

PS0700
RESEARCH METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Spring Semester 2011: 4500 WW Posvar Hall
Monday Wednesday 9:30-10:45 AM

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Course Description

This course serves as an introduction to the methodology of political science research. The course will begin with the logic of social scientific inquiry and the basics of research design, and then introduce students to the quantitative and qualitative methods that are commonly used by political scientists to investigate important questions about the political world. The goals of the course are 1) for the student to become both an intelligent consumer of quantitative and qualitative research, with the ability to see the strengths and flaws of social scientific studies in academic journals and books, magazines, newspapers, and other media outlets; and 2) to give students the skills necessary to begin conducting original political science research studies of their own.

By the end of the class, students will have developed a critical understanding of issues related to scientific inquiry, measurement, causal inference, experimental and quasi-experimental research, formal modeling, comparative research, sampling and survey research, focus groups, in-depth interviewing, case studies and other qualitative methods of data collection. Students will also learn fundamental concepts in descriptive and inferential statistical reasoning, and data analytic techniques such as crosstabulation, and correlation and regression analysis, and will develop the skills to apply these methods using the SPSS statistical package.

Requirements

Grades will be based on three exams, one research exercise, and participation in class discussion. The exam will be held in-class on **February 7, March 14, and April 20**. The research exercise will be an approximately seven page paper in which you a) specify a hypothesized relationship between political variables, b) use SPSS to test the hypothesis with quantitative methods on data that will be made available for you, and c) interpret the results of the analyses. We will have much more to say about this exercise in class. The paper will be due on **April 18**.

Grading

Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Research Exercise	20%
Exam 3	25%
Class Participation	5%

Texts

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, and H.T. Reynolds, with Jason D. Mycoff, *Political Science Research Methods*, 6th Edition. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2008.

Wagner, William. *Using IBM SPSS Statistics for Social Statistics and Research Methods*, 3rd Edition. Sage Pine Forge, 2011.

Students also need to purchase the IBM SPSS statistical package from Pitt's Software Licensing Services on Bellefield Avenue. It is available for \$5 in both Windows and Mac versions. See <http://www.technology.pitt.edu/software/for-students-software/ibmspss-st.html>. IBM SPSS is also available in most public computing labs around campus.

Attendance Policy

I strongly recommend that you make every effort to attend the lectures. Lectures provide the core ideas that we will explore in the class, and they are the source of many of the questions on the exams. Part of your grade (5%) will be based on attendance and on your performance in class discussions.

Academic Honesty

Academic integrity in the university setting is vital. All students are advised to be familiar (<http://www.pitt.edu/~provost/ai1.html>). These principles will be strictly enforced in this course. Anyone thought to have violated the standards of academic integrity will face the full force of university-sanctioned penalties, including, but not limited to, failing the class.

Accommodations For Persons With Disabilities

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, (412)648-7890/(412)383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. All discussions between you and me will remain confidential.

Course Outline

Week 1: Political Science and the Science of Politics

January 5: Introduction to the Course
January 10: Political Science as a "Science"

Readings: Johnson and Reynolds, with Mycoff (hereafter "JRwM"), chapters 1-2.
Easton, "Political Science in the United States: Past and Present", in David Easton and Corinne Schelling, editors, *Divided Knowledge: Across Disciplines, Across Cultures*. Sage Publications, 1991.
Kasza, "Perestroika: For an Ecumenical Science of Politics," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 34, 3, (September, 2001), 597-599.
Bennet, "Perestroika Lost: Why the Latest "Reform" Movement in Political Science Should Fail," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35, 2, (June 2002), 177-179.

Weeks 2-3: Nuts and Bolts of Social Science

January 12: Theories, Concepts, Hypotheses, Variables
January 17: NO CLASS—Martin Luther King Day
January 19: Measurement
January 24: Causality

Readings: JRwM, chapters 3-4, chapter 5 to p. 126.
JR, chapters 3-4.
Sullivan, Pierson, and Marcus, "An Alternative Conceptualization of Political Tolerance: Illusory Increases: 1950s – 1970s," *American Political Science Review* 73, 3 (September 1979), 781 – 794.

Weeks 4-5: Research Designs in Political Science

January 26: Experiments
January 31: Quasi-Experiments
February 2: Longitudinal and Time-Series Designs

Readings: JRwM, chapter 5 to p. 166 (top).
JR, chapter 5.
Ansolabahere, Iyengar, Valentino and Simon, "Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?" *American Political Science Review* 88, 4 (December 1994), 829-838.
Gerber and Green, "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment," *American Political Science Review* 94, 3 (September 2000), 653-663.
Finkel, "Reciprocal Effects of Political Participation and Political Efficacy: A Panel Analysis," *American Journal of Political Science* 29, 4 (November 1985), 891-913.

February 7: **FIRST EXAM**

Weeks 6-7: Research Designs II: Formal, Comparative and Qualitative Designs

February 9: Rational Choice and Formal Modeling I
February 14: Rational Choice and Formal Modeling II
February 16: Comparative and Qualitative Designs I
February 21: Comparative and Qualitative Designs II

Readings: JRwM, pp. 166-175.
Riker, "Political Science and Rational Choice," in James Alt and Kenneth Shelpfle (eds.), *Perspectives on Positive Political Economy*. Cambridge University Press, 1990
Stewart, *Analyzing Congress*, chapter 1, pp. 3 – 22.
Peters, "The Logic of Comparison," and "The Number of Cases", chapters 2-3 in *Comparative Politics: Theory and Method*. New York University Press, 1998.
Seawright and Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options", *Political Research Quarterly* (2008)
Davies, "Qualitative Research and Evaluation: How Do You Know Why (and How) Something Works?" Chapter 8 in *The Magenta Book: Guidance Notes for Policy Evaluation and Analysis*. Government Chief Social Researcher's Office (UK), 2004.

Weeks 8-9: Sampling and Data Collection Strategies

February 23: Sampling
February 28: Survey Research
March 2: Aggregate Data and Document Analysis

Readings: JRwM, chapters 7-10.

March 14: **EXAM 2**

Weeks 10-14: Basic Statistical Methods

March 16: Descriptive Statistics I
March 21: Descriptive Statistics II
March 23: Statistical Inference
March 28: Introduction to SPSS

Readings: JRwM, chapter 11.
Wagner, chapters 1-5.

March 30: T-Tests
April 4: Cross-Tabulation
April 6: Correlation and Regression
April 11: Regression II
April 13: Multivariate Analysis I
April 18: Multivariate Analysis II

Readings: JRwM, chapters 12-13.
Lewis-Beck, *Applied Regression*, pp. 9-46.
Wagner, chapters 6,7,9.

PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE APRIL 18

April 20: **EXAM 3**