RESEARCH IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
Political Science 3600
Fall 2017
(Updated August 31, 2017)

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Class Time/Location: MWF 9-10:20am/Liberal Arts 403

Catalog Description
Research in Political Science helps students learn how to carry out research and write papers in political science, and to provide professional training and similar experiential learning opportunities. Topics include the scientific method, research design, data sources, statistics, and qualitative research. The course introduces appropriate formats for paper in the discipline and reinforces writing skills. Topics will also include Academic Service Learning, Career preparation, or Engagement with the professional community. Prerequisites: C or better in POLS 2310 and POLS 2311.

Course Content
This course will help you learn more about what a political scientist is and does. We will cover how to setup, execute, and write-up research, how to conduct yourself in a professional manner, and learn about your career potentials. You will learn what political scientists do, namely rigorous research using the scientific method. The first step is to understand this method of understanding the world around us and differentiate it from polemic or rhetorical discourse, which is often confused as political science by laypeople. You will also examine multiple aspects of professional behavior. This includes how to communicate effectively, manage time, and team building. The third part of the course allows you to explore your career path by examining how your strengths, desires, and skills can best be used.

After completing this course you can:
- Evaluate the validity and reliability of information;
- Analyze modes of thought, expressive works, arguments, explanations, or theories;
- Recognize possible inadequacies or biases in the evidence given to support arguments or conclusions;
- Write a research paper typically assigned in upper division courses.
- Practice time management and professionalism.
- Understand career possibilities post-graduation.

Course Text and Statistical Application Package

Baglione, Lisa A. 2016. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: a Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods, 3rd edition.* CQ Press: Thousand Oaks, CA
ISBN 978-1-4833-7616-5

Pollock III, Philip H. 2015. *The Essentials of Political Analysis, 5th edition*. CQ Press: Thousand Oaks, CA ISBN 978-1-5063-0583-7

Pollock III, Philip H. 2015. *A STATA Companion to Political Analysis, 3rd edition*. CQ Press: Thousand Oaks, CA ISBN 978-1-4522-4042-8

For those of you who are interested in making the most of their writing in political science, I suggest the following small books:

Michaels, Anne Edwards. 2001. *Writing to Learn in Political Science*. McGraw-Hill: Boston, MA.

Scott, Gregory M. and Stephen M. Garrison. 2011. *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual, 7th edition*. Pearson Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River, NJ.

You will learn to use STATA in the second half of the semester. Our classroom computers have this statistical software application installed and we will have hands-on instruction during this time. Many of the take-home assignments will require you to use STATA. It is up to you to locate computer labs on campus that have this software. A complete list of labs can be found at the following link: http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=68378. You can also access this software off campus by going to https://my.apps.utep.edu/vpn/index.html. You will need to logon using your UTEP username and password. We will go through a demonstration of this before starting the statistical portion of the course.

Course Obligations

There is a mix of obligations you must meet to fulfill the requirements of the course. This includes 1) Take-home assignments; 2) Midterm and final exams; 3) Career profile report and presentation; and 5) Term paper.

All assignments that are completed outside the classroom are to be typed using the format described in:

Turabian, Kate L. 2007. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (7th edition). The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL.

Late assignments will be accepted only under extraordinary circumstances.

Class Participation:

Class attendance and participation can only enhance your learning and course success. To maximize the learning experience, the assigned readings must be done **before** the beginning of class. Questions will be frequently asked during class by both students and the professor. It is up to all participants to be ready to answer these questions.

Take-home Assignments

There are ten take-home assignments. Each assignment is unique and assesses your working knowledge of the course material. It would be wise for you to view many of these assignments as the important steps towards writing a research paper that is acceptable in political science. By viewing each assignment as such, you can optimize their time in completing their final paper. Assignments will be posted on Blackboard.

Career Profile Report

You will conduct an investigation regarding a specific career you can take after graduation. If you are a political science major, your career choice will need to use the skills and knowledge of this major. If you are minoring in political science, international politics, or public administration, your career choice will need to focus on your declared major and how your minor will help you get your first job and advance. The report will be short (five pages) and due November 15. More details will be given early in the semester.

Term Paper& Presentation

The term paper will be the culmination of your research during the course. Evaluation will be based on your competency in the following areas: central hypotheses, literature review, data description and research design, data analysis, discussion and conclusions. These parts comprise the polished efforts of some of your take-home assignments. The topic of the paper will be completely up to you (The Pollock workbook chapter 11 lists some doable ideas). I will provide the necessary guidance throughout the analytical process. Term paper presentations, using technological aides, will be given November 20 or 22. The term paper is due by December 6.

Exams

There are two exams for the course, both of which are closed book and notes. The midterm exam will assess your knowledge of the topics we will review in the beginning of the course; the final exam is comprehensive; both will require you to answer a series of questions. The midterm will be given on October 4 and the final will be given on December 13.

Grade Weights

Each assignment and examination will be given a score out of a total 100 points and will be given the following weights in determining your final grade for the course:

Course Requirement	Due	Weight
10 Take-home assignments	Various	50% (5% each)
Midterm Exam	October 4	10%
Career Profile Report	November 15	5%
Term Paper Presentation	November 20 or 22	5%
Term Paper	December 6	15%
Final Exam	December 13	15%

All grades (including the final) are based on the following distribution of points:

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

Additional Course Policies

The following policies are in place in order to better manage the learning environment:

1) You may tape class lectures for personal use. However the sale or exchange of such tapes is not permitted unless prior permission is given.
2) Cell phones must be off during class hours. They are allowed under emergency circumstances, but please notify the professor ahead of time.
3) Chatting, e-mailing, internet browsing, or any activity not related to official class activity is prohibited.
4) Some communication from me will be posted on Blackboard. Please monitor our course webpage on Blackboard regularly.
5) Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. For further information, please refer to

6) Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with limitations due to disabilities, including learning disabilities. Please see me personally within the first two weeks to discuss any special needs you might have. If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will need to contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) (formerly known as the Disabled Student Services Office) in 302 Union East within the first two weeks of classes. CASS can also be reached in the following ways: Web: http://sa.utep.edu/cass/   E-Mail: cass@utep.edu
Phone: (915) 747-5148 voice or TTY

Readings and Presentations

All presentation slides and additional readings are posted on Blackboard (BB)

August 28
Orientation and Introduction
(Baglione chpt. 1, Pollack[1] introduction, Hoover & Donovan chpt. 1)

What is science? What is meant by thinking scientifically? What is the difference between opinion and reasoned judgment? What is the difference between political science and politics? That is the difference between how we will discuss politics during this course and the way you have discussed politics with family and friends? What is the role of political science, in other words, what is the point to taking this course?

August 30 – No Class

September 1
Planning, Professionalism, and Persistence (Tough, Paul. *How Children Succeed*. Chapter 4 & 5; TED Radio Hour Episode: Success)

What does it take to be successful? What does success even mean? In this session we will discuss the concept of persistence. Persistence is not, in itself, enough. Professionalism and planning can transform an unmanaged "race to the finish line" into a journey worth taking. How do you do this? Through interactive exercises, we will see how to develop our own individual styles.

September 4 Labor Day – No Classes

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[1] All references to Pollack in the "Readings and Presentations" section refer to *The Essentials of Political Analysis* textbook. The other book authored by Pollack (*A Stata Companion to Political Analysis*), will be referred to as "the workbook."

September 6 and 8
The Scientific Method (Hoover & Donovan chapter 2)

Can politics be studied scientifically? How is this different from practicing politics? What is meant by the "truth" in scientific inquiry? What is the difference between objective and subjective reasoning? What value do empirical questions have? What about explanatory questions? Is deductive reasoning superior to inducting reasoning? What is a variable? What is a constant? What is hypothesis? How are hypotheses different from theories? What about models and paradigms? What is meant by the scientific method? What are the steps in the research process (aka hypothesis testing)? What *laws* exist in political science?

September 11 & 13
Asking Questions and Formulating a Hypothesis (Baglione chpt. 2; Pollack chpts. 1 & 2)

What is and is not a reasonable research question? Why is testability (falsifiability) important? How does one go about evaluating potential research topics? What is a useful hypothesis? How do you develop such a hypothesis? What is meant by a *unit of analysis*?

September 15
Assignment #1: Writing your own hypotheses

Bring ideas on hypotheses relevant for political science inquiry following the instructions found in assignment #1

September 18 & 20
Literature Reviews (Baglione chpt. 3 & 4)

Why is conducting a literature review important? What are the various sources one needs to examine for this step in the research process? Are internet options the only sources? What is the problem of overly relying on the internet? What other search options exist? What is an annotated bibliography? What are the different methods in evaluating prior work? How would one link various works to form a literature review?

September 22
Assignment #2: Writing your own literature review

Bring in summaries of at least seven academic sources that you will cite in your literature review. The summaries should each be one paragraph in length and include the following items:
  1) Main research question;
  2) Major hypotheses tested; and
  3) Conclusions of the research.

September 25 & 27
Research Design: Hypothesis Refinement and Testing Strategy
(Baglione chpts. 5 & 7; Pollack chpt. 4)

What value do causal linkages have? What about associational linkages? Why is operationalization important? How does one develop a research design? What is meant by a null hypothesis? What are intervening variables? What are control variables? What are the different levels of measurement? Is error problematic in measurement? When is it most problematic? How does one maximize validity and reliability in measurement?

September 29
Assignment #3: Writing your research design

How do you know if your papers' hypotheses are correct? Your research design will set up the tests to see if your ideas are valid using objective procedures. For this session, bring in the hypotheses you will test in your analysis.

October 2
Qualitative and Quantitative Research (Readings posted on BB)

What is the difference between qualitative and quantitative research? What are the benefits and costs of either type of research? Can qualitative research use the same hypothesis testing techniques? Does qualitative research also use the scientific method?

Midterm Exam October 4

October 6
Career or a Job? (TED Radio Hour Episode: The Meaning of Work)

Why am I getting this degree? In this session, we will examine your strengths, weaknesses, goals, passions, and that "dream job." The aim is to start thinking about career planning which will culminate in your Career Profile Report.

October 9
Introduction to managing data using STATA (Workbook "Getting Started" and chpt. 1)

For this secession, bring the data CD found in the workbook. This lecture will introduce you to STATA. This includes going through the program functions and details on data inputting and labeling.

October 11
Sampling: How a little can tell you a great deal. (Carlson & Hyde chpt. 9)

What are a population and a sample? How can a sample tell us about the population? What are the advantages and disadvantages between probability and nonprobability sampling? What are the differences among all the different types of sampling techniques? What is meant by sampling error? How is this error "managed."

October 13
Assignment #4: Sampling exercises

Go through assignment #4 before we meet. We will resolve any questions/problems associated with the assignment during this session.

October 16
Secondary Data Sources (Carlson & Hyde chpts. 10 & 11)

What are secondary data? Where can one find these data? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using secondary data? What is ICPSR? Why is it important to understand what the exact unit of analysis is when using secondary data? What is meant by *coding data*? What are some guidelines to use when examining secondary survey data? For example, why is question order and question formatting important?

October 18
Descriptive Statistics (Pollock chpts. 3 & 5)

What is a descriptive statistic and how does it differ from an inferential statistic? What is a frequency distribution? What are the measures of central tendency and dispersion among the various levels of variables? Why would a researcher wish to recode variables in a data set? What is the procedure to do this? How do you create a new variable from old ones in STATA?

October 20
Assignment #5: Finding data & Assignment #6: Descriptive and Transformations

This will be an in-class opportunity to work on your two assignments. One good strategy would be to give it a try on your own and then bring questions/problems to the session.

October 23 & 25
Inferential Statistics (I): Comparisons of Two Variables (Pollack chpt. 6)

How does a table with two variables help us understand the strength or direction of their relationship? What is a measure of association? How do you run a crosstabs procedure using STATA? What are some of the ways to graph these relationships? What are some of the pitfalls of graphing variables?

October 27
Assignment #7: Making Comparisons

This will be an in-class opportunity to work on your assignment. One good strategy would be to give it a try on your own and then bring questions/problems to the session.

October 30 & November 1
Inferential Statistics (II): Statistical Significance (Pollock chpt. 7)

What is meant by statistical significance and how does a t-test, F-test, or chi square help us determine significance? What is the difference between two-tailed and one-tailed tests? How are these significance tests performed in STATA? What is the difference between type I and type II errors? Why is it important to know the difference?

November 3
Assignment #8: Making Inferences

This will be an in-class opportunity to work on your assignment. One good strategy would be to give it a try on your own and then bring questions/problems to the session.

November 6 & 8
Inferential Statistics (III): Bivariate Linear Regression (Pollock chpt. 8)

What is a correlation? What is a regression line? What are the parts of the bivariate version of such a line? How can regression analysis help us test hypotheses? Is regression analysis helpful with any type of dependent variable? How do we know if the regression line is significant? How about the significance of the regression coefficient?

November 10
Assignment #9: Correlations and Linear Regression (I)

This will be an in-class opportunity to work on your assignment. One good strategy would be to give it a try on your own and then bring questions/problems to the session.

November 13 & 15
Inferential Statistics (IV): Multivariate Analysis (Pollock chpt. 8 (re-read))

What is meant by a multivariate analysis? What type of multivariate analysis can be conducted using nominal and ordinal variables? What about interval and ratio variables? What effect can a control variable have on the dependent variable? What about the effect of a dummy variable?

Career Profile Report due November 15 – Signup for presentations.

November 17
Assignment #10: Correlations and Linear Regression (II)

This will be an in-class opportunity to work on your assignment. One good strategy would be to give it a try on your own and then bring questions/problems to the session.

November 20 & 22
Term Paper Presentations

You will give a 10 minute presentation on term paper.

November 24 Thanksgiving – No Class

November 27 & 29
The Finishing Touches (Baglione chpts. 8 & 9)

What is the best way to report your findings? What elements belong to in an abstract? Why is a carefully written abstract important? What are the differences between a discussion, a summary, and conclusions? When is an appendix needed? How should tables be formatted? What about results of a regression analysis? How can you make graphs presentable? What is plagiarism? How do you avoid it? The course is over, but is your research question fully answered?

December 1
Meetings with Dr. Genna to address issues regarding term papers

December 4 & 6
Methodological Debate in Political Science (no readings)

What is the major debate today in political science research? What did the members of the perestroika movement want? What did they get? Are they now happy? What does this mean for the future of discipline?

Term Paper due December 6

Final Exam Wednesday, December 13, 10:00 am to 2:45 pm