

Conducting Political Research
Political Science 2270
Spring 2018
MWF 1:10-2:00 PM
Location: Commons Center 320

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Office Hours
8:30-9:30 AM Wednesdays
or by appointment

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. This course is appropriate for political science majors who wish to gain a foundation in political science research methods as well as non-majors who simply wish to gain a better understanding of social science research.

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

Required Texts

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, and H.T. Reynolds. ed. 2012. (7th Edition) *Political Science Research Methods*.
Monogan III, James E. 2015. *Political Analysis Using R*.

Grading

Participation 8%; Short Assignments 12%, Research Proposal 30%, 2 Exams 25% each.

Reading and any additional assignments should be completed before class on the day assigned. There may be lectures from guest speakers. These lectures are important contributions to the class and are considered fair game for exams. Pay careful attention to the syllabus and to any adjustments that may occur. 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. Late and makeup assignments will be allowed only with a doctor's note or other equally serious documented reason for the absence. 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. Students with any other special needs should meet with me early in the semester so that proper accommodations can be made.

Class participation and attendance count for 8% of your final grade. Obviously those who do not attend class cannot participate in class discussion. Attendance in class will be taken regularly throughout the semester. Because the exchange of ideas is an important part of learning, you are encouraged to frequently ask questions and share your informed opinions during regular class. In order to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning, students should use professional language in class discussions and written work. No offensive slang or profanity is permitted. Disagree without being disagreeable. In the event you are disruptive in class, all of your participation points for the day will be lost, and if the disruption escalates, you may lose the entirety of your participation points for the entire semester, you will be asked to leave the class, and the matter passed on to the university administration.

Eight short assignments will be used to calculate 12% of your final grade. These short assignments may include quizzes, problem sets from the textbooks, or other brief assignments. Students will receive ample notice if preparatory work outside of class is required, as may occasionally be the case. The lowest short assignment grade will be automatically dropped. Missed short assignments cannot be made up and will be graded as zeros.

A research proposal will determine 30% of your final grade. The research proposal will require you to submit a short research prospectus outlining your research question and a proposed data source. We will have a workshop day to discuss the prospectus on March 2, and the prospectus will be due by the start of class on March 14. A more detailed research design proposal must then be elaborated upon, including proposed analysis techniques and a preliminary analysis which will be due on the last day of class. You will also present your research design and preliminary analysis through an in class presentation on April 23.

Exams constitute 50% of your final grade. Two non-cumulative exams are each worth 25% and will take place during class on February 19 and April 13. Make up exams will be administered only with prior approval.

Academic honesty is expected. Turn in material that you have completed yourself. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Both cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses that will be reported for disciplinary action. Please refer to the University Handbook and/or speak with the instructor if you have any questions in this area.

Course Outline

Social Science Research Design

Introduction and Course Overview
January 8

Social Science Research and Theory Building
January 10, 12, and 19
Johnson and Reynolds Chapters 1-3, pp. 1-101

Hypotheses, Operationalization, and Measurement
January 22, 24, and 26
Johnson and Reynolds Chapters 4-5, pp. 102-164

Research Design through Causal Inference
January 29, 31, and February 2
Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 6, pp. 165-221

Methods of Social Science Data Collection
February 5 and 9
Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 8-9, pp. 257-305

Survey Research Methods
February 12, 14 and 16
Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 7 and 10, pp. 222-256; 306-353

Exam I
February 19

Obtaining and Analyzing Political Data

Obtaining Data
February 21

World Values Survey FAQ:

<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>

World Values Survey Wave 6 Website:

<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>

World Values Survey Wave 6 Questionnaire

Linked Word File on Wave 6 site under “Questionnaire” heading, named
“WV6_Official_Questionnaire_v5_SilatechMenaModule_English.doc”

Cumulative Cooperative Congressional Election Study Guide

Download through “Download” button in upper left corner of web page here:

<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/file.xhtml?fileId=3108367&version=RELEASED&version=.3>

Cooperative Congressional Election Study Cumulative Data Source

<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi%3A10.7910/DVN/II2DB6>

Bring Laptop to Class

The Beauty of R

February 23, 26 and 28

Monogan Chapter 1-2, pp. 1-32

Short Assignment 2 (Practice Problems 1.6 in Monogan) Due February 26

Short Assignment 3 (Practice Problems 2.6 in Monogan) Due March 2

Research Design Workshop
March 2

Descriptive Statistics

March 12, 14 and 16

Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 11, pp. 354-395

Monogan Chapter 4, pp. 53-62

Research Prospectus Due March 14

Short Assignment 4 (Practice Problems 4.3 in Monogan) Due March 16

Hypothesis Testing

March 19, 21, and 23

Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 12, pp. 396-427

Monogan Chapter 5, pp. 63-66

Short Assignment 5 (Practice Problems 5.4, items 1 and 2 in Monogan) Due March 23

Measures of Association

March 26, 28, and 30

Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 13, pp. 428-480

Monogan Chapter 5, pp. 66-77

Short Assignment 6 (Practice Problems 5.4, items 3 and 4 in Monogan) Due March 30

Bivariate Regression

April 2, 9, and 11

Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 13, pp. 481-526

Monogan Chapter 6, pp. 79-97

Short Assignment 7 (Practice Problems 6.3) Due April 9

Exam II

April 13

Presenting Political Science Research

Describing and Interpreting Research Findings

April 16

Johnson and Reynolds Chapter 15, pp. 594-615

Healy et al., "Irrelevant events affect voters' evaluations of government performance." (2010)

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences

<http://www.pnas.org/content/107/29/12804>

Social Science Research Proposal Writing Guide:

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

Data Visualization

April 18 and 20

Monogan Chapter 3, pp. 33-51

Short Assignment 8 (Practice Problems 3.5) Due April 20

Presentations

April 23

April 23- Research Proposals Due