class so you can complete Quiz 7
Week 13		Introduction to Regression Analysis QUIZ 8 AT END OF CLASS	READINGS: Acock Chapter 10 (pp 267-328) JRM Chapter 14 (516- 583)
Week 14		Applied Multi-variate Regression	
Week 15		Make up week (Or exam review, time permitting)	
FINAL EXAM	TBA	COVERING MAINLY CONCEPTUAL MATERIAL	MIX OF ESSAY AND SHORT ANSWER

University Policies

Public Health Directives

Face coverings are currently mandatory for all faculty and students in the classroom. Students must follow all active UNLV public health directives while enrolled in this class. UNLV public health directives are found at [Health Requirements for Returning to Campus](https://www.unlv.edu/coronavirus/health-requirements), <https://www.unlv.edu/coronavirus/health-requirements>. Students who do not comply with these directives may be asked to leave the classroom. Refusal to follow the guidelines may result in further disciplinary action according to the [UNLV Student Conduct Code](https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/27/StudentConduct-Code.pdf), https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/27/StudentConduct-Code.pdf, including being administratively withdrawn from the course.

Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the University community. We 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 to always take the ethical path whenever faced with choices. Students enrolling at UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's educational mission. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another person, from the Internet or any other source without proper citation of the source(s). See the [Student Conduct Code](https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct), <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

Auditing a Course

Auditing a course allows a student to continue attending the lectures and/or laboratories and discussion sessions associated with the course, but the student will not earn a grade for any component of the course. Students who audit a course receive the same educational experience as students taking the course for a grade, but will be excused from exams, assessments, and other evaluative measures that serve the primary purpose of assigning a grade.

Classroom Conduct

Students have a responsibility to conduct themselves in class and in the libraries in ways that do not interfere with the rights of other students to learn, or of instructors to teach. Use of devices such as cellular phones and pagers, or other potentially disruptive activities are only permitted with the prior explicit consent of the instructor. Students are specifically prohibited to record classes without instructor authorization, including online/remote classes (either audio only, or video and audio). The instructor may rescind permission at any time during the class. If a student does not comply with established requirements or obstructs the functioning of the class, the instructor may initiate an administrative withdrawal of the student from the course.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic forced some instruction to be delivered remotely starting in Spring 2020, numerous students have asked instructors to record their synchronous classes, so that they can access them at their convenience. Instructors who agree to record their classes (audio only, or video and audio) should inform students in advance. Recorded lectures may not be broadly released to anyone, but made available exclusively to those students enrolled in the class during the particular academic term. Recorded lectures must be stored securely, and are subject to the Nevada System of Higher Education's Records Retention Policy, meaning that the recordings can only be deleted 120 days after the end of class (i.e., after grades are posted). Once this requirement is met, the recordings should be deleted.

Class recordings are protected from disclosure, as they are deemed part of an educational record under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Copyright

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 student or employee 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 [copyright policy information](https://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright) is available at <https://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The [UNLV Disability Resource Center](https://www.unlv.edu/drc) (Student Services Complex, SSC-A, Room 143, <https://www.unlv.edu/drc>, telephone 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. Students who believe that they may need academic accommodations due to a permanent disability, temporary or permanent medical need, or academic support due to pregnancy are encouraged to contact the DRC as early as possible in the academic term. A Disabilities Specialist will discuss what options may be available to you. Students who are already registered with the DRC should request their accommodations online each semester, and make an appointment to discuss their accommodations with their instructors.

Final Examinations

The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur on the date and at the time specified in the Final Exam schedule. The Final Exam schedule is typically available at the start of the semester, and the classroom locations are available approximately one month before the end of the semester. See the [Final Exam Schedule](https://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars), <https://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

Identity Verification in Online Courses

All UNLV students must use their Campus-issued ACE ID and password to log in to WebCampus-Canvas.

UNLV students enrolled in online or hybrid courses are expected to read and adhere to the [Student Academic Misconduct Policy](https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/misconduct/policy), <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/misconduct/policy>, which states that “acting or attempting to act as a substitute for another, or using or attempting to use a substitute, in any academic evaluation or assignment” is a form of academic misconduct. Intentionally sharing ACE login credentials with another person may be considered an attempt to use a substitute, and could result in investigation and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Academic Misconduct Policy.

UNLV students enrolled in online courses are also expected to read and adhere to the [Acceptable Use of Computing and Information Technology Resources Policy](https://www.it.unlv.edu/policies/acceptable-use-computing-and-information-technology-resources-policy), <https://www.it.unlv.edu/policies/acceptable-use-computing-and-information-technology-resources-policy>, which prohibits sharing university accounts with other persons without authorization.

To the greatest extent possible, all graded assignments and assessments in UNLV online courses should be hosted in WebCampus-Canvas or another UNLV-managed platform that requires ACE login credentials for access.

Incomplete Grades

The grade of “I” (Incomplete) may be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session, but cannot complete the last part of the course for reason(s) beyond the student’s control and acceptable to the instructor, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. For undergraduate courses, the incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester. 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 period indicated, a grade of “F” will be recorded, and the student’s GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete grade do not register for the course, but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the “I” grade.

Library Resources

Librarians are available to consult with students on research needs, including developing research topics, finding information, and evaluating sources. To make an appointment with a subject expert for this class, please visit the [Libraries’ Research Consultation](https://guides.library.unlv.edu/appointments/librarian) website, <https://guides.library.unlv.edu/appointments/librarian>. You can [also ask the library staff](https://ask.library.unlv.edu/) questions via chat and text message at <https://ask.library.unlv.edu/>.

Missed Classwork

Any student missing class, quizzes, examinations, or any other class or laboratory work because of observance of religious holidays will be given an opportunity during that semester to make up the missed work. The make-up opportunity will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for Fall and Spring courses (except for modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for Summer and modular courses, of their intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit the Missed Classwork policy, under Registration Policies, on the [Academic Policies](https://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=32&navoid=8271&hl=) webpage, <https://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=32&navoid=8271&hl=>.

In accordance with the policy approved by the Faculty Senate regarding missed class time and assignments, students who represent UNLV in any official extracurricular activity will also have the opportunity to make up assignments, provided that the student submits official written notification to the instructor no less than one week prior to the missed class(es).

The spirit and intent of the policy for missed classwork is to offer fair and equitable assessment opportunities to all students, including those representing the University in extracurricular activities. Instructors should consider, for example, that in courses which offer a “Drop one” option for the lowest assignment, quiz, or exam, assigning the student a grade of zero for an excused absence for extracurricular activity is both contrary to the intent of the Faculty Senate’s policy, and an infringement on the student’s right to complete all work for the course.

This policy will not apply in the event that completing the assignment or administering the examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the University that could be reasonably avoided. There should be a good faith effort by both the instructor and the student to agree to a reasonable resolution. When disagreements regarding this policy arise, decisions can be appealed to the Department Chair/School Director, College/School Dean, and/or the Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee.

For purposes of definition, extracurricular activities may include, but are not limited to academic recruitment activities, competitive intercollegiate athletics, fine arts activities, liberal arts competitions, science and engineering competitions, and any other event or activity sanctioned by a College/School Dean, and/or by the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Rebelmail

Rebelmail is UNLV's official email system for students and by University policy, instructors and staff should only send emails to students' Rebelmail accounts. Rebelmail is one of the primary ways in which students receive official University communications, information about deadlines, major Campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the University. Sending emails within WebCampus-Canvas is also acceptable.

Tutoring and Coaching

The Academic Success Center (ASC), at the Claude I. Howard Building, 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, please visit the [ASC website](https://www.unlv.edu/asc), <https://www.unlv.edu/asc>, or call 702-895-3177. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of SSC A, Room 254. Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library, and on the second floor of the College of Engineering building (TBE A 207).

UNLV Writing Center

One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the [Writing Center](https://writingcenter.unlv.edu/), <https://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>, located in the Central Desert Complex, Building 3, Room 301 (CDC 3-301). Walk-in consultations are sometimes available, but students with appointments receive priority assistance. Students may make appointments in person or by calling the Center, telephone 702-895-3908. Students are requested to bring to their appointments their Rebel ID Card, a copy of the instructions for their assignment, and two copies of any writing they have completed on their assignment.

Diversity Statement

As an institution of higher learning, UNLV represents a rich diversity of human beings among its faculty, staff, and students, and is committed to aspiring to maintain a Campus environment that values that diversity. Accordingly, the University supports understanding and appreciation of all members of its community, regardless of race, sex, age, color, national origin, ethnicity, creed, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy, genetic information, veteran status, or political affiliation. Please see [University Statements and Compliance](https://www.unlv.edu/about/statements-compliance), <https://www.unlv.edu/about/statements-compliance>.

A successful learning experience requires mutual respect and trust between the students and the instructor. Accordingly, the instructor asks that students be willing to listen to one another's points of view, acknowledging that there may be disagreements, keep discussion and comments on topic, and use first person, positive language when expressing their perspectives.

UNLV Land Acknowledgement

UNLV is situated on the traditional homelands of Indigenous groups, including the Nuwu or Nuwuvi, Southern Paiute People, descendants of the Tudu, or Desert People. We honor and offer gratitude for those who have stewarded the land; for the land itself; and for the opportunity to cultivate a thriving, diverse, inclusive, and just scholarly community here today that works for a better tomorrow for all.