INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH
POLITICAL SCIENCE 203

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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE
FALL SEMESTER 2017

TA: MATTHEW SMOLDT
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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 TEXT:

The required text can be purchased at the UWM Bookstore or at one of a couple of on-line vendors. I have included two links below: one to the publisher of the course book and one to Amazon. You can buy your textbooks through any source you choose. But be sure you get the right book! Also, be aware that sometimes online vendors are unreliable in shipping books in a timely manner—depending on the vendor and the mode of shipping you choose. 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.

https://global.oup.com/academic/product/beginning-research-in-political-science-9780190215965?q=begiニング%20research%20in%20political%20science&lang=en&cc=us

https://www.amazon.com/Beginning-Research-Political-Science-
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% (Tuesday, October 24)
FINAL EXAM: 35% (Tuesday, December 19, 10:00 am - 12:00 noon)
TERM PAPER: 20% (Due Tuesday, December 12, beginning of class)
HOMEWORK EXERCISES: 20%

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 a term paper. You will work on this paper throughout the semester in stages, parts of which will be turned in as homework. The final version of the paper is due on Tuesday, December 12. Please carefully read and follow the suggested guidelines on how to organize your paper as found in chapter 11 of the Forestiere textbook. The “Paper Progress” section found on pages 285-286 is also very helpful. Your paper will be graded based on how well you carry out each of the steps of the research process, including how well written the paper is.

HOMEWORK EXERCISES: You will be assigned various exercises and components that will contribute to your term paper from the Forestiere textbook. The schedule of exercises and paper components is listed in a separate handout. Students are expected to complete all of the assigned exercises and paper components. The exercises and paper components cumulatively count for 20% 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://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism/](http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism/) (watch the video and access the link in the right-hand column entitled “Duke University Plagiarism Tutorial”). 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](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, 9/5: Class Introduction and basic overview of importance of studying research methods
Thursday, 9/7: What is Political Science?; The Scientific Method

II. Components of Empirical Political Analysis

Tuesday, 9/12: Overview of the Research Process; Problems, Research Questions and Theories (Forestiere, Chp. 1, 2, 3)
Thursday, 9/14: Overview of the Research Process (cont.)

Tuesday, 9/19: Concepts, Definitions, and Variables; Validity and Reliability, Levels of Measurement, and Units of Analysis (Forestiere, Chp. 3, 4, 6)
Thursday, 9/21: Concepts, Definitions, and Variables (cont.)

Tuesday, 9/26: Hypotheses
Thursday, 9/28: Hypotheses (cont.)

Tuesday, 10/3: Correlations and Causality; Causal Chains and Spuriousness
Thursday, 10/5: Correlations and Causality; Causal Chains and Spuriousness (cont.)

III. Research Designs

Tuesday, 10/10: Experimental Designs (Forestiere, Chp. 5)
Thursday, 10/12: Experimental Designs (cont.)

Tuesday, 10/17: Correlational and Quasi-Experimental Designs
Thursday, 10/19: Qualitative Designs; Catch-up and review for midterm exam

Tuesday, 10/24: Midterm Exam

IV. Sources of Evidence – Data Collection

Thursday, 10/26: Observations, Questionnaires, and Surveys
Tuesday, 10/31: Observations, Questionnaires, and Surveys (cont.)
Thursday, 11/2: Observations, Questionnaires, and Surveys (cont.)

Tuesday, 11/7: Populations, Samples, and Z-scores

V. Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing: Statistical Inference

Thursday, 11/9: Descriptive (Univariate) Statistics (Forestiere, Chp. 7)
Tuesday, 11/14: Types of Frequency Distributions

Thursday, 11/16: Measures of Central Tendency

Tuesday, 11/21: Measures of Dispersion

Thursday, 11/23: **Thanksgiving Break**

Tuesday, 11/28: Bivariate Relationships (Forestiere, Chp. 8)

Thursday, 11/30: **Paper Due (beginning of class); Statistical Significance and Measures of Association**

Tuesday, 12/5: Statistical Significance and Measures of Association (cont.)

Thursday, 12/7: Controlling for a Third Variable: Regression (Forestiere, Chp. 9)

Tuesday, 12/12: Qualitative Analysis (Forestiere, Chp. 10); The Final Product (Forestiere, Chp. 11, 12)

Thursday, 12/14: Catch-up and review for final exam

Tuesday, 12/19: **FINAL EXAM - 10:00 am -12:00 noon**