
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
Political Science 3600: Research in Political Science
Fall 2017

Instructor: Dr. José D. Villalobos

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Office Hours: MW 1:30-2:30pm (or by appointment)

Course Registration Number: 18093

Classroom: LART 403

Date/Time: MW 3-4:50pm

COURSE OVERVIEW

The primary goal of this course is to introduce you to the scientific study of politics. Throughout this course, we will cover various topics including developing research questions, theories and hypotheses, evaluating causal relationships, designing research, operationalization and measurement of variables, analyzing data, and making statistical inferences. Therein, you will learn how to apply the scientific method for studying political phenomena by conducting your own empirical research.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

I believe, with adequate effort and willingness, all of you are capable of doing well in this course. By the end of this course, you can expect to accomplish the following learning outcomes:

- To define, understand, and apply basic concepts, principles, and practices regarding the scientific study of politics.
- To develop research questions and hypotheses, identify and apply relevant theoretical frameworks, and formulate strategies for systematic research.
- To recognize and apply basic analytical methods and approaches that political scientists use for the systematic study of political phenomena.
- To draw valid inferences from statistical analyses by using the scientific method.
- To understand and apply the basics of academic writing commonly employed in the political science literature.

OBJECTIVES FOR PROFESSIONALISM

It is essential that the utmost respect and professionalism be adhered in all exchanges between class members. This is a political science course and we will be discussing at times sensitive and controversial topics. Avoid any unnecessary arguments with other class members, such as political polemical arguments (e.g., negative partisan talking points targeting those of opposing ideological perspectives or particular political figures) or, even worse, personal attacks on others for having different views.

No inappropriate behavior will be tolerated. Unprofessional conduct will be dealt with swiftly through the university and it is at the professor's full discretion to have a student dropped from the course for any inappropriate behavior.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXT



Paul M. Kellstedt and Guy D. Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (ISBN: 9781107621664)

This book is available at online bookstores and suppliers in hardback, paperback, and online formats for purchase or rent.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Apart from the required book, I will also assign several additional book chapters and journal articles as listed in the course schedule section of this syllabus. All these items are available on Blackboard in the “Additional Readings” folder.

GRADING POLICY

Your final grade in this class will be based on the following requirements:

Course Requirement	Due	Weight
Midterm Exam	10/16	15 percent
Final Exam	TBD	20 percent
Research Project	12/6	20 percent
Research Presentation	11/29 or 12/4	10 percent
Homework Assignments	Various dates	15 percent (in total)
Quizzes	Various dates	10 percent (in total)
Class Participation	All meetings	10 percent

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

Points	Letter
≥ 89.50	A
79.50-89.49	B
69.50-79.49	C
59.50-69.49	D
≤ 59.49	F

I do not change grades or give individual-specific extra-credit opportunities to be fair to everyone. If you are concerned about your grade, please come and see me during my office hours. This is particularly important if your grade on the first exam is not what you expected. I will not change the grade, but I can give you feedback and suggestions on how to improve your performance in the class.

EXAMS

There are two exams for the course: a midterm exam and a comprehensive final. All exams are closed book/notes and in-class. Questions are based on the readings, lectures, and class discussions.

Make-up exams

Make-up exams will be given *only* in the case of a *documented* university-excused absence (see the “excused absences” section below). Note that make-up exams may be in a different format than the original exam and may require more intensive preparation. If you miss a test and your absence is not considered excused, you will receive a zero on the test. This policy will be strictly enforced.

GROUP RESEARCH PROJECT

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the scientific study of politics. An important part of this goal is to help you develop the analytical skills necessary to grasp the dynamics of systematically studying political phenomena by writing an empirical research paper on a topic of your choosing as a group. Throughout the semester, we will discuss the expectations for the research paper in greater detail. Below are the major guidelines:

- The paper should be double-spaced; 9-10 pages long (not counting the cover page, abstract, tables, figures, and references); typed in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins; and pages should be numbered. Papers that do not follow the formatting guidelines will lose 10 points.
- There should be no more than two extensive quotations (in excess of three lines of text).
- Make sure you are aware of the scholarly pitfalls of plagiarism, which are discussed in detail in the document on academic misconduct (available on Blackboard). Specifically, whenever you use an idea or information from another source, you must give credit to the author by properly citing her/him *within the text* as well as by including a list of all references at the end of the text. Not doing so constitutes an act of plagiarism, which will result in a score of zero for the paper.
- The formatting of your paper should follow the *American Political Science Association* (APSA) style. Specifically, you are required to carefully read the document on citation and reference requirements (also available on Blackboard) and employ these formatting rules for your research paper. Papers submitted with an inaccurate citation/reference format will lose up to 25 points (depending on severity).
- Tables and figures should be included on separate pages at the end of the text. As such, please do not embed them in the text as this may cause spacing problems. Instead, right below (or right above) the paragraph where you mention a figure or a table, insert a centered designation that reads as such:

[Table (or Figure) 1 here]
- You must provide at least 10 scholarly sources (academic books and articles) or you will lose 5 points for each missing scholarly source. You can use up to four readings assigned for the course, but they should not be the sole source of information. If you are unclear about what constitutes a scholarly book or article, please ask! (For example, Wikipedia is

NOT a scholarly source, nor are magazines and newspapers such as the *Economist* or the *New York Times*).

- In addition to the substantive quality of your assignments, grades will also be based on the clarity of one's writing (e.g., appropriate tone of writing, organization, quality of spelling and grammar, etc.). Please note that the University Writing Center (UWC) provides writing assistance to all UTEP students. The UWC is located on the second (ground) floor of the library in Room 227 Library; phone: (915) 747-5112.
- You are welcome to come and discuss your paper progress during my office hours (or by appointment).

Additional instructions will be provided in class.

GROUP RESEARCH PRESENTATION

You will present your research project (approximately 15 minutes presentation and 5 minutes of Q&A) in one of the class sessions at the end of the semester. You should prepare and submit a PowerPoint document by the end of the designated date of your presentation. The research presentation constitutes 10 percent of your final grade point average. Additional instructions will be provided in class.

GROUP HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

There are three homework assignments that constitute, in total, 15 percent of your final grade. These assignments are designed to serve as necessary steps that will contribute to the process of writing your research paper. The assignments should be double-spaced; 2-4 pages long (not counting the front sheet, references, tables, and/or figures); typed in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins; and pages should be numbered. Assignments that do not follow the formatting guidelines will lose 10 points.

Assignments should be submitted electronically on the designated due dates. Assignments submitted late will lose 10 points (1 letter grade) per day (including weekends).

Upon completion of each assignment, each group member will also conduct peer evaluations of the performance and contributions of other group members regarding the group project. These evaluations will be due by 11:59pm on the due date of each assignment. Those who fail to submit their peer evaluations on time will lose 10 points.

Assignment 1:

Pick a political topic that you are interested in doing research on. After you identify the topic: (1) formulate a research question based on two factors that you expect to be causally related, (2) provide a credible causal explanation for your arguments and expectations, and (3) present your hypothesis.

Assignment 2:

Submit your review of the literature regarding your research topic. You must provide at least 7 scholarly sources (academic books and articles) or you will lose 5 points for each missing scholarly source. On a separate page, you should also include the references that you cite in your

literature review. Follow the *American Political Science Association* (APSA) style. Specifically, you are required to carefully read the document on citation and reference requirements (available on Blackboard) and employ these formatting rules for this assignment.

Assignment 3:

Discuss your data and research design. Specifically: (1) discuss your operationalization of the dependent and independent variables (including the control variables) that you will employ in your research design, (2) identify and discuss the data that you will make use of to test your hypothesis, and (3) provide a table of summary statistics for all of the variables you will use in your analytical models.

QUIZZES

As part of the coursework, you will have periodic in-class and/or take-home quizzes over the assigned readings for a given class meeting and/or on the material presented in the lectures. The quizzes will constitute, in total, 10 percent of your final grade. Please keep in mind that the quizzes will not be announced ahead of time. Students who are not in class on the day of a quiz will receive a zero for that quiz without a university-excused absence. Only those with a valid university-excused absence (that is appropriately documented for the relevant class day) will be given a make-up quiz.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

I expect everyone to attend class on the scheduled dates and times. Keep in mind that class participation is more than just attending the class meetings—you should come to class alert, be willing to ask and answer questions, and contribute intellectually to class discussions. To do so, you should complete the assigned readings before each class meeting. Exams will cover material from the readings and the lectures, so doing just one or the other will leave you at a disadvantage.

You will be asked to sign an attendance sheet at each class meeting and it is your responsibility to make sure to sign-in. In-class attendance and participation will count for 10% of the final grade such that one must attend and participate in class to earn an A. Only those students who attend class regularly and actively participate in class discussions will receive full credit (100) for their class participation grade. *After one unexcused absence, I will begin to deduct 10 points from your participation grade for each absence thereafter. If you arrive late and request to sign-in at the end of the class meeting, I will deduct 5 points from your participation grade for each incident of tardiness after two late arrivals. The same policy will apply to incidents of leaving class early (Note that if you leave the class early, the time of your departure will be recorded).* The class participation portion of the grade is non-negotiable and left solely to the discretion of the instructor.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

I will excuse absences and late work *only* when a student participates in an official university-recognized activity, observes a recognized religious holiday of her/his faith that happens to coincide with a class session, is called to and participates in active military service for a reasonably brief period, or confronts a medical emergency. To be excused, you must notify me

in writing prior to the date of absence. That said, in cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. a medical emergency), you must provide notification as soon as possible following your absence. Such notification must include an explanation of why notice could not be sent in advance. You must also provide satisfactory documentation verifying the reason for the absence. In case of an illness, a doctor's note is the proper documentation required. *For my records, you should e-mail me a scanned copy of the documentation that verifies the reason for your absence (if you don't have access to a scanner, you can take a photo of the documentation). Documentation that is not provided in a timely manner will not be accepted.* Please do not ask me to excuse absences for minor illnesses or scheduling conflicts. I am aware that students have other interests and obligations, but you should nevertheless make this class a priority. If you are likely to have recurring conflicts, please take another course that better fits your schedule.

See academic regulations in UTEP Undergraduate Catalogue for a list of excused absences: <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=54418>. 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 may 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."

CLASSROOM AND E-MAIL PROTOCOL

Chatting, e-mailing, internet browsing, or any activity not related to official class activity is prohibited. The best way to contact me is via UTEP e-mail. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24 hours of receipt during weekdays. I will respond to weekend messages by Monday at the latest. When e-mailing me, please put the course number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND MISCONDUCT

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to cheating, collusion, and plagiarism. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student and possessing unauthorized materials during a test. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. *One example of collusion is signing in for another person (or having someone sign for you) on the class attendance sheet.*

Plagiarism is commonly defined as passing off the ideas, works, writing, etc., of another person as your own. Accordingly, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own work, even if you have the permission of that person. If you are unsure whether a citation is required, err on the side of caution and provide one. A document detailing different forms of plagiarism is provided on Blackboard. Here is an informative webcast on plagiarism: <http://www.plagiarism.org/resources/webcasts>.

Be aware, just as the internet has made it easier to find material, it has also made it easier to trace the source of any written work. All written work submitted for this course will be checked by

the instructor for originality via *Turnitin*—an online originality checking service made available by UTEP (http://www.turnitin.com/en_us/features/originalitycheck).

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. Refer to <http://studentaffairs.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=4386> for further information.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT FOR COURSE MATERIALS

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further retained or disseminated.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you require specific accommodations and support services, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Please keep in mind that accommodations need to be requested at least two weeks (or a month if advance planning, such as the acquisition of books-on-tape, is required) prior to the beginning of the semester. Here is the contact information for CASS: web: <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/>; phone: (915) 747-5148; fax: (915) 747-8712; e-mail: cass@utep.edu; location: UTEP Union Building East Room 106.

UTEP TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The University of Texas at El Paso offers complete technical information and Help Desk support at: <http://issweb.utep.edu/techsupport/>.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS*

SECTION I: PREPARING FOR AND DESIGNING RESEARCH	
8/28	Introduction and Course Overview Scientific Study of Politics K & W Chapter 1
8/30	Scientific Study of Politics (Continued) *Continue readings for Ch. 1-2 and complete Homework Assignment
9/4	Labor Day Holiday (NO CLASS)
9/6	Developing Research Questions, Theories and Hypotheses K & W Chapter 2
9/11	Evaluating Causal Relationships K & W Chapter 3
9/13	Conducting Literature Reviews Johnson, Janet and H.T. Reynolds, with Jason D. Mycoff. 2008. <i>Political Science Research Methods</i> . Washington DC: CQ Press. Chapter 6. Document on Citation and Reference Requirements
9/18	An Overview of the Academic Writing Process Roselle, Laura and Sharon Spray. 2008. <i>Research and Writing in International Relations</i> . New York: Longman. Chapters 4, 11, and 12. Research Ethics Babbie, Earl. 2004. <i>The Basics of Social Research</i> . Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing. Chapter 3. Document on Academic Misconduct and Dishonesty
9/20	Research Design: Qualitative Studies Levy, Jack S. 2002. Qualitative Methods in International Relations. In F. P. Harvey & M. Brecher (Eds.), <i>Evaluating Methodology in International Studies</i> . Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp. 432-454.
9/25	Research Design: Quantitative Studies K & W Chapter 4, pp. 77-85
9/27	Research Design: Experimental Studies K & W Chapter 4, pp. 67-75 Morton, Rebecca B., and Kenneth C. Williams. 2010. <i>Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality: From Nature to the Lab</i> . New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.
10/2	Research Design: Formal Modeling

	Morton, Rebecca B. 1999. <i>Methods and Models: A Guide to the Empirical Analysis of Formal Models in Political Science</i> . New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2.
10/4	IOSSBR Conference (NO CLASS)
10/9	Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement K & W Chapter 5 <i>Assignment 1 due by 11:59pm MT</i>
10/11	Sampling Johnson, Janet and H.T. Reynolds, with Jason D. Mycoff. 2008. <i>Political Science Research Methods</i> . Washington DC: CQ Press. Chapter 7. Review for Midterm Exam
10/16	Midterm Exam
SECTION II: ANALYZING DATA	
10/18	Data Analysis Using STATA Stata Manual
10/23	Obtaining and Coding Data Brians, Craig L., Lars Willnat, Jarol B. Manheim, and Richard C. Rich. 2008. <i>Empirical Political Analysis: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods</i> . 7th ed. New York: Pearson/Longman. Chapter 14.
10/25	Preparing Your Datasets for Analysis
10/30	Preparing Your Datasets for Analysis
11/1	Descriptive Statistics and Graphs K & W Chapter 6 <i>Assignment 2 due by 11:59pm MT</i>
11/6	Statistical Inference K & W Chapter 7
11/8	Bivariate Hypothesis Testing and Regression Models K & W Chapter 8 & Chapter 9
11/13	Multiple Regression Models: The Basics K & W Chapter 10
11/15	Multiple Regression Models: Crucial Extensions K & W Chapter 11

11/20	Multiple Regression Models: Applications K & W Chapter 12 <i>Assignment 3 due by 11:59pm MT</i>
11/22	<i>Full open session for in-class work on the research project.</i>
11/27	Reporting Empirical Results Johnson, Janet and H.T. Reynolds, with Jason D. Mycoff. 2008. <i>Political Science Research Methods</i> . Washington DC: CQ Press. Chapter 14.
11/29	Research Presentations
12/4	Research Presentations
12/6	Final Research Projects Due Concluding Remarks and Review for Final Exam
TBD	FINAL EXAM @ TBD

*Note: This is a provisional schedule of our course. With advanced notice, I may introduce specific changes based on progress in class.