

Introduction to Political Science Research Political Science 203

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University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Spring Semester 2022
TR 2:00-3:15 PM
Location: Bolton Hall B60

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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:

Forestiery, Carolyn. 2022. *Beginning Research in Political Science*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

The required textbook can be purchased or rented at the UWM Virtual Bookstore or through various 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 textbook 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 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://global.oup.com/academic/search?q=forestiery&cc=us&lang=en>

https://www.amazon.com/Beginning-Research-Political-Science-Forestiery/dp/0190081600/ref=sr_1_4?crid=1HXMUPTBZNGI5&keywords=forestiery+research&qid=1641178716&srefix=forestiery+research%2Caps%2C77&sr=8-4

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

MIDTERM EXAM: 25% (**Thursday, March 17, in class**)

FINAL EXAM: 35% (**Tuesday, May 17, 3:00-5:00 pm**)

TERM PAPER: 20% (**Due Tuesday, May 3, beginning of class**)

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS: 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 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, May 3. 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 264-265 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. **No late term papers will be accepted without an approved excuse.**

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS: You will need to complete various assignments from the Forestiere textbook, many of which will contribute to your term paper. The schedule of assignments and paper components is listed in a separate handout. Students are expected to complete all the assignments and paper components. **No late homework assignments will be accepted without an approved excuse.**

- The homework assignments and the term paper will require you to use the Dataprac data set (available at www.oup.com/he/forestiere2e) and/or the statistical software program SPSS; in fact, you cannot write the term paper without using the Dataprac data set and SPSS. The Forestiere textbook provides instructions on accessing the relevant data set online as well as how to then use that data set in SPSS (homework assignment 6 requires access to the Dataprac data set, and homework assignments 7-9 require you to use the Dataprac 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/student-software/> (scroll down to “SPSS,” click, and follow the

directions). 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 assignments requiring SPSS.

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. 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/> (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.

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

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, 1/25: Class Introduction and basic overview of importance of studying research methods

Thursday, 1/27: What is Political Science? The Scientific Method

II. Components of Empirical Political Analysis

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

Thursday, 2/3: Overview of the Research Process (cont.)

Tuesday, 2/8: Concepts, Definitions, and Variables; Validity and Reliability, Levels of Measurement, and Units of Analysis (Forestiere, Chp. 3, 4, 6)

Thursday, 2/10: Concepts, Definitions, and Variables (cont.)

Tuesday, 2/15: Hypotheses

Thursday, 2/17: Hypotheses (cont.)

Tuesday, 2/22: Correlations and Causality; Causal Chains and Spuriousness

Thursday, 2/24: Correlations and Causality; Causal Chains and Spuriousness (cont.)

III. Research Designs

Tuesday, 3/1: Experimental Designs (Forestiere, Chp. 5)

Thursday, 3/3: Experimental Designs (cont.)

Tuesday, 3/8: Correlational and Quasi-Experimental Designs

Thursday, 3/10: Correlational and Quasi-Experimental Designs (cont.)

Tuesday, 3/15: Qualitative Designs; Catch-up and review for midterm exam

Thursday, 3/17: **Midterm Exam**

Tuesday, 3/22 & Thursday, 3/24: Spring Break

IV. Sources of Evidence – Data Collection

Tuesday, 3/29: Observations, Questionnaires, and Surveys

Thursday, 3/31: Observations, Questionnaires, and Surveys (cont.)

Tuesday, 4/5: Observations, Questionnaires, and Surveys (cont.)

Thursday, 4/7: Populations, Samples, and Z-scores

V. Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing: Statistical Inference

Tuesday, 4/12: Descriptive (Univariate) Statistics (Forestiere, Chp. 7)

Thursday, 4/14: Types of Frequency Distributions

Tuesday, 4/19: Measures of Central Tendency

Thursday, 4/21: Measures of Dispersion

Tuesday, 4/26: Bivariate Relationships (Forestiere, Chp. 8)

Thursday, 4/28: Statistical Significance and Measures of Association

Tuesday, 5/3: **Paper Due (beginning of class)**; Statistical Significance and Measures of Association (cont.)

Thursday, 5/5: Controlling for a Third Variable: Regression (Forestiere, Chp. 9)

Tuesday, 5/10: Qualitative Analysis (Forestiere, Chp. 10); The Final Product (Forestiere, Chp. 11, 12)

Thursday, 5/12: Catch-up and review for final exam

Tuesday, 5/17: **FINAL EXAM – 3:00-5:00 PM**