Political Research Methods
PSC 303.090
Fall 2018
Mon. & Weds. 10am - 10:50am in Ferguson 374
Fri. 10am - 10:50am in Info Labs (Library)

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Office Hours: Thurs. 1:45pm - 3:45pm & Fri. 11am - 2pm

Course Description

Introduction to research methods in political science emphasizing research design and quantitative/qualitative methods of analysis. Required for all political science majors and second majors. Prerequisites: PSC 141 and 142.

Text Books


Software

The course will be using the statistical software SPSS for many of the assignments. I will hold lab sessions during Friday class. Given that a number of assignments will require you to use SPSS, I strongly encourage you to download SPSS onto your personal computer. If you choose not to download onto your computer, you will need to find a computer lab on campus with SPSS installed.

1Because this is a syllabus, it is guide for how the semester will unfold. To be clear, I reserve the right to change ANY aspect of the course as necessary.
Course Requirements

Grading. Grades for this course will be based on exams, assignments, a research paper, and research presentation.

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>60 – 70</td>
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<td>0 – 60</td>
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Exams (40%). There will be a midterm exam and a cumulative final exam. These exams will be weighted equally and will cover material from the lectures and readings. Moreover, there will be no make-up exams, unless the absence is excused. If you know you will miss an exam for an excused absence, you must make arrangements with me at least three days prior to the scheduled exam date to take the exam early. If you miss the exam because you become suddenly ill, then you must contact me in a timely manner (within three days of the exam) to work out other arrangements. The following are acceptable excuses: illness with a doctor’s note, military duty, death in the family, or participation in approved university-sponsored events. The following are NOT acceptable excuses: forgetting to set your alarm, scheduled flights or trips, scheduled non-emergency doctor appointments, going to work, picking up relatives at the airport, chauffeuring a friend somewhere, etc.

Homework Assignments (25%). The material in this course builds on itself. Because of this there will be regular homework assignments. This will help ensure that everybody is following the material. Homework assignments will be a combination of problems from the textbooks, questions that require you to use SPSS, and tasks aimed at helping you complete the final project for the class. All homework assignments must be turned in as a hard copy, because I will not accept email submissions. Moreover, all assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the assigned due date. If you turn in your homework assignment after the beginning of class on the assigned due date, it will be considered one day late and you will automatically lose 10% on that assignment, and there will a 5% penalty for each day the assignment is late. To be clear, all assignments must be turned in no more than three days after the assignment is due. If you fail to turn in an assignment with in three days of its due date, you automatically receive a zero for the assignment.

Final Research Project (25%). For the research paper, you are required to analyze a research question in political science. You will develop a theoretical explanation for some political phenomena that interests you, perhaps based on your previous coursework in political science. From this theory, you must formulate hypotheses concerning the relationship
between a dependent variable and some independent variables. Testing these hypotheses will require the collection of data from secondary sources and applying the appropriate statistical methods learned in this course. In the paper, which should be approximately 10-12 pages long (with clear and appropriately formatted tables and graphs), you should explain the research design, present the findings from the statistical analysis, and discuss your conclusions regarding your hypotheses. The organization of the paper and how to conduct the analysis will be discussed later in the class. The paper is due Monday, December 10, at 1pm. There will be preliminary due dates throughout the semester for the paper topic, hypotheses, and data description.

**Final Research Presentation (10%).** All students will be required to give a 6-8 minute research presentation in front of the class. The order of presentation will be chosen randomly. If your name is called and you refuse to present, then you will automatically lose 10 percent on the assignment. If your name is called and you are absent, then you will lose 10 percent on the assignment (exceptions will be made for excused absences, but excused absences must be properly documented). Moreover, if you choose not to present, you will not earn higher than a C for the course.

**Academic Integrity**

The following is taken from SFA’s *Policy Manual* and can be found in section 4.1 – Student Academic Dishonesty: Abiding by university policy on academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members must promote the components of academic integrity in their instruction, and course syllabi are required to provide information about penalties for cheating and plagiarism as well as the appeal process.

All cases of academic dishonesty, both cheating and plagiarism, will be handled according to University policies and procedures (A-4.1 & A-6.3). Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit. While these are not exhaustive lists, students who are curious should peruse SFA’s *Policy Manual*[^1] Specifically, you should focus on section 4.1 – Student Academic Dishonesty[^2]

[^1]: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/)
[^2]: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student_academic_dishonesty.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student_academic_dishonesty.pdf)
To be clear, I do not take academic dishonesty lightly, and the consequences for academic dishonesty will be an “F” for the course. No exceptions.

Withheld Grades

The following is taken from SFASU’s Policy Manual (2014), “Semester Grades Policy” (A-54): At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. **Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F.** If students register for the same course in future semesters, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Students with Disabilities

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

Acceptable Student Behavior

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.
Course Schedule

Aug. 27: Introduction
  • No Readings

Aug. 29: Introduction
  • No Readings

Aug. 31: Introduction
  • Meet in Info Lab 1 (Library)

Sep. 3: The Definition of Measurement and Concepts
  • *Essentials*, Ch. 1

Sep. 5: The Definition of Measurement and Concepts
  • *Essentials*, Ch. 1

Sep. 7: Introduction to SPSS
  • *Companion*, Ch. 1
  • Meet in Info Lab 1 (Library)

Sep. 10: The Definition of Measurement and Concepts
  • *Essentials*, Ch. 1

Sep. 12: Measuring and Describing Variables
  • *Essentials*, Ch. 2

Sep. 14: Descriptive Statistics
  • *Companion*, Ch. 2
  • Meet in Info Lab 1 (Library)

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4This is a tentative schedule, and I reserve the right to change the schedule as necessary.
Sep. 17: Measuring and Describing Variables
  • Essentials, Ch. 2

Sep. 19: Measuring and Describing Variables
  • Essentials, Ch. 2

Sep. 21: Transforming Variables
  • Companion, Ch. 3
  • Meet in Info Lab 1 (Library)

Sep. 24: Proposing Explanations, Framing Hypotheses, and Making Comparisons
  • Essentials, Ch. 3

Sep. 26: Proposing Explanations, Framing Hypotheses, and Making Comparisons
  • Essentials, Ch. 3

Sep. 28: Making Comparisons
  • Companion, Ch. 4
  • Meet in Info Lab 1 (Library)

Oct. 1: Research Design and the Logic of Control
  • Essentials, Ch. 4

Oct. 3: Research Design and the Logic of Control
  • Essentials, Ch. 4

Oct. 5: Making Controlled Comparisons
  • Companion, Ch. 5
  • Meet in Info Lab 1 (Library)
Oct. 8: Research Design and the Logic of Control
  • *Essentials*, Ch. 4

Oct. 10: Foundations of Statistical Inference
  • *Essentials*, Ch. 5

Oct. 12: No Class
  •

Oct. 15: Foundations of Statistical Inference
  • *Essentials*, Ch. 5

Oct. 17: Foundations of Statistical Inference
  • *Essentials*, Ch. 6

Oct. 19: Making Inferences about Sample Means
  • *Companion*, Ch. 6
  • Meet in Info Lab 1 (Library)

Oct. 22: Midterm Exam
  •

Oct. 24: Tests of Significance and Measures of Association
  • *Essentials*, Ch. 7

Oct. 26: Chi-square and Measures of Association
  • *Companion*, Ch. 7
  • Meet in Info Lab 1 (Library)

Oct. 29: Tests of Significance and Measures of Association
  • *Essentials*, Ch. 7
Oct. 31: Tests of Significance and Measures of Association
  • Essentials, Ch. 7

Nov. 2: Correlation and Linear Regression
  • Companion, Ch. 8
  • Meet in Info Lab 1 (Library)

Nov. 5: Correlation and Linear Regression
  • Essentials, Ch. 8

Nov. 7: Correlation and Linear Regression
  • Essentials, Ch. 8

Nov. 9: Dummy Variables and Interaction Effects
  • Essentials, Ch. 9

Nov. 12: Logistic Regression
  • Essentials, Ch. 9

Nov. 14: Logistic Regression
  • Essentials, Ch. 9

Nov. 16: No Class
  •

Nov. 19: No Class
  •

Nov. 21: No Class
  •

Nov. 123 No Class
  •
Nov. 26: Presentations
  •

Nov. 28: Presentations
  •

Nov. 30: Presentations
  •

Dec. 3: Presentations
  •

Dec. 5: Presentations
  •

Dec. 7: Presentations
  •

Dec. 12: Final Exam
  • 10:30am - 12:30pm