

Introduction to Political Analysis POLS 3314-001 – Fall 2023

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Couse Overview:

This course is meant to familiarize students with political science research methodology, as well as how to understand and conduct political science research. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to identify and locate academic sources on a variety of political and social science topics, to identify the particular research designs used in these studies, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these studies, and to utilize these publications and research methods in future political science courses. In addition to mastering the nuts-and-bolts of political science research design, you will also learn how to conduct quantitative analysis in Excel. Although most social science research is conducted using statistical analysis, this is *not* a “math class.” The majority of statistical analysis you conduct will focus on *interpretation*. The skills you learn in this class will be useful in your academic life and in your future employment.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the basic goals of social science research and identify research design components in peer-reviewed political science publications
 - Evaluation method: Lab Assignments, Midterm Exam
2. Be able to locate and summarize peer reviewed sources through library databases
 - Evaluation method: Lab Assignments, Homework Assignments
3. Demonstrate the ability to perform, understand, and explain descriptive statistics
 - Evaluation method: Lab Assignments
4. Demonstrate the ability to perform and explain bivariate and multivariate analysis
 - Evaluation method: Lab Assignments, Analysis Project
5. Learn how to formulate an appropriate research question, develop testable hypotheses, and operationalize concepts in order to test said hypotheses
 - Evaluation method: Homework Assignments, Analysis Project
6. Have a working knowledge of basic descriptive statistics and be able to interpret the types of regression analyses that appear in published articles
 - Evaluation method: Lab Assignments
7. This course is also a communication literacy class. Students graduating with an undergraduate degree in political science will be able to communicate graphical information and mathematical results.

Course Materials

Required Text

Johnson, Janet, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason Mycoff. 2019. *Political Science Research Methods*. Sage CQ Press, 9th Edition. ISBN 9781544331430.

You're welcome to purchase an older version of the required textbook if you prefer (or rent the eBook), but you are responsible for checking content order changes. Chapters listed in the course calendar correspond to the 9th edition, but I also note the content areas you're responsible for reading. I still use the 8th edition.

We will be using Microsoft Excel in this class along with the Analysis ToolPak add-in. You can download the entire MS Office suite free-of-charge through TTU at this site:

<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/itts/software/>

In addition to the textbook, you will also be responsible for reading a variety of peer-reviewed research articles and book chapters. These readings are listed in the course schedule [Author's Last Name (Year of Publication) "Short Title"] and can be found in the relevant weekly module folder on Blackboard.

All of your assignments will be submitted on Blackboard. If you are having trouble with Blackboard, it is your responsibility to contact Blackboard support and get the issue resolved. Their email is blackboard@ttu.edu

I highly recommend you always bring a laptop or internet accessible device with you to class.

You will need a computer to complete lab assignments, and we will frequently do in-class activities and tutorials that require you to download files from Blackboard.

Earning Your Grade

The grading and assignments for this course have been designed to offer you **a variety of ways to succeed**. Below is a breakdown of how your grade for this course will be assessed. Assessment is more than the assigning of a grade. Assessment helps you to understand your achievement and helps instructors meet your learning needs.

Lab Assignments:	30%
Midterm Exam	20%
Research Assignments:	15%
Attendance/Participation:	15%
Final Analysis Paper:	20%

Lab Assignments: Throughout the semester, you will complete seven (7) lab assignments that require you to apply the various research method techniques we cover in class. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest lab grade. Accordingly, your lab grade will be worth 30% of your final grade (6 assignments X 5% each). **Lab assignments will be worked on in class during the scheduled lab session. Lab assignments cannot be submitted late or made up in any way.**

Research Assignments: Throughout the semester, you will complete three (3) research assignments related to a political science topic you pick at the beginning of the semester. Each assignment is worth 5% of your final grade. All topics and research questions will be explored using one of three commonly used public opinion datasets that I will provide at the beginning of the semester. Assignment 1, is the initial research proposal and includes a peer review component.

Assignment 2 asks you to complete a literature review on your topic and write an annotated bibliography. Assignment 3 is an expanded research proposal with a data component which allows you to review Assignment 1. Complete details about each assignment can be found on Blackboard under the “research paper link.”

Midterm Exam: In Week 8 of the course, you will complete a 30-question multiple-choice midterm exam on Blackboard. You will have 60 minutes to complete the exam and you must finish it in one sitting. The exam will be available on Blackboard 24 hours before the deadline listed in the course schedule. The midterm exam is worth 20% of your final grade.

Final Analysis Paper: The final project will examine a political science phenomenon using quantitative analysis. You will incorporate components of your *revised* homework assignments and you will test a hypothesis using the appropriate quantitative analytic technique. Complete details about the research paper can be found on Blackboard under the “research paper” link.

Attendance and Participation: This is a hands-on class where attendance is highly correlated with good grades. Many of our class meetings will be devoted to research tutorials which cannot easily be replicated online. To ensure your success, **attendance in this class is mandatory**. I will not take attendance on a daily basis. Instead, we will have unannounced in-class activities that you will turn in for your attendance and participation grade. You will get two free unexcused absences – no questions asked. There’s no way to make up a missed activity. Attendance and participation constitute 15% of your final grade.

Late work policy: Lab assignments are to be completed in-class during the scheduled lab period. Since I drop the lowest lab grade at the end of the semester, I will not accept late lab submissions. For the research assignments and final paper, you may submit written work late, however I will deduct 20% for each day late. That means if homework is due at 10AM on a Monday and you turn it in later in the day on Monday or Tuesday morning before 10AM (without an instructor-approved excuse), I will grade your paper and then subtract 20% from that grade.

The biggest reason that students have failed this class in the past is because they have not completed or submitted assignments. If you follow directions, respond to feedback, and put forward your best effort on *all* assignments, there is no reason you can not pass the class.

Calculating Your Grade

Each assignment will receive a percentage grade and both midterm and final grade formulas will result in a percentage, which will translate into a letter grade using the following scale:

Points	Letter Grade
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
59% or below	F

Please do not contact me requesting an arbitrary grade increase (this includes requests for “rounding” at the end of the semester). If you have an appeal about an assignment grade besides a simple clerical error, you must type a formal appeal describing the problem.

I will make the final determination about “rounding” and will heavily base my final decision on a holistic evaluation of your participation during the semester. I will never submit a grade change for a +/- . The addition of +/- to a letter grade is at the instructor’s discretion.

Additional Policies

The use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT) is ***not permitted*** in this course; therefore, any use of AI tools for work in this class may be considered a violation of Texas Tech’s Academic Integrity policy and the Student Code of Conduct since the work is not your own. The use of unauthorized AI tools will result in referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

Students should familiarize themselves with the Texas Tech University policies linked below:

[Texas Tech Policies Concerning Academic Honesty, Special Accommodations for Students with Disabilities, Student Absences for Observance of Religious Holy Days, and Accommodations for Pregnant Students.](#)

[Plagiarism Statement](#)

****Disclaimer – I reserve the right to modify this syllabus at any time as I see fit to better accommodate the course. Modifications will be communicated via Blackboard, email, or in class. A current version of the syllabus will always be available on Blackboard.**

Assignment Deadlines: The final research paper must be uploaded to Blackboard by 5PM on Friday December 8. Research assignments are due at 5PM on the days listed below. Lab assignments are to be completed *in class* on the days listed below.

<u>Course Schedule</u>		
<p>JRM denotes the required textbook by Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff. All other readings are available on Blackboard (denoted at “Bb”) in the respective weekly folder</p> <p>Readings should be completed <i>before</i> class on the day they are assigned</p>		
Week	Reading/Plan	Assignments Due
Introductions: 8/25	Friday: Syllabus	N/A
Week 1: 8/28 – 9/1 Introduction to the course/scientific research	Monday: JRM Chapter 1 Wednesday: No reading Friday: Listen to Freakonomics podcast on replication	N/A
Week 2: 9/4 – 9/8 Empiricism and Research Questions	Monday: Read JRM Chapter 2 (Empirical Approach) Wednesday: JRM Chapter 3 (specifying the question & sources of ideas) Friday: No reading, Library Tutorial	N/A
Week 3: 9/11 – 9/15 Collecting and Reviewing Literature	Monday: JRM Chapter 3 (“why conduct a literature review” through end of chapter). Wednesday: Lab Day Friday: No reading	Lab #1 after class on 9/13
Week 4: 9/18 – 9/22 Building Blocks of Research: Concepts, Hypotheses, & Measurement	Monday: JRM Chapter 4 p. 73-87 (through “defining concepts”) Wednesday: JRM Chapter 4 (“measurement strategies” through end of chapter) Friday: No reading	Research Assignment #1 Due by Friday 9/22 at 5PM

<p>Week 5: 9/25 – 9/29</p> <p>Putting it all together: Research Design Components</p>	<p>Monday: Read Street et al. (2017) “The Politics Effects of Having Undocumented Parents” - Bb</p> <p>Wednesday: Lab Day – Identifying Research Design Components in Scholarly Articles</p> <p>Friday: No reading – Data Tutorial Day</p>	<p>Lab #2 Due after class on 9/27.</p> <p>Peer reviews from Assignment #1 due Friday 9/29 by 5PM</p>
<p>Week 6: 10/2 – 10/6</p> <p>Sampling</p>	<p>Monday: JRM Chapter 5 (Sampling)</p> <p>Wednesday: Lab Day – Writing Hypotheses</p> <p>Friday – No class, mental health day</p>	<p>Lab #3 Due After Class on 10/4</p>
<p>Week 7: 10/9 – 10/13</p> <p>Making Causal Inferences</p>	<p>Monday: No Reading – Data Tutorial Day</p> <p>Wednesday: Lab Day – Manipulating Datasets</p> <p>Friday: Read JRM Chapter 6 (Establishing Causation)</p>	<p>Lab #4 due after class on 10/11</p>
<p>Week 8: 10/16 – 10/20</p> <p>Collecting Data</p>	<p>Monday: Read JRM Chapter 9 (Quantitative Research Designs)</p> <p>Wednesday Read JRM Chapter 10 (Quantitative Methods)</p> <p>Friday: No class meeting, complete midterm</p>	<p>Research Assignment #2 due by Monday 10/16 at 5PM</p> <p>Midterm Exam due by 5PM Friday 10/20 (Blackboard)</p>
<p>Week 9: 10/23 – 10/27</p> <p>Making Sense of Data, Part 1</p>	<p>Monday: JRM Chapter 11 (Making Sense of Data)</p> <p>Wednesday: Lab Day – Describing Data</p> <p>Friday: Read JRM Chapter 12 (Testing Relationships)</p>	<p>Lab #5 due after class on 10/25</p>
<p>Week 10: 10/30 – 11/3</p> <p>Making Sense of Data, Part 2</p>	<p>Monday: No reading, data tutorial</p> <p>Wednesday: Lab Day – Testing Hypotheses</p> <p>Friday: Read JRM Chapter 13 (Categorical Data)</p>	<p>Lab #6 Due After Class on 11/5</p>
<p>Week 11: 11/6 – 11/10</p> <p>Bivariate Relationships & The Logic of Regression</p>	<p>Monday: Read “A step by step guide to hypothesis testing with categorical variables” (linked here) & on Bb</p> <p>Wednesday: Data Tutorial – Chi-Square Tests in Excel</p>	

	Friday: Read "How to interpret a regression table" (linked here & on Bb)	Research Assignment #3 Due by Friday 11/10 at 5PM
Week 12: 11/13 – 11/17 Multivariate Regression Part 1	Monday: Data Tutorial – The regression set up in Excel Wednesday: Chapter 14 307-323 (through "categorical independent variables") Friday – Data Tutorial – Regression with multiple independent variables	No graded assignments this week
November 20 – November 24: Thanksgiving Week. No class meeting.		
Week 13: 11/27 – 12/1 Multivariate Regression Part 2	Monday – Data Tutorial – Categorical Independent Variables Wednesday – Lab Day Friday – JRM Chapter 14 324-329	Lab #7 Due after class on 11/29
Week 14: 12/4 – 12/6 Final Remarks	Monday: Lab time to work on final paper with individual check ins. Wednesday: No class for Individual Study Day	Final papers due by 5PM on Friday 12/8

Last updated: August 23, 2023