

Introduction to Political Science Research Political Science 203

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University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Fall Semester 2014
TR 9:30-10:45 AM
Location: Physics 147

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course serves as an introduction to the philosophy and practice of political science including the basic methods of research in political science. We will explore what is meant by “science” and the scientific method, and the various subfields of political science. We will also cover the various stages of the research process, as well as the basics of political analysis. By the end of the course, students should develop:

- (1) a knowledge and understanding of basic concepts in political science research;
- (2) the ability to offer sophisticated, critical analyses of empirical work;
- (3) competence in rudimentary statistical skills;
- (4) the skills to write quality review and research papers in upper division courses.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

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

Mycoff, Jason D. 2012. *Working with Political Science Research Methods: Problems and Exercises*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage/CQ Press.

These texts are available in the university bookstore. Students are required to complete all readings **PRIOR** to each class meeting and be prepared to discuss them. Faculty members say this in all classes, but it is particularly important in this one. In learning to do research, we will be focusing on the research **process**: a process that is built step by step. Unlike some other classes, the knowledge here is **cumulative**. Therefore, you have to make sure that you understand each step before we move on to another. Keeping up with the reading and taking part in class discussions will be very important in determining how well you comprehend the material.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Your grade will be based on four components: two exams, one paper, and homework exercises. The calculation of your grade will be determined as follows:

MIDTERM EXAM: 25% (Thursday, October 23)

FINAL EXAM: 35% (Thursday, December 18, 10:00 am - 12:00 noon)

TERM PAPER: 25% (Due Thursday, December 4, beginning of class)

HOMEWORK EXERCISES: 15%

94%-100% = A	90%-93% = A-	
87%-89% = B+	84%-86% = B	80%-83% = B-
77%-79% = C+	74%-76% = C	70%-73% = C-
67%-69% = D+	64%-66% = D	60%-63% = D-
0%-59% = F		

EXAMS: Both of the exams will cover material included in the assigned readings and class lectures. The final exam will be comprehensive, although a majority of it will focus on material covered after the midterm exam. The exact makeup of the exams is yet to be determined but I will notify the class in advance concerning the nature of the exams. *Absolutely no makeup exams will be given without a university-approved excuse.* **If you have a university-approved excuse and miss an exam, get in touch with me immediately, beforehand if possible. If you miss an exam without giving me prior notice, you MUST contact me within 24 hours of that exam or you will not be allowed to take a make-up under any circumstances.** Also, according to university policy, final examinations cannot be scheduled at a different time during the examination period or at a time preceding the examination period.

TERM PAPER: You will also be required to write an 8-10 page term paper. This will take the form of a critical review of a scholarly article in political science. First, you must select an article for review. To do so, go to our D2L site for this course and you will find these three articles in the Content section. Choose one and print it out. The citation for the article (an example is included below), must be included at the beginning of your review.

Maoz, Zeev, and Bruce Russett. 1993. "Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946-1986." *American Political Science Review* 87: 624-638.

I will provide a separate handout discussing the paper assignment in greater detail. These papers will be graded not only for substantive content but also for grammatical and stylistic presentation as well. Therefore, I highly recommend the use of spell checks on word processors as a first step and some type of style manual for help with grammar, style, and other questions dealing with the use of English in written form. **Any paper turned in after the beginning of our class period on Thursday, December 4, will be penalized at the rate of one letter grade per day.** If you have any questions at all please feel free to speak with me.

HOMEWORK EXERCISES: You will be assigned various exercises from the Mycoff workbook associated with the Johnson and Reynolds textbook. The schedule of exercises is listed in a separate handout. Students are expected to complete all of the assigned exercises. The exercises cumulatively count for 15% of the final grade. **No late homework exercises will be accepted without an approved excuse.**

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: Attending class lectures is an integral part of succeeding in this course; therefore, I will take attendance each day. I understand that students get sick and have other bona fide reasons for missing class from time to time. However, if I feel that you are missing too many classes I will inquire as to the reasons why. I also reserve the right to suggest that you drop the course or if it is too late to do so to penalize your grade appropriately. You will also be expected to contribute in a meaningful fashion to class discussions and/or answering questions concerning class readings. Of course, if you are not in attendance or have not done the assigned reading, then your grade will be negatively affected. Moreover, high grades on exams will be difficult to attain if attendance and participation are not regular because lectures and class discussions will cover material not included in the texts and test questions will also come from these lectures and discussions. No extra credit assignments will be given. You may also be invited to participate during a normal class period in a foreign policy experiment under my direction (this is actually a pleasant diversion from the normal class lectures and discussion ☺).

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is a representation of other people's work as your own (for example, in directly quoting another source without using quotation marks). Plagiarism can be defined by using Alexander Lindley's definition:

Plagiarism is the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of another person's mind, and presenting it as one's own (Plagiarism and Originality [New York: Harper, 1957], p. 2). Plagiarism may take the form of repeating another's sentences as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, or even presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of a thesis as though it were your own. In short, to plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from another.

I strongly urge you to access the following link to read a discussion of what plagiarism is and looks like <http://www.ctlw.duke.edu> (In the left-hand column, click on Programs, then UWP, then Plagiarism Tutorial). Another useful link concerning plagiarism as well as information pertaining to grammar and writing can be found by accessing the following link: <http://webster.comnet.edu/mla/plagiarism.shtml>. See the Wisconsin Administrative Code, Chapter UWS 14, entitled "Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures," for a discussion and range of available penalties. Severe penalties (up to the maximum allowed) should be expected for plagiarism or other forms of cheating. Along these lines, you may NOT use a paper that you have written previously, or are currently writing for another course, for this class unless you clear it with me first. Doing so without first consulting me is considered academic misconduct and will be dealt with accordingly.

UWM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has several policies concerning students with disabilities, accommodations for religious observances, students called to active military duty, incompletes, discriminatory conduct, academic misconduct, and so forth available for you to read using the following link: <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf>. I strongly encourage you to access this link and familiarize yourself with these policies and procedures.

TOPICS, READING ASSIGNMENTS, AND EXAM SCHEDULE:

The following is a tentative outline for the semester, including topics, reading assignments, and exams. Students should have read the assigned material by the class date shown.

I. Introduction to the Research Process

Tuesday, 9/2: Class Introduction and basic overview of importance of studying research methods
Thursday, 9/4: What is Political Science?; The Scientific Method (Johnson and Reynolds, Chp. 1-2)

II. Components of Empirical Political Analysis

Tuesday, 9/9: Overview of the Research Process; Problems, Research Questions and Theories (Johnson and Reynolds, Chp. 3)

Thursday, 9/11: Overview of the Research Process (cont.)

Tuesday, 9/16: Concepts, Definitions, and Variables; Validity and Reliability, Levels of Measurement, and Units of Analysis (Johnson and Reynolds, Chp. 5)

Thursday, 9/18: Concepts, Definitions, and Variables (cont.)

Tuesday, 9/23: Hypotheses (Johnson and Reynolds, Chp. 4)

Thursday, 9/25: Hypotheses (cont.)

Tuesday, 9/30: Correlations and Causality; Causal Chains and Spuriousness (Johnson and Reynolds, Chp. 6)

Thursday, 10/2: Correlations and Causality; Causal Chains and Spuriousness (cont.)

III. Research Designs

Tuesday, 10/7: Experimental Designs

Thursday, 10/9: Experimental Designs (cont.)

Tuesday, 10/14: Correlational and Quasi-Experimental Designs

Thursday, 10/16: Correlational and Quasi-Experimental Designs (cont.)

Tuesday, 10/21: Qualitative Designs; Catch-up and review for midterm exam (Johnson and Reynolds, Chp. 9)

Thursday, 10/23: **Midterm Exam**

IV. Sources of Evidence – Data Collection

Tuesday, 10/28: Observations, Questionnaires, and Surveys (Johnson and Reynolds, Chp. 8, 10)

Thursday, 10/30: Observations, Questionnaires, and Surveys (cont.)

Tuesday, 11/4: Observations, Questionnaires, and Surveys (cont.)

Thursday, 11/6: Populations, Samples, and Z-scores (Johnson and Reynolds, Chp. 7)
V. Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing: Statistical Inference

Tuesday, 11/11: Descriptive (Univariate) Statistics (Johnson and Reynolds, Chp. 11)

Thursday, 11/13: Types of Frequency Distributions

Tuesday, 11/18: Measures of Central Tendency

Thursday, 11/20: Measures of Dispersion

Tuesday, 11/25: Bivariate Relationships (Johnson and Reynolds, Chp. 13)

Thursday, 11/27: **Thanksgiving Break**

Tuesday, 12/2: Statistical Significance and Measures of Association (Johnson and Reynolds,
Chp. 12)

Thursday, 12/4: Statistical Significance and Measures of Association (cont.)

Tuesday, 12/9: Controlling for a Third Variable (Johnson and Reynolds, Chp. 14)

Thursday, 12/11: Correlation and Regression; The Final Product (Johnson and Reynolds, Chp.
15); Catch-up and Review for Final

Thursday, 12/18: **FINAL EXAM** - 10:00 am -12:00 noon