*Research in Politics*
POL 550
Fall 2022
T 1:00 PM-3:30 PM
Location: Deupree Room 131

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

Office Hours
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM Mondays
*or by appointment*

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Office Hours

## Course Description

This course is designed to familiarize new graduate students and advanced undergraduate students with the fundamentals of conducting research in political science. We will begin the first half of the class by examining some critical basic concepts in probability theory before turning to subjects in philosophy of science and the general problem of determining the observable implications of social science theory. In the second half of the class, we will walk through practical matters of crafting a research design, including the process of formulating specific hypotheses from a research topic, the specifics of data collection and management for different types of research designs, and concluding with an examination of the process of writing up and presenting research.

Making useful sense of these abstract concepts of philosophy, probability, and causal inference is far more effective when a knowledge base is applied to political science research which is of personal interest. As such, Part I of the class will culminate in a midterm exam focused on assessing mastery of probability theory and philosophy of science concepts. In Part II, you will apply the concepts assessed by constructing an original research design which you will be able to draw upon in future classes and milestones in graduate studies.

## Objectives

To inculcate a grasp of the conceptual frameworks of probability and random variables required to conduct statistical inference in the second semester of the methods sequence

To introduce students to a set of key works on research design and philosophy of science

To develop understanding of different styles of political science research, and assess the methodological strengths and weaknesses of each

To foster the ability to generate appropriate causal explanations, hypotheses, and research designs necessary to answer political science questions of interest to your academic career

To familiarize students with the structure of commonly available data, data generating and collection processes, and available data sources relevant to political science research

## Required Course Materials

DeGroot and Schervish, Probability and Statistics, 3rd Edition 2002.

Hempel, Philosophy of Natural Science 1966.

Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 3rd Edition 1996.

Little, Varieties of Social Explanation 1991.

Powner, Empirical Research and Writing 2014.

## Grading

Participation 10%; Problem Sets 20%; Reflection Essays 10%; Midterm Exam 25%; Research Design Paper 35%.

*Class participation* counts for 10% of your final grade. This is a seminar with a small number of students, and it is important to discuss critiques and questions about the course material while we are together. At various points during the semester, we will discuss mathematical concepts, philosophy readings, and practical matters of research design, and the discussion will vary accordingly. Nevertheless, all students are required to show up to class prepared to discuss the readings and prepared to ask clarifying questions where there is confusion.

Five probability theory *problem sets* will contribute 20 percent of your final grade. Each week from Week 3 to Week 7, a problem set will be due, drawing from the practice questions in DeGroot and Schervish from the prior week. These problem sets should be submitted on paper at the start of class, and grades will be assigned on the basis of work as well as correctness.

Seven one page *reflection essays* on the philosophy of science readings (due on Weeks 8-10) and the development of your research design project (for Part II) will contribute 10% of your final grade. These essays should be emailed to the TA before class.

*A midterm exam* constitutes 25% of your final grade. The midterm exam will take place in class on October 25, and will consist of two elements: a problem in probability theory and an essay on the philosophy of science readings.

*A research design paper* will be used to calculate 35% of your final grade. Each student must develop a research design on a topic of personal interest, and it should be a clear application of the course materials. In a 10-12 page paper you should:

1. Sketch a research project that involves normal science within political science and which includes collection of new empirical data. The sketch should indicate the previous research to which it is related, the contribution it will make, the methods of the study, the types of empirical data to be examined, the mode of analysis, and the nature of conclusions anticipated. This section should be 8-9 pages. (Undergraduates will write only this section in 5-6 pages.)

2. Provide an analytic critique of your design, indicating its strengths and weaknesses in contributing to progress in political science. This section should be 2-3 pages. (This section will not be completed by undergraduates.)

The proposal must be explained to the class in a 10 minute presentation at the end of the semester on December 8. Undergraduates do not need to present their proposal.

*Fostering Independent Learning for Graduate Students*

This course is designed to introduce graduate students to a core set of foundational readings on probability theory and the philosophy of science and then generate reflective writings and discussions about the implications of those readings for independent investigation of empirical phenomena. These takeaways are then applied to the tasks of independent scholarship in the form of problem sets whose mastery will lay a foundation for further development of statistical inference skills, as well as the development of an original empirical research design which is suitable for further development in the next semester of the graduate program. As such, the deliverables in this class provide a foundation for future methods classes to build upon in the process of forming the ability for independent scholarship in the profession.

*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*

Reading and any additional assignments should be completed before the official start time for class on the day assigned. This means that email copies of assignments must be in the instructor'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.

There a lot of assigned reading for this class, particularly in the last three weeks of Part I. I have selected these readings in order to introduce you to classic works in the philosophy of science, social science methods, and political science methods. I do expect that you read all 80-110 pages assigned, so that we are able to have a fruitful discussion on each assigned reading.

Part II is focused on practical application and assigns roughly 50 pages of reading per week, and will be accompanied by lectures which will supplement those readings. The lectures will cover the material from a different perspective than the readings.

*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. In this course, attendance is defined as participation in the course meetings in our seminar room.

Late and makeup assignments will be allowed only with a doctor's note or other equally 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 a note from a doctor mentioning specific dates under which attendance was prevented as a result of the mental health condition. If no date is provided in the documentation, there will be no excused absence given.
The University must have accurate contact information, including cell phone numbers, to facilitate student communications and contact tracing. Students should check and update their University contact information available at https://olemiss.edu/mystudentprofile.

*Policy on COVID-19 and Mental Health Support*

If students test positive for COVID-19 at any health care facility, they must report it to the Student Health Center (http://coronavirus.olemiss.edu/report/ or 662-915-7274) and they must follow directions for the healthcare provider and isolate. 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.
I will work with you to help you continue your progress in the course. In your email, state how long you expect not to attend class. I will not be able to provide recordings of class sessions, but we can work together to establish a plan for completing the necessary work. You will have access to the readings, my course materials, and our course site on Blackboard. More information on isolation protocols can be found at https://healthcenter.olemiss.edu/covid-19-faqs. Follow the most up-to-date guidance from the CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html.
The University Counseling Center is a professional facility offered by the University of Mississippi to assist students, faculty, and staff with many types of life stressors that interrupt day-to-day functioning, including the stressors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. They offer individual counseling, couple's counseling, group counseling, stress management, crisis intervention,

assessments and referrals, outreach programs, consultations, and substance abuse services. There is no fee for currently enrolled University students and everything you say to your counselor is confidential. You can contact the Counseling Center for information about mental health issues at https://counseling.olemiss.edu, counslg@olemiss.edu, 662-915-3784, 320 Lester Hall, and https://www.facebook.com/universitycounselingcenterolemiss/. You can schedule an appointment or get information about appointments by calling the UCC at 662-915-3784.

*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 704; 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*

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*

Note: Please pay attention to the policy on reading expectations on page 3.

## Part I: Probability and Distributions

*Week 1 (Aug 23) Introduction*

*Week 2 (Aug 30) Introduction to Probability*

DeGroot and Schervish, Probability and Statistics 2002. Chapter 1, Sections 1.1-1.9.

*Week 3 (Sep 6) Conditional Probability*

DeGroot and Schervish, Probability and Statistics 2002. Chapter 2, Sections 2.1-2.3, and Chapter 3, Sections 3.1-3.2.

**Problem Set 1 Due**

*Week 4 (Sep 13) Random Variables and Distributions I*

DeGroot and Schervish, Probability and Statistics 2002. Chapter 3, Sections 3.3-3.5.

**Problem Set 2 Due**

*Week 5 (Sep 20) Random Variables and Distributions II*

DeGroot and Schervish, Probability and Statistics 2002. Chapter 3, Section 3.6, 3.8-3.9.

**Problem Set 3 Due**

*Week 6 (Sep 27) Expectation*

DeGroot and Schervish, Probability and Statistics 2002. Chapter 4, Section 4.1-4.8.

**Problem Set 4 Due**

*Week 7 (Oct 4) Philosophy of Empirical Social Science*

Hempel, Philosophy of Natural Science 1966. Chapters 1-6.

**Problem Set 5 Due**

*Week 8 (Oct 11) Progress in Empirical Social Science*

Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 3rd Edition 1996. Chapters 1-9.

**Reflection Essay 1 Due**

*Week 9 (Oct 18) Causal Explanations in Social Science*

Little, Varieties of Social Explanation 1991. Chapters 1-4; skim Chapters 5-8.

**Reflection Essay 2 Due**

*Week 10 (Oct 25) Midterm Exam*

Midterm Exam in Class

**Reflection Essay 3 Due**

## Part II: Designing Political Research

*Week 11 (Nov 1) The Journey from Topic to Hypothesis*

Powner, Empirical Research and Writing 2014. Chapters 1-4.

**Reflection Essay 4 Due**

*Week 12 (Nov 8) Selecting a Research Design and Qualitative Designs*

Powner, Empirical Research and Writing 2014. Chapters 5-6.

**Reflection Essay 5 Due**

*Week 13 (Nov 15) Quantitative Designs and Sampling*

Powner, Empirical Research and Writing 2014. Chapters 7-8.

**Reflection Essay 6 Due**

Please email Dr. Klingler a short description of your planned research design by November 15.

*Week 14 (Nov 22) Thanksgiving Break*

NO CLASS

*Week 15 (Nov 29) Writing up and Presenting Your Research*

Powner, Empirical Research and Writing 2014. Chapters 9 and 11.

**Reflection Essay 7 Due**

*Week 16 (Dec 8) Presentations*

**Research Design Presentations 12 PM**
Research Designs Due