

**Research in Political Science**  
Political Science (POLS) 3500 – 001  
CRN: 24076  
The University of Texas at El Paso  
Spring 2017  
MW: 1:30pm - 3:20pm  
Liberal Arts Building 403

Instructor: Dr. Gregory S. Schober  
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Office Hours: MW, 11:45am – 1:15pm (and by appointment)  
Class Website: Blackboard through your MY UTEP PORTAL

### **Course Description**

This course considers research in political science, with a focus on the evaluation and creation of research. We will study the different stages of the research process, with an emphasis on the selection of topics and research questions, the development of arguments, the evaluation and implementation of research designs, data analysis, and the reporting of the findings.

Professional development is another key component of the course. Students will have the opportunity to exercise key professional skills and abilities, including writing skills, verbal communication skills, networking skills, analytical skills, skills in quantitative and qualitative analysis, and the ability to create an effective resume.

Throughout the course, we will focus on developing answers to the following four questions: (1) How do I pick a topic and research question in political science? (2) How do I collect and analyze data? (3) How do I describe my project and communicate the results to others? (4) How do I prepare for my future professional career?

### **Learning Objectives**

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Identify and explain the different stages of the research process.
- Compare different research methods and evaluate the quality of a research design.
- Perform data analysis in Stata and conduct interviews.
- Write a research paper on a topic in political science.
- Recognize the importance of acquiring and exercising professional skills.

**Required Reading** (available at the UTEP Bookstore or elsewhere):

- Political Science Research in Practice
  - Editors: Akan Malici and Elizabeth S. Smith
  - 1<sup>st</sup> edition
  - 2013
  - ISBN-13: 978-0415887731

**Course Requirements**

- **Research Proposal:** Students will be required to write a research proposal that describes their chosen topic, research question, argument, and research design for the research paper. The deadline for the research proposal is indicated in the Schedule of Classes. **Late proposals will be penalized one full letter grade for each class day that they are late** (15% of grade).
- **Research Paper:** Students will be required to write a research paper on a topic in political science. The deadline for the research paper is indicated in the Schedule of Classes. **Late papers will be penalized one full letter grade for each class day that they are late. A late paper that is not turned by the start of the final class day will receive zero credit** (30% of grade).
- **Presentation:** Students will be required to give an individual, in-class presentation on their research project and main findings. The potential dates for the class presentations are indicated in the Schedule of Classes. Students will be able to provide input to the instructor on which date they prefer for their presentation, but unfortunately it is not possible to guarantee that all students will receive their preferred date(s) (10% of grade).
- **Short Assignments:** The short assignments will consist of calculations, data analysis exercises, and/or data collection efforts. Topics for the short assignments will include basic calculations, the description of variables, the creation of graphs, summary statistics, correlation analysis, significance tests, and the collection of data through interviews. **Each late assignment will only receive, at most, half credit if it is turned in by the start of the next class day. A late paper that is not turned in by the start of the next class day will receive zero credit** (25% of grade).
- **Class Attendance and Participation:** Students will be able to earn participation points each class session by attending and participating in class discussions. Points will be awarded based on the quantity and quality of participation (20% of grade).

**University Policies**

This instructor abides by university policies, such as excused absences and attendance, as stated in the UTEP undergraduate catalog: <http://catalog.utep.edu/undergrad/academic-regulations/curriculum-and-classroom-policies/>. It is the student's responsibility to understand their rights and university policies. In addition to university policies, I add the following policies below.

## Attendance Policy

UTEP expects that students will not miss classes without valid excuses. Students will be asked to sign an attendance sheet for each class meeting. It is expected that you do not miss classes, which will result in a penalty to your grade. More specifically, after two unexcused absences, I will begin to deduct points from your attendance and participation grade for each subsequent unexcused absence. Note that the class participation portion of each student's grade is left solely to the discretion of the instructor.

Here are specific situations of absence and whether or not excuses will be accepted as valid or not:

- Valid university excuses include religious holy days, officially recognized university activities (with Dean of Students letter), and military leave. Students must follow the required documentation procedure for each valid university excuse.
- The instructor reserves the right to accept, or not, excuses related to medical issues. Naturally, it is not usually feasible to document in advance any time lost due to illness. The exception is planned surgeries and appointments (not normal check-ups). Any class time missed will not be excused without medical or other valid documentation. Documentation from Mexico is permissible. Students with severe medical problems that result in missing a majority of the semester may want to consider a complete withdrawal from the university for medical purposes.
- Absences due to conflicts with work, child care, etc. that make it impossible for you to regularly attend this class are not permitted. If you know you will have scheduling conflicts with this class, then you should make other arrangements or postpone this class until a future semester.
- According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, "When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor can drop the student from the class with a grade of W before the course drop deadline and with a grade of F after the course drop deadline."
- Missed presentations due to family hardship or family medical problems may not be accepted by the instructor as valid excuses. For example, helping family members move, picking up at the airport, driving family members to medical appointments when you know they conflict with class, and other such activities, will not be permitted as valid excuses. Emergencies such as deaths in the family must be documented, unfortunately.
- Missing any course assessments and work due to vacations and pre-booked travel arrangements are not valid excuses.

## Research Proposal

A research proposal is a detailed plan for a research project. In the research proposal, you will have the opportunity to describe your proposed topic in political science, research question, relevant literature, argument, research design, and references for the research paper. The instructor will provide feedback on the research proposal, so that students will be able to incorporate the suggestions into the research paper. Note that students are not allowed to begin collecting or analyzing data until the research proposal has been approved by the instructor.

Further details and instructions will be provided in class (about 1000 words, worth 15% of overall grade). **Printed copy is due on 3/6 (at the start of class).**

### **Research Paper**

In the research paper, you will have the opportunity to implement the approved research project that you proposed in the research proposal. Note that students are not allowed to begin collecting or analyzing data until the research proposal has been approved by the instructor. The research paper will include an introduction, research question, main argument, literature review, description of the research design, the main findings, discussion, conclusion, and references. Further details and instructions will be provided in class (minimum 15 pages to maximum 20 pages, worth 30% of overall grade). **Printed copy is due on 4/26 (at the start of class).**

### **Other Course Policies and Expectations**

- Debate and discussion are important in the critical evaluation of politics. It is expected that students will treat the instructor and other students with respect, including refraining from disparaging remarks, personal insults, derogatory comments, and other unprofessional behavior, in person or electronically. Any problem related to rude conduct, or any threats to violence, etc., likely will result in the student being dropped from the course by the instructor.
- Outside work and other non-class related activities are not permitted in our classroom.
- If you engage in behaviors that distract others or create a disturbance, you will be asked to leave the class. If you refuse to leave class, university police will be contacted.
- Cell phone/smart phone/PDA usage is not permitted at times when it might pose a class disturbance. Laptops, tablets, or other electronic devices used for note-taking and/or class exercises are permissible, but students using such must not engage in any activities that disturb other students.

### **Email Protocol**

When emailing me, please put the course and section number in the subject line. In the body of your email, clearly state your question. At the end of your email, be sure to put your first and last name. Please do not email me about information you can obtain from the syllabus. I generally do not answer substantive material from lectures or readings via email, as it is not an effective means of communicating. If there is class material you are confused about, please come see me during my office hours.

### **Academic Integrity and Dishonesty**

As stated in the UTEP undergraduate catalog, “Any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Academic dishonesty includes, and is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the *Handbook of Operating Procedures*

(HOP), and available in the Office of Student Life and on the homepage of the Office of Student Life at [www.utep.edu/dos](http://www.utep.edu/dos), can result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to a failing grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.”

### Students with Different Abilities

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at [www.sa.utep.edu/cass](http://www.sa.utep.edu/cass). CASS’ staff are the only individuals who can validate, and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities. The student is responsible for presenting to the instructor any CASS accommodation letters and instructions before arrangements need to be made for exams or other needs.

### Schedule of Classes

Wed	1/18	Introduction to the Course
Mon	1/23	Why Do We Need a Science of Politics? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malici and Smith, Ch. 1</li> <li>• Methods Lab (Math Review, Introduction to Stata)</li> </ul>
Wed	1/25	How Do We Get a Science of Politics? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malici and Smith, Ch. 2</li> <li>• Writing Workshop</li> </ul>
Mon	1/30	Normative and Ethical Considerations of Political Science Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Short Assignment #1 Due (at the start of class)</b></li> <li>• Malici and Smith, Ch. 12</li> <li>• Methods Lab (Variables, Summary Stats, Distributions)</li> </ul>
Wed	2/1	Statistical Research: To Naturalize or Not to Naturalize? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malici and Smith, Ch. 6</li> <li>• Writing Workshop</li> </ul>
Mon	2/6	Statistical Research: To Naturalize or Not to Naturalize? (continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Short Assignment #2 Due (at the start of class)</b></li> <li>• Methods Lab (Sampling, Probability, Surveys)</li> </ul>
Wed	2/8	Survey Research: Religion and Electoral Behavior in the United States <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malici and Smith, Ch. 7</li> <li>• Writing Workshop</li> </ul>

Mon	2/13	Survey Research: Religion and Electoral Behavior in the United States (continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Short Assignment #3 Due (at the start of class)</b></li> <li>• Methods Lab (Correlations, Significance Tests, Exploring available datasets)</li> </ul>
Wed	2/15	Secondary Data Analysis: A Program Evaluation of School Vouchers in Milwaukee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malici and Smith, Ch. 8</li> <li>• Writing Workshop</li> </ul>
Mon	2/20	Secondary Data Analysis: A Program Evaluation of School Vouchers in Milwaukee (continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Short Assignment #4 Due (at the start of class)</b></li> <li>• Methods Lab (Interview Data)</li> </ul>
Wed	2/22	Interviews: What are the Pathways to Human Rights Activism? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malici and Smith, Ch. 5</li> <li>• Writing Workshop</li> </ul>
Mon	2/27	Interviews: What are the Pathways to Human Rights Activism? (continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Short Assignment #5 Due (at the start of class)</b></li> <li>• Methods Lab (Collecting original data vs. finding existing data)</li> </ul>
Wed	3/1	Case Study and the Comparative Method: Why Do States Join Institutions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malici and Smith, Ch. 3</li> <li>• Writing Workshop</li> </ul>
Mon	3/6	Case Study and the Comparative Method: Why Do States Join Institutions? (continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Research Proposal Due (at the start of class)</b></li> <li>• Professional Development Workshop</li> </ul>
Wed	3/8	Experimental Research: If Bill Clinton Were a Woman? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malici and Smith, Ch. 10</li> <li>• Writing Workshop</li> </ul>
Mon	3/13	<b>Spring Break (no class)</b>
Wed	3/15	<b>Spring Break (no class)</b>

Mon	3/20	Experimental Research (continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No assigned reading</li> <li>• Professional Development Workshop</li> </ul>
Wed	3/22	Field Research: Zhuang Ethnic Identity and the Chinese State <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malici and Smith, Ch. 4</li> <li>• Writing Workshop</li> </ul>
Mon	3/27	Field Research: Zhuang Ethnic Identity and the Chinese State (continued) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Development Workshop</li> </ul>
Wed	3/29	Formal Modeling: Cultural Icons of U.S. Foreign Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malici and Smith, Ch. 11</li> <li>• Writing Workshop</li> </ul>
Mon	4/3	Formal Modeling: Cultural Icons of U.S. Foreign Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Development Workshop</li> </ul>
Wed	4/5	Research and Writing Session
Mon	4/10	Research and Writing Session
Wed	4/12	Content Analysis: Local Media and Congress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malici and Smith, Ch. 9</li> <li>• Writing Workshop</li> </ul>
Mon	4/17	Content Analysis: Local Media and Congress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Development Workshop</li> </ul>
Wed	4/19	Student Presentations
Mon	4/24	Student Presentations
Wed	4/26	Student Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Research Paper Due (at the start of class)</b></li> </ul>
Mon	5/1	Student Presentations
Wed	5/3	Student Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last Lecture</li> </ul>
End of Course (No Final Exam)		