

## Introduction to Political Science Research (Online) Political Science 203

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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:**

Forestiere, Carolyn. 2017. *Beginning Research in Political Science*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

The required text can be purchased at the UWM Virtual Bookstore or through on-line vendors. I have included a link below to Amazon (I did not include a link to the publisher because there is a second edition of the textbook that I declined to use at this time for various reasons, and the publisher is only offering the 2<sup>nd</sup>, more expensive, edition). You can buy your textbooks through any source you choose, e.g., the UWM Virtual Bookstore, Amazon, Chegg, Textbooks.com, etc. But be sure you get the right book, i.e. the 2017, 1<sup>st</sup> edition! 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 must 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://www.amazon.com/Beginning-Research-Political-Science-Forestiere/dp/0190215968/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1501790241&sr=8-1&keywords=beginning+research+in+political+science](https://www.amazon.com/Beginning-Research-Political-Science-Forestiere/dp/0190215968/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1501790241&sr=8-1&keywords=beginning+research+in+political+science)

**FLOW OF THE CLASS:** For our purposes this semester, a week will start on Monday at 12:00 AM and end on Sunday at 11:59 PM. Each week, I will post lecture outline notes and other assignments for that week. These materials, combined with the reading from the textbook, will

constitute the materials for that week. For the week when you are taking an exam, I will temporarily take down the lecture notes from the course web site.

All the material for this course will be delivered asynchronously in Canvas, meaning that you do not have to be online to access the relevant information. However, I may also conduct synchronous meetings in which I will elaborate on important points and answer questions using Zoom in Canvas. Several weeks into the semester I will notify everyone concerning dates and times for these synchronous meetings. However, you do not necessarily need to attend “live,” i.e., synchronous sessions because they will be audio-visually recorded for students who are unable to attend at the scheduled time. Students who participate with their camera engaged or who utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their audio/video or image recorded. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded.

**GRADES:** Your grade will be based on four components: two exams, one paper, and 10 homework exercises. The calculation of your grade will be determined as follows:

**MIDTERM EXAM: 25% (Wednesday-Thursday, October 20, 12:00 am – October 21, 11:59 pm, Available online via Canvas)**

**FINAL EXAM: 35% (Friday-Saturday, December 17, 12:00 am – December 18, 11:59 pm, Available online via Canvas)**

**TERM PAPER: 20% (Due Sunday, December 11, Submit online via Canvas by 11:59 pm)**

**HOMEWORK EXERCISES: 20% (Submit online via Canvas by 11:59 pm on due dates)**

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 exams will cover material included in the assigned readings and class lectures. The final exam will be comprehensive, although a majority will focus on material covered after the midterm exam. Both exams will have 50 multiple choice and/or True/False questions. Both the midterm and final exam will be administered online in the Quizzes section of Canvas on the dates indicated above.

**You can take the midterm and final exam at any time during the time it is available. But you will only have one opportunity to take it – once you begin the exam, you must finish it. You cannot start an exam, and then enter again at a later time to finish it. You should also make sure you have a secure connection before you begin. You will have sixty minutes to complete the midterm and final exams so be sure to set aside the whole time allotted to take the exam once you begin.** Also, since you have a limited amount of time to take the exam, you cannot look up answers as you take the exam. Do not fall prey to this temptation, thinking that since you are not in a proctored classroom that you can simply “look up” the “correct” answers—besides, doing so would also be dishonest. Be sure to complete the exam on your own, i.e., academic dishonesty in any form will result in a failing grade in the course and appropriate university disciplinary action. **You should study and prepare for these exams in**

**the same way you would any closed-book exam.** I will temporarily close off access to the course notes on the course web site at 11:59 pm on the night before 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 Sunday, December 11. 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. In other words, chapter 11 in the Forestiere textbook will instruct you on how to organize and write your paper, the components of which you will have already mostly completed as homework exercises throughout the semester (be sure to keep electronic files of your homework assignments, making sure to make any changes and revisions for the final paper as noted in your returned and graded homework assignments). 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. All papers should be submitted via Canvas by Sunday, December 11 (Microsoft Word files only, please. Doing so will provide me with the opportunity to use Track Changes to grade, and make comments on, your paper). **No late papers will be accepted.** Again, if you have questions, please ask.

HOMEWORK EXERCISES: You will be assigned various exercises and components from the Forestiere textbook that will contribute to your term paper. The schedule of exercises and paper components is listed in a separate document. Students are expected to complete all the assigned exercises and paper components and submit each homework exercise by the assigned due date and time (Microsoft Word files only, please. Doing so will provide me with the opportunity to use Track Changes to grade, and make comments on, your paper). The exercises and paper components cumulatively count for 20% of the final grade. **No late assignments will be accepted without an approved excuse.**

- The homework exercises and the term paper will require you to use a data set from the World Values Survey ([www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)) and/or the statistical software program SPSS; in fact, you cannot write the term paper without using the data set from the World Values Survey website and SPSS. The Forestiere textbook provides detailed instructions on accessing the relevant data set online as well as how to then use that data set in SPSS (homework exercises 3 and 6 require access to the WVS data set, and homework exercises 7-9 require you to use the WVS data set in SPSS). You will need to download the SPSS statistical software program onto your own computer, which UWM provides to students and faculty free of charge. Here is the link to download SPSS on to your computer: <https://uwm.edu/software/spss-student-use/>. If you have any problems doing so, please call UWM computer support at 414-229-4040. However, you will only be able to download SPSS if you have a Mac or PC. If you have a Chromebook, the process for accessing SPSS is much more difficult and convoluted, but still doable. Please let me know asap if you only have access to a Chromebook for the semester, and I

can help you access a virtual lab that would allow you to use SPSS. However, your best option is to use a campus computer—if you don't have your own—to complete the homework exercises requiring SPSS.

**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/> (watch the video and access the link in the right-hand column entitled "Duke University 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://www.plagiarism.org>. 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.

**Students in Need:** Any student who faces challenges securing their food, housing, or technology, or is struggling with mental, physical, or emotional health, and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students ([dos@uwm.edu](mailto:dos@uwm.edu)) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable doing so. This will enable them to provide any resources that they may have and can connect you to the Dean of Students as well.

Here is a link to helpful on-campus resources specifically designed to help students: <https://uwm.edu/cetl/resources/student-resources/>.

Students are encouraged to use a tool called Navigate. This tool can help you learn about academic resources, set up study groups in your courses, make appointments with your academic advisor, get reminders on important dates, and much more. In addition, Navigate allows instructors to send Progress Reports to students throughout the term, allowing for updates on

your academic progress in a course in addition to your grade. You can log into the platform here: <https://uwmilwaukee.campus.eab.com/> or by finding the Navigate link under the Current Students tab on the [UWM home page](#). More information on how you can use Navigate and the app, including tutorials, can be found on [UWM's Navigate website](#).

**Panther Community Health and Safety Standards:** UWM has implemented reasonable health and safety protocols, taking into account recommendations by local, state and national public health authorities, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a member of our campus community, you are expected to abide by the Panther [Interim COVID-Related Health & Safety Rules](#), which were developed in accordance with public health guidelines. These standards apply to anyone who is physically present on campus, UWM grounds, or participating in a UWM-sponsored activity:

- All individuals visiting UWM facilities must wear face coverings while indoors;
- Unvaccinated students coming to campus are required to test weekly for COVID-19; and,
- You should check daily for COVID-19 symptoms and not come to campus if you are feeling sick.

Additional details about student and staff expectations can be found on the [UWM COVID-19 webpage](#).

### **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**

Week 1 – September 1: Class Introduction and basic overview of importance of studying research methods; What is Political Science? The Scientific Method

#### **II. Components of Empirical Political Analysis**

Week 2 – September 6: Overview of the Research Process; Problems, Research Questions and Theories (Forestiere, Chp. 1, 2, 3)

Week 3 – September 13: Concepts, Definitions, and Variables; Validity and Reliability, Levels of Measurement, and Units of Analysis (Forestiere, Chp. 3, 4, 6)

Week 4 – September 20: Hypotheses

Week 5 – September 27: Correlations and Causality; Causal Chains and Spuriousness

#### **III. Research Designs**

Week 6 – October 4: Experimental Designs (Forestiere, Chp. 5)

Week 7 – October 11: Correlational and Quasi-Experimental Designs; Qualitative Designs

Week 8 – October 18: **MIDTERM EXAM** (available in Canvas from Wednesday, October 20, 12:00 AM to Thursday, October 21, 11:59 pm)

#### **IV. Sources of Evidence – Data Collection**

Week 9 – October 25: Observations, Questionnaires, and Surveys

#### **V. Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing: Statistical Inference**

Week 10 – November 1: Descriptive (Univariate) Statistics (Forestiere, Chp. 7); Types of Frequency Distributions

Week 11 – November 8: Measures of Central Tendency; Measures of Dispersion; Populations, Samples, and Z-scores

Week 12 – November 15: Bivariate Relationships (Forestiere, Chp. 8); Statistical Significance and Measures of Association

Week 13 – November 22: **Thanksgiving Week**

Week 14 – November 29: Controlling for a Third Variable: Regression (Forestiere, Chp. 9)

Week 15 – December 6: The Final Product (Forestiere, Chp. 11, 12); Catch-up and review for final exam

- Sunday, 12/11: **Term Paper Due – Submit online via Canvas by 11:59 pm**

Week 16 – December 13: **FINAL EXAM** (available in Canvas from Friday, December 17, 12:00 AM to Saturday, December 18, 11:59 pm)