POLS 3600 – RESEARCH METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
TR: 9:00 – 10:50 am in LART 403

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Rebecca Reid
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EMAIL: rareid@utep.edu
OFFICE: 307 Benedict Hall
OFFICE HOURS: TR 11:00 am-1:00 pm and 3:00-5:00 pm, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will help students learn how to carry out research and write papers in political science. Topics include the scientific method, research design, data sources, data manipulation, statistics, and quantitative and qualitative research. The course introduces appropriate formats for papers in the discipline and reinforces writing skills. The purpose of this class is to make students familiar with the basic research techniques employed by political scientists as well as many other social science disciplines. In this class, students will learn how to analyze a variety of quantitative data, prepare graphs and tables to summarize data, and how to utilize and interpret basic statistical techniques, including ordinary least squares regression. Students will be expected to complete an original, professional research paper including quantitative analysis.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Over the course of the semester students will have:
- An understanding of how to generate research questions and appropriate research designs, research techniques, data collection, and measurement/operationalization
- Learned how to summarize, describe, and depict data
- Learned to execute basic statistical analysis (including using statistical software)
- Developed their ability to digest and critically/analytically evaluate political science and social science research
- Developed original research ideas and execute original research, generating an original research paper (including analysis) at the college level

REQUIRED READING

- Wheelan, Charles. 2013. *Naked Statistics: Stripping the Dread from the Data*. W. W. Norton & Company.

- Baglione, Lisa A. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*. 3rd edition CQ Press.

- Pollock, Philip H. 2015. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, 5th Edition. CQ Press.

- Acock, Alan C. 2016. *A Gentle Introduction to Stata*. Fifth Edition. Stata Press.

RECOMMENDED READING

- O'Neil, Cathy. 2016. *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increase Inequality and Threatens Democracy*. Crown: New York.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation in this course will be based on the following components:

Homework Assignments	15%
Research Sections	10%
Peer Reviews	10%
Final Research Paper	30%
Midterm Examination	15%
Final Examination	20%

The grading scale is as follows:

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

Participation: Attendance and participation are essential. Students are responsible for offering their thoughts, opinions, and questions without solicitation from the instructor. Needless to say, these thoughts should have merit and be based upon the readings.

Examinations: There will be 2 examinations during the course, a midterm and a final. The exams are closed book. All exams are **cumulative** and will cover material learned in the class lectures, quizzes, discussion, and the assigned readings. As a general rule, **make up exams will NOT be offered**; although make up exams will be permitted only under the gravest of circumstances, and I reserve the right to determine whether a make up exam is offered to individuals based upon their situation and timely request. I reserve the right to alter the questions for make up exams. Students are responsible to bring a new blue book for each exam.

Students may be given the opportunity to revise and correct the short answer section of midterm exam to earn back up to half of the points lost (in that section only). In order to receive credit, students must submit the corrected short answer questions and answers and the original blue book exam. Revisions without the original exam blue book will receive no credit.

The final exam is scheduled by the university and in under no circumstances can the final be rescheduled for after its original date. Students with schedule conflicts should contact me to reschedule the final; in other words, the final exam may be taken prior to the scheduled date upon arrangement but cannot be rescheduled after the date.

Homework Assignments: Students are required to turn in their homework assignments. While such assignments may be completed in a group setting, all assignments must be the individual student's original work. As such, students may not 'borrow,' copy, or plagiarize from other students' work (or any other source). Any work that is plagiarized will receive a 0 on the assignment (see Academic Dishonesty below). Hence, students working in groups should ensure that each assignment is reflective of individual work.

Research Sections: This portion of your grade (10%) is the average of each research section (and revision) submission. Each section will be graded by following four categories: i) Exemplary, requiring few or minor revisions only (equivalent to a grade of 95 or A), ii) Above Average, requiring some revisions or including relatively minor errors (equivalent to a grade of 85 or B), iii) Average, requires some significant revisions and includes significant errors (equivalent to a grade of 75 or C), or iv) Unacceptable, where the assignment is incomplete, late, or otherwise indicative of insufficient or inappropriate work (equivalent to a grade of 50 or F). Missing work receives a grade of zero.

A. _Research Question and Data Source:_ Each student must submit to typed, hard-copy research question on **September 14th**. (The revised research question and data is due Sept. 21st). This research question must be falsifiable and testable using an appropriate dependent variable for OLS. Students should also include why this research question is important and thus worth examining. Students will revise this research question based upon the peer review feedback as well as my own.

In addition, you need to locate possible datasets (available online) that you can use to examine your research question. Provide the name of the datasets and location (url or website). Keep in mind that you will likely not have time to collect your own data, although feel free to discuss this with me, and your datasets must be in Excel or Stata formats (.dta or .xlsx) in order to use Stata. Many government and non-profit organizations provide accessible data (World Bank, United Nations, Freedom House, The State Department, Transparency International, etc.) via their websites.

While you are free to use any dataset that is appropriate for your research question, I recommend selecting research questions that would correspond to the following datasets or collectives of data:

Quality of Governance
http://qog.pol.gu.se/data

Correlates of War
http://www.correlatesofwar.org/data-sets

High Courts Database
http://artsandsciences.sc.edu/poli/juri/highcts.htm

Supreme Court Database
http://scdb.wustl.edu

A National Election Survey
http://www.electionstudies.org/studypages/download/datacenter_all_NoData.php

Bureau of Justice Statistics
https://www.bjs.gov

Other sources: ICPSR
https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/

B. *Preliminary Theory and Research Design*: Due on **September 28th**, students must submit to me a typed, hard copy paper explaining their theory and causal mechanism linking their main independent variable of interest with their dependent variable. The paper must also include a short research design with justification for the selection of that design. (The revision is due October 3rd).

C. *Literature Review:* Due on **October 24th**, students must submit a typed, hard-copy, 3-7 page literature review on the topic of their research paper. (The revision is due November 2nd). This literature review will be evaluated by classmates under peer review as well as by me based upon the level of research, understanding of the scholarship, and synthesis of previous work (as well as basic grammar, etc.) This literature review must include references. A literature review is designed to provide readers an overview of the relevant research in a specific area. As such, it provides readers the necessary background to understand and evaluate your research project (i.e. your final paper). Literature reviews therefore **organize and synthesize** existing research within the theoretical framework of your specific project. The best literature reviews do not simply list each individual research article (eg. Person1 said X. Person2 said Y. Person3 said Z.) Rather, literature reviews synthesize existing research to inform readers how each research relates to your rsearch. I recommend using peer-reviewed articles as examples of literature review (as we will discuss in class). As with all papers, literature reviews required multiple drafts and revisions, especially as your project conceptualizes. I welcome the submission of drafts to me prior to the deadline for revisions and feedback.

The UTEP library and website offers a rich trove of articles and books for you to find articles, as does Google Scholar. I would recommend Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.com) and JSTOR (http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.utep.edu) as the best places to find articles and other literature. You never need to pay for access to articles, so if you find an article that you don't have access to, simply copy and paste the title into one of these websites. I would also recommend talking with library staff who can help you locate literature, the Writing Center, and other resources that are crucial in the research paper process.

D. *Methods and Results Section:* Due on **November 16th**, students must submit a typed, hard-copy version of their completed methods section (i.e. analyses must be complete). This methods section will be evaluated by classmates under peer review as well as by me. Methods sections will be evaluated on the completion and appropriateness of the operationalizations, data sources, and statistical analysis employed. The results section includes the tables and figures of your OLS regression models and diagnostics as well as the written explanations and interpretation of coefficients. You must present the results in appropriate formats (i.e. do not copy and paste program output) and correctly interpret your results.

Peer Reviews: Throughout the semester, each student will turn in sections of their course research paper. These sections will be peer reviewed by fellow classmates. **Students must turn in two copies (typed, hard copy) of the peer review as well as the classmate's paper. One copy of the review will be submitted to me, along with the classmate's paper. The second copy of the peer review will be submitted to the classmate and should remain anonymous** (do not include your name on this copy). I will evaluate the quality of the peer review and the level of student comprehension and application of class material.

> Research Question and Data Source Peer Review due **September 19th**
> Preliminary Theory and Research Design due **October 5th**
> Literature Review Peer Review due **October 26th**
> Methods and Results Section Peer Review due **November 21th**

Research Paper: Due on **December 7th**, students must submit a typed, hard-copy, 15-20 page research paper on original research. References and in-text citations must be included. This paper will be evaluated on clarity and specification of the research question and theoretical argument, the synthesis of the literature review, the appropriateness of the research design and methods, the quality of the statistical analysis, the proper interpretation of results, the presence and quality of diagnostic analyses, and writing quality, such as organization, clarity, spelling, and grammar. See rubric pages 12-13. I welcome the submission of drafts to me prior to the deadline for revisions and feedback. No late work is accepted.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

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, 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. _CASS' Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities._

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Absolutely no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In all matters of intellectual pursuit, UTEP faculty and students must strive to achieve excellence based on the quality of work produced by the individual. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of scholastic dishonesty is an affront to the pursuit of knowledge and jeopardizes the quality of the degree awarded to all graduates of UTEP. It is imperative, therefore, that the members of this academic community understand the regulations pertaining to academic integrity and that all faculty insist on adherence to these standards.

Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but 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 the Dean

of Students and the homepage of The Dean of Students at www.utep.edu/dos, may result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, a failing grade on the work in question, a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. You will be held responsible for all material covered in the textbooks, quizzes, articles, videos, and the class discussions. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for the content of that day's information. I will not tolerate disruptive behavior, including (but not limited to) reading newspapers, talking during lectures, using cell phones or pagers, and disrespecting classmates or the instructor. Additionally, I expect all students to attend class prepared and to show up on time. It is disrespectful to the instructor and the other students when individuals show up late or are not prepared to participate in the class discussion. I allow the use of laptops and phones for note-taking, research, and class assignment purposes only; however, should laptop usage become disruptive, I reserve the right to prohibit laptops and other electronic devices.

This class is designed to provide information and challenge students with new, sometimes controversial, ideas, and arguments. This class is designed to be a safe, open environment to express ideas, arguments, and opinions for learning purposes. This class is designed to initiate an open discussion based upon the required readings, encourage critical thinking and application to current events, and enable students to digest difficult material through these discussions. **This class DOES NOT give you knowledge—i.e. knowledge and understanding is not transfused to students by simply sitting in class. <u>Learning is an interactive process and one that is the primary responsibility of each student.</u>**

<u>Late assignments will receive no credit</u>.

All grades are earned and reflect your reflect the mastery of material through the adequate completion of assignments by their deadline. As such, they do not reflect level of effort, interest, or intention. **<u>I will not change final grades for the course under any circumstances</u>**, with the single exception of cases where an error occurred. As general policy, I do not offer incompletes for this course. Finally, no assignments are accepted after the last day of class or its scheduled due date.

The following is a list of topics to be covered at each class meeting, and the readings should be completed in order to fully participate in class that day. I *require* you to read the appropriate material prior to the class since you will be expected to participate in the discussion. Articles will be provided in Blackboard whenever possible, however it is the responsibility of students to locate each article from the UTEP library (which has access to JSTOR, Sage, and other online journals). Occasionally, Google Scholar and author websites may similarly provide access to these articles. In no situation is a student expected to or required to purchase an article.

While I give specific days/weeks on which certain topics will be discussed, the calendar is subject to change. Any alterations to the course schedule will be clearly announced. As a general rule, the course will follow this order of topics, regardless of date changes, unless otherwise announced.

August	29	Distribute Syllabus and Introduction (How to read research and the scientific method)
	31	No class (APSA Conference)
September	5	What is Political Science? And How to Read Scholarship *Readings due*:

Mahoney, James. (2001). "Path-Dependent Explanations of Regime Change: Central America in Comparative Perspective."

Knutsen, C. H. and Nygård, H. M. (2015). "Institutional Characteristics and Regime Survival: Why Are Semi-Democracies Less Durable Than Autocracies and Democracies?" *American Journal of Political Science*, 59: 656–670. doi:10.1111/ajps.12168.

Deuffel, B., and Kedar, O. (2010). " Race and Turnout in U.S. Elections Exposing Hidden Effects." *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 74* (2), 286-318.

7   Statistics and Inferences
            Readings due:
                    Wheelan (2013) Chapter 1
                    Pollock (2015) Introduction and Chapter 1

            Homework due: Pollock Chapter 1 Exercises (#1-6)

12   Writing a Research Paper: Research Question
            Introduction to Data and Stata
            Readings due:
                    Baglione (2016) Chapters 1 and 2
                    Pollock (2015) Chapter 2

            Homework due: Pollock Chapter 2 Exercises (#1, 4, 5)

14   Writing a Research Paper: Annotated Bibliography
            Readings due:
                    Baglione (2016) Chapter 3

            Due: Research Question and Data Sources

19   `   Writing a Research Paper: Literature Review
            Readings due:
                    Baglione (2016) Chapter 4

            Due: Research Question peer review

21   Writing a Research Paper: Theory
            Readings due:
                    Baglione (2016) Chapters 5 and 6
                    Pollock (2015) Chapter 3

            Due: Research Question and Data Sources revised

	26	Writing a Research Paper: Research Design

        26   Writing a Research Paper: Research Design
                      Readings due:
                              Baglione (2016) Chapter 7
                              Wheelan (2013) Chapter 13
                              Pollock (2015) Chapter 4

        28   Writing a Research Paper: Data Prep
                      Introduction to Data in Stata
                      Readings due:
                              Baglione (2016) Chapter 8

                      Due: Preliminary Theory and Research Design

  October   3   Descriptive Statistics (and Stata)
                      Readings due:
                              Wheelan (2013) Chapters 2 and 3
                              Pollock (2015) Chapter 5

                      Due: Preliminary Theory and Research Design peer review

        5   Correlation (and Stata)
                      Readings due:
                              Wheelan (2013) Chapter 4

                      Due: Preliminary Theory and Research Design revised

        10   Basic Probability
                      Readings due:
                              Wheelan (2013) Chapters 5, 5 ½, and 6

                      Homework Stata 1 Assignment

        12   Data
                      Readings due:
                              Wheelan (2013) Chapter 7

                      Due: Homework Stata 1 Assignment revised

| | 17 | Review for Midterm Exam I |
| | | Data Workshop |

| | **19** | **Midterm Exam I** |

24 The Central Limit Theorem
Readings due:
      Wheelan (2013) Chapter 8

<u>Due: Literature Review</u>

26 Statistical Inferences and Hypothesis Testing
Readings due:
      Wheelan (2013) Chapters 9 and 10
      Pollock (2015) Chapter 6

Homework due: Pollock Chapter 6 Exercises (#1-6)

<u>Due: Literature Review peer review</u>

31 Statistical Inferences and Hypothesis Testing (continued)
Readings due:
      Wheelan (2013) Chapters 9 and 10
      Pollock (2015) Chapter 7

Homework due: Pollock Chapter 7 Exercises (#1-3)

November 2 Regression
Readings due:
      Wheelan (2013) Chapter 11

<u>Due: Literature Review revised</u>

7 Regression
OLS Interpretation and Graphing in Stata
Readings due:
      Pollock (2015) Chapter 8

Homework due: Pollock Chapter 8 Exercises (# 3, 4, 5, 6)

	9	Common Regression Problems, Assumptions, Diagnostics

9   Common Regression Problems, Assumptions, Diagnostics
Readings due:
         Wheelan (2013) Chapter 12

Due: Exam I Short Answer Revisions

14   Common Regression Problems, Assumptions, Diagnostics
OLS Diagnostics in Stata

16   Common Regression Problems, Assumptions, Diagnostics
OLS Diagnostics in Stata

Due: Methods and Results Sections

21   Workshop
Due: Methods and Results Sections peer review

23   No Class (Thanksgiving Holiday)

28   Workshop

30   Writing a Research Paper: Bringing it Together
Readings:
         Baglione (2016) Chapter 9
         Wheelan (2013) Chapter 14
         Pollock (2015) Chapter 10

December   5   Troubleshooting

Due: Homework Assignment: Statistical Inference

7   **Final Research Paper due**
Review for final exam

8   No classes: Dead Day

12   **Final Exam 10:00am- 12:45 pm**

Research Paper Grading Rubric

	Below Expectations	**Acceptable**	**Exceeds expectations**	**Score**
Research Question	Author did not develop a suitable research question. Research question is either undeveloped and/or not clearly stated. **0 points**	Author developed a suitable research question. Research question is fairly well developed and articulated. **3 points**	Author developed an interesting and unique research question that is appropriate for a research paper. Research question is well developed and clearly articulated. **5 points**	____/5
Theoretical Argument	Paper lacks a clear theoretical argument **and/or** lacks clearly stated hypothesis **0 points**	Paper has fairly well developed theoretical argument **and** to some extent has clearly stated hypothesis **5 points**	Paper has a clear, well-organized, well-specified theoretical argument **and** has clearly stated hypothesis **10 points**	____/10
Literature review	Paper lacks a review of the literature **and/or** the literature reviewed is not clearly related to research question **0 points**	Paper has fairly well-developed literature review on relevant research **5 points**	Review of literature clearly synthesizes existing research within the theoretical framework **10 points**	____/10
Data	Data is insufficient or incorrect for research question and/or absent **0 points**	Data includes minor errors in cleaning, citation, completeness, or appropriateness **and/or** is not clearly described prior to analysis **3 points**	Data is complete, appropriate, cited, and cleaned for analysis **and** clearly described prior to analysis **5 points**	____/5
Research Design and Methods	Research design and methodology is not appropriate to evaluate research question and data **and/or** design is not correctly executed **0 points**	Research design and methodology is somewhat appropriate for research question and data **and/or** design is fairly well-executed **8 points**	Research design and methodology is clearly appropriate and well-justified for the research question and data **and** design is well-executed and replicable **15 points**	____/15

Statistical Analysis	Author fails to include appropriate statistical analysis **and/or** analysis is incorrectly executed or incomplete **0 points**	Statistical analysis is fairly well-executed with minor mistakes and/or omissions **8 points**	Statistical analysis is well-executed, complete, and clearly explained/justified, and replicable **15 points**	____/15
Graphs and Tables	Paper lacks appropriate figures and tables **and/or** they are unclear, not labeled, or incomplete **0 points**	Figures and tables are mostly clear and complete, with minor errors or omissions **5 points**	Figures and tables are professional, clear, labeled, complete, and appropriate depictions of data and results **10 points**	____/10
Interpretation of Results	Author fails to include results **and/or** fails to correctly interpret results **0 points**	Interpretation of results include minor errors or omissions **and/or** are unclear **5 points**	Author correctly and clearly interprets all relevant results in an organized, consistent manner **10 points**	____/10
Diagnostic Tests and Limitations	Author fails to include diagnostic tests **and/or** such diagnostic tests are incorrect or inappropriate **and/or** fails to discuss the limitations of the paper **0 points**	Author includes some diagnostic tests with few errors or omissions **and/or** provides only superficial discussion of the limitations of the paper **3 points**	Author includes all necessary, correctly executed diagnostic tests **and** presents the results of each **and** offers insightful and complete discussion of limitations of the paper **5 points**	____/5
References	Author fails to include appropriate references **0 points**	Author includes some references but is incomplete or inappropriate **3 points**	Author includes complete, formatted references **5 points**	____/5
Writing Quality	Paper lacks organization and clarity **and/or** includes several spelling and grammatical mistakes and typos **0 points**	Paper is somewhat organized **and/or** includes some minor spelling and grammatical mistakes or typos **5 points**	Paper is well-organized and clearly written **and** lack spelling and grammatical errors and typos **10 points**	____/10

Total score:_____

The Scientific Method
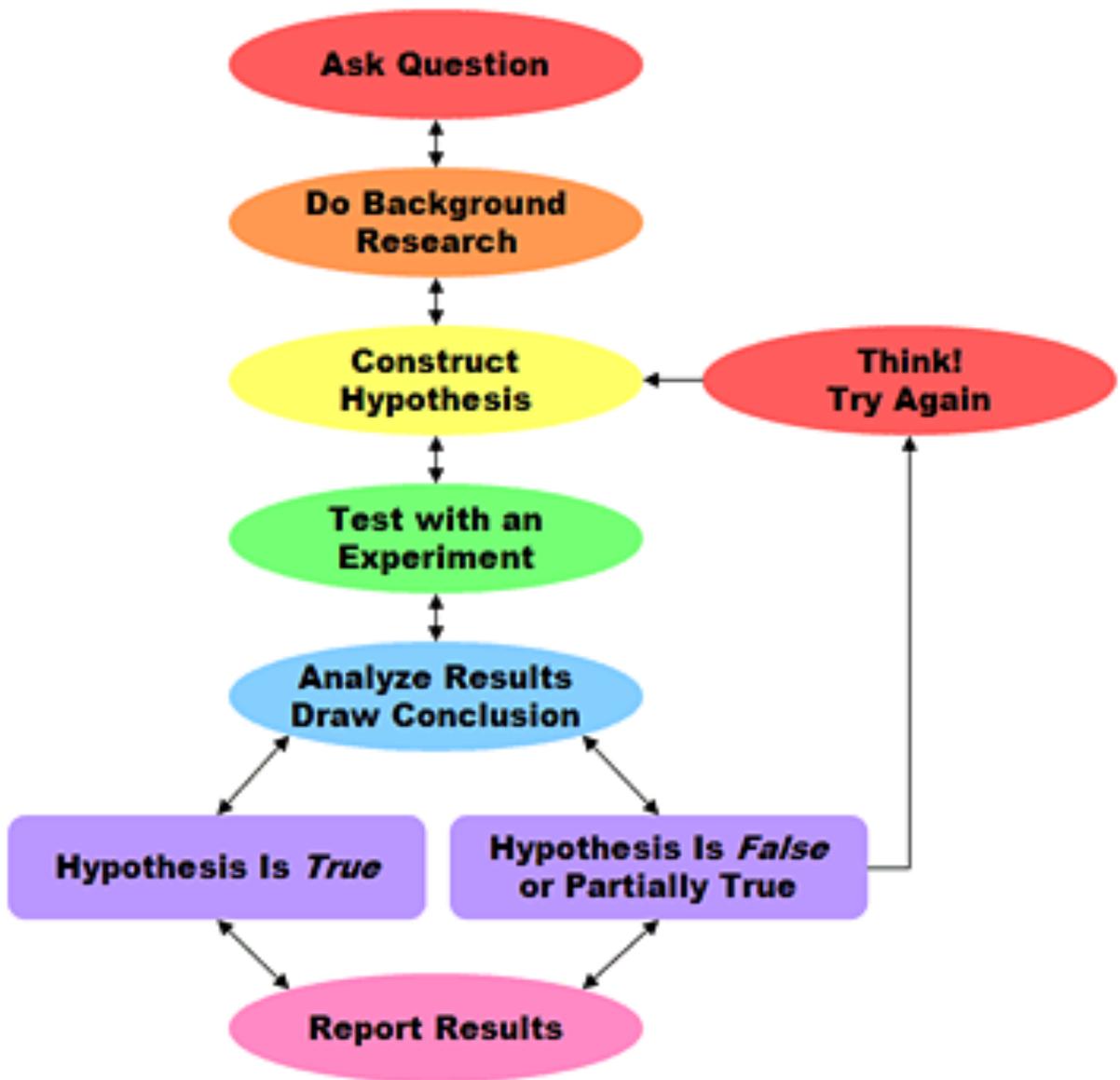
How to Read and Evaluate Research (Quick Tips)

1) What is the research question?
2) What is the theoretical argument and/or thesis?
3) What is the dependent variable?
4) What are the main independent variables?
5) Do the variables match the theory? Are they appropriate? Do they measure what the authors claim?
6) What data is utilized and is it appropriate?
7) Did the authors include all relevant variables and exclude irrelevant variables? Are there confounding variables? Are there omitted variables?
8) What method of analysis was employed? Qualitative or quantitative? Is this method appropriate for the research question?
9) What are the results? How strong are these results?
10) What are the limitations of the theory, methods, and results?
11) How generalizable are the results?
12) How persuasive is the article? Why?