

POLI 205: Doing Research in Politics

College of Charleston

Spring 2018

Time: TR 1:40 p.m. – 2:55 p.m.

Place: Education Center, 109

Instructor: Professor Matthew Nowlin

Email: nowlinmc@cofc.edu

Office Location: Political Science building, 114 Wentworth #107

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-3 p.m. and by appointment

Course Description

From the course catalog: *An introduction to the techniques and strategies researchers in politics use to study and understand the political world.*

This is an undergraduate course in social science research methods and data analysis. It is designed to introduce you to the use of political analysis, begin an exploration in the exciting worlds of quantitative research methods, and help you practice basic analytical methods for understanding political and social phenomena.

In addition and as stated in the Kellstedt and Whitten text, this course will help prepare you to 1) consume academic political science research in your other courses, 2) become a better consumer of information, and 3) start you on the road to becoming a producer of scientific research. We will cover a lot of material in this course, **therefore it is imperative that you come to class having done the readings and prepared to participate.**

As we progress, we will spend part of the semester on the tools and techniques of quality research design; the basic statistical skills that give you an understanding of the appropriate uses and mis-uses of these tools and techniques; and finally we will learn to do some data analysis using *R*, a statistical programming language.

In the first part of the course we will review the features of science, the scientific method, and core concepts in empirical research. Topics include theory development, how to formulate hypotheses, and how political scientists think about causality. The first section is intended to enhance your critical and social scientific thinking skills while also helping you distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly research. The next section introduces students to the components of a research design. We will cover the features of experimental and non-experimental designs, review the fundamentals of statistical inference, and cover survey research. This section is intended to provide you with a working knowledge of the methods used by academic political

scientists and help you design your own research. The third part of the course will focus on “doing” research and we will have several lab sessions where we will be performing data analysis using the statistical programming language *R*. Topics will include the exploring and visualizing of data and examining relationships between two variables. Finally, we will discuss and learn how to apply Ordinary Least Squares regression, the “workhorse” of empirical social science research, to test hypotheses.

NOTE: This classroom is equipped with a computer at each work station, however we will only use the computer on certain days and for specific purposes. Therefore, **the computers must remain off unless we are using them for class**. In addition, **all phones and laptops must remain put away** unless you are asked to use them for class purposes. *Notes should be taken by hand, with pen and paper. You learn better that way.*

I recommend taking notes using the [Cornell Method](#)

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

The goals for this course are to:

- Identify and explain current academic research projects in politics.
- Enhance critical and social scientific thinking skills to distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly approaches.
- Develop research questions that are answerable with a variety of methods.
- Demonstrate some of the methods used by scholars of politics.
- Develop skills in designing a research project.

Required Textbook

The following book is required and *additional readings will be provided on OAKS*

KW: Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Cambridge University Press. 2nd Ed.

Required Software

You are also required to download *R* and *RStudio* on your home computer and/or laptop. Both programs are open-source and available at no cost. In addition, both are available on the computers in the classroom. For more information and instructions for downloading *R* and *RStudio* go to the R Help document on [OAKS](#), under Content.

While not required, I strongly recommend the use of citation manager software such as [Zotero](#) or [Mendeley](#).

Course Requirements and Grading

Performance in this course will be evaluated on the basis of a research design, ten reading quizzes, four in-class lab assignments, four homework assignments, and a comprehensive final exam.

Points will be distributed as follows:

Assignment	Possible Points
Research Design	300 points (total)
10 Reading Quizzes (20 pts each)	200 points
4 In-Class Lab Assignment (25 pts each)	100 points
4 Homework Assignments (25 pts each)	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
Total	800 points

All due dates for assignments are on the following schedule.

Specific requirements for each assignment will be available on [OAKS](#) and discussed in class. *You must be present during the in-class lab assignments to receive credit, no make-ups will be allowed without documentation provided by the absence office.*

Late Work Policy

Late homework will be penalized 10% each day (24 hr period) it is late, up to 2 days. After 2 days the assignment will not be accepted. For example, if an assignment is due Tuesday at 1:30pm, it is late as of 1:31pm and you lose 10%. After Wednesday at 1:31pm you lose another 10% and no work will be accepted after Thursday at 1:30pm. No make-up work is possible. *No late reading quizzes are accepted and no make-up questions are allowed.*

No late homework will be accepted 48 hrs after the assignment due date and time. Does NOT apply to reading quizzes.

Attendance

Attendance is expected and mandatory for this course and will be taken each class period. You are allowed to miss two classes without penalty. The penalties for missing 2 or more classes are as follows:

Absences	Penalty
2	None
3	40 points
4	60 points (100 points total)
5	80 points (180 points total)
6	120 points (300 points total)
7+	Grade of WA

Grading Scale

There are **800** possible points for this course. Grades will be allocated based on your earned points and calculated as a percentage of **800**. A: 94 to 100%; A-: 90 to 93%; B+: 87 to 89%; B: 83 to 86%; B-: 80 to 82%; C+: 77 to 79%; C: 73 to 76%; C-: 70 to 72%; D+: 67 to 69%; D: 63 to 67%; D-: 60 to 62%; F: 59% and below

Course Schedule

The following schedule is guide of the topics that will be covered this semester. The order of topics, number of readings, and other aspects of this schedule are subject to change.

Subject to change and all changes will be announced in class and/or by email

Important Due Dates

Homework 1	Jan 25th
Homework 2	Feb 20th
Research Design: Introduction and Literature Review	March 8th
Research Design: Theory and Hypothesis	March 15th
Homework 3	April 5th
Research Design: Data and Methods	April 6th
Homework 4	April 19th
Research Design: Complete paper	April 23rd

Readings, Assignment Due Dates, and Exam Dates

KW: Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Cambridge University Press. 2nd Ed. Other readings listed below will be on the **OAKS** course page under Content -> Readings.

All readings listed for the week should be read prior to class on Tuesdays, unless otherwise noted OR announced in class.

Reading quizzes and homework assignments are due prior to class, at 1:30pm EST, on the dates they are assigned. Instructions for the readings quizzes will be posted on **OAKS**. Homework will be submitted in the dropbox on **OAKS**.

JAN 9TH–11TH: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

- *Readings:*
 - Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff Chap 1: “Introduction” on **OAKS**

JAN 16TH–18TH: POLITICAL SCIENCE?

- *Readings:*
 - KW Chap 1: “The Scientific Study of Politics”

- The Weekly Standard makes a fact-free argument about political science. Here are some facts. on OAKS

- *Assignments:*

- Reading Quiz 1 due Jan 16th

JAN 23RD–25TH: WHAT TO RESEARCH AND WHERE TO START

- *Readings:*

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff Chap 3: “Beginning the Research Process: Identifying a Research Topic, Developing Research Questions, and Reviewing the Literature” on OAKS

- *Assignments:*

- Homework 1 due on Jan 25th

- **Meet in Addlestone Library room 122 on Jan 23rd**

JAN 30TH–FEB 1ST: THEORY BUILDING AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING

- *Readings:*

- KW Chap 2: “The Art of Theory Building”

- *Assignments:*

- Reading Quiz 2 due Jan 30th

FEB 6TH–8TH: CAUSALITY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

- *Readings:*

- KW Chap 3: “Evaluating Causal Relationships”
- King, Keohane, and Verba Chap 3: “Causality and Causal Inference” on OAKS

- *Assignments:*

- Reading Quiz 3 due Feb 6th

FEB 13TH–15TH: RESEARCH DESIGN

- *Readings:*

- KW Chap 4: “Research Design”

- *Assignments:*

- Reading Quiz 4 due Feb 15th

FEB 20TH–22ND: RESEARCH METHODS: CASE STUDIES AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

- *Readings:*
 - Evera Chap 2: “What are Case Studies? How Should they be Performed?” on [OAKS](#)
 - Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff Chap 9: “Document Analysis: Using the Written Word” on [OAKS](#)
- *Assignments:*
 - Homework 2 due on *Feb 20th*

FEB 27TH–MARCH 1ST: RESEARCH METHODS: QUANTITATIVE DATA AND MEASUREMENT

- *Readings:*
 - KW Chap 5: “Getting to Know Your Data: Evaluating Measurement and Variations”
- *Assignments:*
 - Reading Quiz 5 due Feb 27th
 - R Lab 1 *March 1st*

MARCH 6TH–MARCH 8TH: PROBABILITY AND STATISTICAL INFERENCE

- *Readings:*
 - KW Chap 6: “Probability and Statistical Inference”
 - [How to Lie with Statistics](#)
- *Assignments:*
 - Reading Quiz 6 due March 6th
 - *Research Design*: Introduction and Literature Review due *March 8th*

MARCH 13TH–MARCH 15TH: ASSOCIATION OF VARIABLES

- *Readings:* KW Chap 7: “Bivariate Hypothesis Testing”
- *Assignments:*
 - Reading Quiz 7 due March 13th
 - *Research Design*: Theory and Hypothesis due *March 15th*
 - R Lab 2 *March 15th*

MARCH 20TH–MARCH 22ND: SPRING BREAK

MARCH 27TH–MARCH 29TH: SIMPLE REGRESSION

- *Readings:*
 - KW Chap 8: “Bivariate Regression Models”
- *Assignments:*
 - Reading Quiz 8 due March 27th
 - R Lab 3 *March 29th*

APRIL 3RD–APRIL 5TH: MULTIPLE REGRESSION I

- *Readings:*
 - KW Chap 9: “Multiple Regression: The Basics”
- *Assignments:*
 - Reading Quiz 9 due April 3rd
 - Homework 3 due *April 5th*
 - *Research Design: Data and Methods* due *April 6th at 5:00pm EST*
- **No class on April 5th**

APRIL 10TH–APRIL 12TH: MULTIPLE REGRESSION II

- *Readings:*
 - KW Chap 10: “Multiple Regression Model Specification”
- *Assignments:*
 - Reading Quiz 10 due April 10th
 - R Lab 4 *April 12th*

APRIL 17TH–APRIL 19TH: CONCLUSION

- Discuss research designs
- Review for final
- *Assignments:*
 - Homework 4 due April 19th
 - *Research Design: Complete paper* due *April 23rd at 5:00pm EST*

THE FINAL EXAM IS ON MAY 1st AT 12:00pm. YOU MUST ARRIVE PROMPTLY AT 12:00pm TO BE ABLE TO TAKE THE EXAM

Important Information

Center for Student Learning

I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning's (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL [website](#) or call (843) 953-5635.

Students with Disabilities

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply at the [Center for Disability Services](#) located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me at least one week before any accommodation is needed.

Cheating or Plagiarism

A grade of zero will be given to anyone cheating on any exam, homework assignment or committing plagiarism in a paper. As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own ideas, the words, writings, music, graphs/charts, etc that were created by another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you have the permission of that person. It does not matter from where the material is borrowed—a book, article, material off the web, another student's paper—all constitute plagiarism unless the source of the work is fully identified and credited. Plagiarism is cheating and a violation of academic and personal integrity and will not be tolerated. It carries extremely serious consequences. To avoid plagiarism it is necessary when using a phrase, a distinctive idea, concept or sentence from another source to reference that source in your text, a footnote, or end-note. Please contact me if you need assistance in citing a source.

Religious Holiday Policy

It is the policy of the College to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays. Please see me immediately if you will need to miss class any time during this semester.