

*Introduction to Political Science Methods*

POL 251

Spring 2021

MWF 9:00 AM-9:50 AM

Location: Brevard 134

Prof. Jonathan Klingler  
237 Deupree Hall  
Email: jklingl@olemiss.edu

Office Hours - Zoom Only  
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM Wednesdays  
*or by appointment*  
Zoom Meeting ID: 924 1564 4665  
Password: science

TA: Obaida Shammama  
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Office Hours - Zoom Only  
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM Tuesdays  
*and by appointment*  
Link: <https://olemiss.zoom.us/j/5853715819>

## Course Description

The ability of political science research to shed light on pressing questions in contemporary political life is only as strong as the quality of the research designs used by political scientists. Gaining and sharing insight into the behavior of human beings within the sphere of politics requires a strong understanding of the logic of causal inference underlying empirical research in the social sciences, a capacity to gather useful political data and analyze it in an informed manner, and the ability to share research with others through scientific papers and formal presentations. This course will cover all of these aspects of social science research and leave students with the basic toolkit to ask good questions and design and execute plans to answer those questions. While this course is predominantly focused on quantitative research methods, qualitative methods will be discussed to a lesser degree.

## Objectives

To acquaint students with the logic of causal inference and social science research design strategies

To introduce students to the practices of obtaining political science data

To familiarize students with conducting statistical analysis using the R statistical computing environment

To equip students to present political science research through research papers and presentations

To develop students' critical thinking and analytical skills through class discussion and written assignments

To foster skills in collaboratively crafting arguments through coauthorship and providing constructive feedback to others

## Required Course Materials

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, H.T. Reynolds, and Jason Mycoff, ed. 2019. (9th Edition) *Political Science Research Methods*.

Gillespie, Brian J., Kathleen Charli Hibbert, and William E. Wagner, III. 2020. *A Guide to R for Social and Behavioral Science Statistics*.

## Hybrid Format/Flipped Classroom

This is a hybrid class following the model of a flipped classroom. Our in-person meetings will be used to walk through the homework, allow you to work with your coauthor/partner and get help with problems. Recorded lectures posted on Blackboard will cover course material and you are free to watch and listen to these lectures on your own schedule during the week before completing a quiz on the weekly section to assess your knowledge which will be due before the start of the next week.

## Grading

Section Quizzes 10%; 2 Exams 25% each; Research Project 30%; Short Assignments 10%

*Section quiz* questions count for 10% of your final grade. Several multiple choice questions on the readings and lecture material will be posted on Blackboard in the Content folder for each section of the class, which typically correspond to a week. The section quiz questions will be automatically graded and will be designed to reward you for paying attention. Section quizzes must be completed by 11:59 PM on the Sunday following the last class day of the section.

*Exams* constitute 50% of your final grade. Two non-cumulative exams are each worth 25% and will be administered on Blackboard on February 26 and April 14. Make up exams will be administered only with prior approval.

Collaboration with others is essential to the scientific process, and you must complete the research project and short assignments discussed below with a single coauthor throughout the semester. You and your coauthor must be assigned to the same day for in-person meetings. You and your coauthor must email Prof. Klingler stating that you will be working together by February 8. Any short assignments or research project components turned in without a coauthor will receive a zero.

*A research project* will determine 30% of your final grade. The research project will consist of three parts.

The first component is a short research proposal outlining your research topic, specific research question, the existing literature addressing this question, hypotheses derived from the literature, and your chosen data source, which is due on ~~March 19~~ March 26 and worth 10 percent of your final grade. **Late research proposals turned in before April 18 will receive a 10 percent late penalty.**

The second component is a longer research paper which builds upon the work of the proposal with data analysis testing these hypotheses and interpretation of the results, which is due on

April 27 and worth 15 percent of your final grade.

The final component is a scientific poster presentation as part of a Zoom research conference which will take place on our exam day on April 28 and worth 5 percent of your final grade. The conference will consist of three poster sessions. During each session you and your coauthor will present your research project and its findings, or you will be able to provide feedback to others who are presenting.

Everything in this class is designed to lead into the research project in some way, and will provide you with the opportunity to complete an original piece of political science research over the course of the semester.

*Ten short assignments* will be used to calculate 10% of your final grade. These short assignments are designed to help contribute to the research project either as components of the research proposal or as data analysis exercises to ensure that you are comfortable with the tools you will need for the research paper. In-person meetings will be used to cover short assignments, and short assignments will be due on the day listed in the course outline in the syllabus via email to the TA at oshammam@go.olemiss.edu. The lowest short assignment grade will be automatically dropped (ensuring you are only graded on 10). Missed short assignments cannot be made up and will be graded as zeros. *Short Assignments 10 and 11 are canceled and all students will receive full credit for both without having to turn them in.*

There are three ways to gain extra credit in this course:

Coauthors who provide **research conference comments** by ranking and commenting on the posters in the other poster session on April 27 can obtain up to an extra 4% of the final grade. Those who provide rankings and comments to all the posters in the other session will obtain 2% of their final grade. In addition to extra credit from providing comments, if both coauthors on a poster submit comments, their poster is eligible to earn an additional 2% extra credit if their poster is the highest-ranked poster in their session. If one or neither coauthor on a poster provides comments and rankings, that poster is not eligible for the additional 2% extra credit.

Completing **midsemester course evaluations** on Blackboard can provide up to an extra 2% of the final grade. If at least 90% of the class completes a midsemester course evaluation, everyone in the class will receive one extra percentage point on his or her final grade. For each additional percentage point of the class that completes a midsemester evaluation, everyone in the class will receive 1/10 of an additional bonus point. For example, if 95% of the class completes the midsemester course evaluation, then everyone will receive 1.5 bonus points from this pot. The total amount of extra credit students may receive from midsemester course evaluations is two bonus points. Note that I can see who answers the survey at any time as well as the content, but not who wrote what comment. I can see, however, the proportion of the class which completes evaluations.

Coauthors who take specific steps to **work on their homework early** can receive up to 5% extra credit on their final grade and 20 percent extra credit on individual homeworks. Every time a coauthor team comes to class together on Monday, they will receive 10 percent extra credit on that week's homework, and 0.75 points of extra credit for the class overall. Each time a coauthor team comes to class together on Wednesday, they will receive 5 percent additional extra credit on that week's homework, and an additional 0.25 points of extra credit for the class overall. All assignments which are turned in by 5 PM on the Thursday before the assigned due date will

receive 5 percent extra credit. *Partner attendance-based extra credit will apply to SA10 and SA11.*

### *Grade Scale*

Below is how your final percentage grade will be mapped into a letter grade. There are opportunities for extra credit in this class so there will be no rounding. If you get an 87.99999999%, (for example) when the semester is over your final grade will be a B+. **No exceptions.**

Percentage Point Range	Letter Grade
92-100	A
88-91.99...	A-
85-87.99...	B+
81-84.99...	B
78-80.99...	B-
75-77.99...	C+
71-75.99...	C
68-70.99...	C-
65-67.99...	D+
62-64.99...	D
60-61.99...	D-
0-59.99...	F

### Class Policies

Changes to the syllabus may be made in order to correct errors, adjust the schedule, fine tune course details, or address unforeseen issues. Changes will be discussed and announced in class. It is the student's responsibility to attend class to be aware of any syllabus changes. The official syllabus will always be available on Blackboard.

#### *Policy on Readings and Assignment Expectations*

Readings should be completed before you come in for class to work on the homework so you are familiar with the material in advance. Readings are listed both on the syllabus course outline and in the Content folder in Blackboard.

Assignments should be completed before 11:59 PM on the day listed in the syllabus course outline. This means that email copies of assignments must be in the TA's possession at the official start time for class or the assignment is late. Pay careful attention to the syllabus and to any adjustments that may occur. Material in the readings is fair game for exams even if not discussed in class.

#### *Policy on Missed Classes and Assignments*

The University requires that all students have a verified attendance at least once during the first two weeks of the semester for each course. If attendance is not verified, then a student will be dropped from the course and any financial aid is adjusted accordingly by the University. Students attending the virtual component of hybrid, remote, or online classes are subject to the same attendance policy and procedures as traditional students. Attendance will be verified when you come

into class on person on your assigned day or participate in a Zoom session in the first week of class.

Late and makeup assignments will be allowed only with a serious documented reason for the absence. **Excused absences will only be given for dates listed in the documentation provided. Keep this in mind when requesting doctors notes or obtaining other documentation such as memorial programs in the event of a funeral.** Excused absences from mental health conditions such as depression, bereavement, or anxiety require documentation mentioning specific dates under which attendance was prevented as a result of the mental health condition. Excused absences may also be granted if the student must serve as a caregiver for a relative diagnosed with COVID-19 even if the student is not ill, so long as some documentation is provided affirming this arrangement and notification is provided in a timely manner so alternative arrangements may be made. If no date is provided in the documentation, there will be no excused absence given.

You are responsible for material presented in lectures and discussed in class regardless of your attendance. Notes will not be supplied for students who have missed class, so plan to make other arrangements. Athletes and other students who will miss class due to extra- or co-curricular travel should inform me of the relevant dates early in the semester.

#### *Policy on Safe Coauthorship and Safe Classroom Attendance*

Properly worn face coverings or face masks are required inside all University buildings. Face-to-face sessions will not proceed unless all present have properly worn face coverings or face masks. (Students who have a diagnosed health concern which interferes with the wearing of face coverings or face masks may contact the Student Disabilities Services (SDS) Office to seek a University-approved accommodation. Please contact SDS at <https://sds.olemiss.edu/> for more information.)

Students and faculty must complete the daily symptom checker before any face-to-face class meeting. Upon entering the room, students should use provided cleaning supplies to wipe down the surfaces that they will touch during the class. Students and faculty should remain six feet apart when entering and leaving the classroom.

Students will be assigned a seat socially distant but adjacent to their coauthor and should sit in that seat each time they come in for class. Students should remain in their seats during class even when working to maintain a safe environment. Seating information will be recorded each class day for contact tracing purposes though attendance will not be graded.

#### *Policy on COVID-19*

The University is taking the pandemic seriously and each of us must take responsibility to limit the spread of the virus until more permanent solutions can be found. Students with COVID-19 should seek immediate medical attention at the Student Health Center and contact Dr. Klingler to let me know that you are sick, quarantined, or have some other health-related absence. If students test positive for COVID-19 at any health care facility, they must contact the Student Health Center at 662-915-7274. The Contact Tracing Team can provide documentation for students who are identified as close contacts to people who are COVID-19 positive. University Health Services will coordinate contact tracing to lessen the likelihood of spread. Students and faculty must quarantine for 14 days if they have a positive COVID-19 test, possible virus exposure, or display any

symptoms related to COVID-19.

Students have been informed of the COVID-19 guidelines for the school year (including face covering, social distancing, hand hygiene, etc.). The University's Academic Conduct and Discipline Policy states that "disorderly behavior that disrupts the academic environment violates the standard of fair access to the academic experience." Failure to adhere to health requirements during the COVID-19 emergency will be deemed as disruptive to the classroom and will be enforced following the Academic Conduct and Discipline procedures. The University of Mississippi has adopted a tiered disciplinary protocol for nonadherence to COVID-19 health requirements. This disciplinary protocol is maintained by the Office of Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct (<http://conflictresolution.olemiss.edu>)

### *Policy on Grade Appeals*

All grade appeals must be made in writing to the instructor. No grade appeals will be considered within the first 24 hours of a grade being posted or an assignment/exam being returned; those that come in within the first 24 hours will be discarded. All grade appeals must be received within ten calendar days of the grade being posted or the assignment/exam being returned; those that come in after this deadline will be discarded. All appeals must contain the following information:

The name of the assignment in question

The reason why you believe your grade should be higher. Be specific and discuss this in the context of the requirements of the assignment.

Determine whether you believe it is an error of calculation (the instructor/TA incorrectly tabulated points), judgment (the grade received does not reflect the quality of the work), or both.

If the instructor/TA determines that an error of calculation is present, then the correct grade will be calculated and the correct grade will be allocated. If it is argued by the student that an error of judgment is present, then the student has the option to have the assignment graded *de novo* by the instructor. As this will be a regrade from scratch, there is the possibility that the grade given to the regraded assignment will be lower than the initial grade given. All decisions by the instructor are final.

### *Policy on Disabilities*

Students facing disabilities or mental health concerns who are not registered should apply for accommodation with Student Disability Services (SDS). Any student who has a documented disability and has received recommendations for accommodations from SDS should speak with the instructor as soon as possible regarding accommodations.

### *Policy on Email*

Email communication must be used to make requests to the instructor/TA (*e.g.* for meetings outside of office hours) so that everyone has a record of the request and decision. For emails sent between Monday and Thursday, inclusive, please allow the instructor/TA up to 48 hours to respond. For those sent between Friday and Sunday, inclusive, please allow the instructor/TA up to 96 hours to respond.

It is the student's responsibility to check his/her Ole Miss email daily, since Blackboard works through Ole Miss email addresses and this is how I am able to communicate with you. If you prefer another email address, set up forwarding from your Ole Miss address.

Writing a professional email is an important skill one should master before graduation. All emails to the instructor/TA should include the following: a subject line briefly explaining the topic of the email and that it pertains to POL 251; a greeting more professional than "Yo" or "Hey" (I prefer "Professor Klingler" or "Dr. Klingler."); a clear question or request; and should identify the sender by name. Emails lacking any of these criteria will not be returned. Before sending an email, please make sure you cannot easily get the answer from another source, such as the syllabus or other class documents.

### *Policy on Technology*

Students are expected to silence their cell phones and refrain from talking, texting, or otherwise using their phones for the duration of the class period. I do not want to hear or see them (including holding the phone underneath your desk while sending a text message). Turn them off. If you feel you will not be able to abide by this policy, leave your electronic devices at home so you won't be tempted. I reserve the right to have you leave the class if you disrupt class, and this includes habitually sending/checking text messages.

This course relies heavily on access to computers and the Internet. At some point during the semester you will have a problem with technology. Your laptop will die, a file will become corrupted, a server will go down, or something else will occur. These are facts of life, not emergencies. Technology problems will not normally be accepted as excuses for unfinished work. Expect that "stuff" will happen and protect yourself by doing the following:

- Plan ahead - start early, particularly if you'll need something hard to get.

- Save work often at multiple stages - at least every ten minutes.

- Make regular backups of files in a different location from the originals - there are several free cloud services that you can use to do this automatically.

- When editing an image, set aside the original and work with a copy.

- On your personal computer, install and use software to control viruses and malware.

When submitting any assignment electronically in this course, you are responsible for any technological problems (*e.g.* Internet connection difficulties, corrupted files, misspelled email addresses, delayed email delivery, etc.). To prevent problems along with the associated penalties for late assignments, you should submit assignments well before the deadline and take proactive steps to make sure that files were not corrupted and that assignments were received. Again, please do not trust your computer to function as expected at the last minute.

### *Policy on Respect and Civility*

The exchange of ideas is an essential part of learning, and you are encouraged to frequently ask questions and share your thoughts during regular class. *Disagree without being disagreeable.* We

will be discussing some polarizing issues in class, and conversation should remain civil and conducted in a good faith exchange. In order to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning, students should use professional language in class discussions and written work and behave professionally. No offensive slang or profanity is permitted and unwanted physical contact of another student is a serious offense which will be reported for disciplinary action.

Disruptive behavior will result in a recommendation of appropriate sanction including grade reduction in minor cases and stronger action in more severe cases. If your behavior is disruptive enough to distract me, it can distract the people around you as well, and is a threat to the learning environment. The instructor reserves the right to ask all students in the vicinity of disruptive behavior or conversations to leave the class for the day.

### *Policy on Academic Discipline*

Academic honesty is expected, and academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Examples of academic misconduct are explored in the M Book and include plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation), using someone else's work as your own, allowing someone else to represent your work as their own, gaining or attempting to gain an unfair advantages, giving false information or altering documents, harming academic support facilities, and any act that violates the principles of honesty or fairness that does not fall into these categories.

Turn in material that you have completed yourself and respect the learning environment. Acts of academic misconduct are serious offenses that will be reported for disciplinary action and appropriate sanction after discussion with the student. Please see the University's Student Academic Conduct and Discipline Policy, the University's Academic Regulations in the M Book and/or speak with Prof. Klingler if you have questions in this area.

## *Course Outline*

### *Part I: Social Science Research Design*

January 20 and 22

*Introduction and Course Overview*

Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 1 pp. 1-25

January 25, 27 and 29

*Social Science Research and Theory Building*

Johnson and Reynolds Chapters 2-3, pp. 25-72

In Person: Short Assignment 1 (Research Topic Brainstorming Workshop) Due in Class

February 1, 3, and 5

*Hypotheses, Operationalization, and Measurement*

Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 4, pp. 73-100

Gillespie et al. Chapter 1, pp. 1-24

In Person: Downloading and Installing R and R Studio

In Person: Short Assignment 2 (Coauthorship Statement) Due February 8

February 8, 10, and 12

*Research Design through Causal Inference*

Johnson and Reynolds Chapters 6 and 9, pp. 121-133 and 169-192

In Person: Short Assignment 3 (Introducing Your Research Question) Due February 21

February 15, 17 and 19

*Methods of Social Science Data Collection*

Johnson and Reynolds Chapters 7-8, pp. 135-168

In Person Sessions Canceled due to Winter Storm

### *Part II: Obtaining and Analyzing Political Data*

February 22, 24, and 26

*Survey Research Methods*

Johnson and Reynolds Chapters 5 and 10, pp. 101-120 and 193-211

In Person: Exam Review Session

February 26

#### **Exam I**

Exam will take place on Blackboard from 10 AM to midnight.

March 1, 3, and 5

*Obtaining Data*

Skim the article listed below associated with your project topic. All articles are in the

"Obtaining Data" folder on Blackboard

“White Evangelicals See Trump as Fighting for their Beliefs, Though Many Have Mixed Feelings About His Personal Conduct” (Pew Religion and Politics Example Report)

“Sizing Up Twitter Users” (Pew Twitter and Politics Example Report)

“Executive Orders” (Brandt Cowan Executive Order Example Report)

“Are You Doing Your Part” (CCES Intervention Attitudes Example Report)

“European Public Opinion Three Decades After the Fall of Communism” (Pew Global Attitudes Example Report)

In Person: Short Assignment 4 (Literature Review) Due March 7

In Person: Short Assignment 5 (Obtaining Data and Variable Selection) Due March 7

March 8, 10, and 12

*The Beauty of R*

Gillespie et al. Chapter 2, pp. 25-64

In Person: Short Assignment 6 (Gillespie Chapter 2 Exercises) Due March 14

March 15, 17, and 19

*Descriptive Statistics*

Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 11, pp. 211-238

Gillespie Chapters 3-4, pp. 65-102

In Person: Short Assignment 7 (Gillespie Chapters 3 and 4 Exercises) Due March 21

March 22, 24, and 26

*Hypothesis Testing*

Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 12, pp. 239-266

Gillespie Chapters 6 and 8, pp. 130-140; 164-189

Research Proposal Due March 26 - Extended Deadline from March 19

In Person: Short Assignment 8 (Gillespie Chapter 8 Exercises) Due March 28

March 29, 31, and April 5

*Measures of Association*

Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 13, pp. 267-306

Gillespie Chapter 7, pp. 141-163

In Person: Short Assignment 9 (Gillespie Chapter 7 Exercises) Due April 11

April 2

NO CLASS

April 7, 9, and 12

*Bivariate Regression*

Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 14, pp. 307-323

Gillespie Chapter 10, pp. 211-236

In Person: Assistance for Research Proposals and Research Papers

April 14

**Exam II**

Exam will take place on Blackboard from 12:01 AM to midnight.

April 16  
NO CLASS

April 18  
Research Proposal Due Date with Late Penalty

*Part III: Presenting Political Science Research*

April 19, 21 and 23

*Presenting Research Findings*

Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 15, pp. 331-344

Gillespie Chapter 5, pp. 103-129

Social Science Research Proposal Writing Guide:

<http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchproposal>

In Person: Assistance for Research Papers and Conference Presentations

April 28

*Zoom Research Conference*

**Research Conference (9 AM - 11 AM)**

Research Papers Due April 27 at 11:59 PM