

# **Research in Political Science**

Fall 2020

Department of Political Science  
University of Texas – El Paso  
POLS - 3600

Instructor – Todd A. Curry, Ph.D

Lecture – Online

Office – Online

Office Hours – T/R – 12:30 – 1:30pm or by appointment

E-mail – [tacurry@utep.edu](mailto:tacurry@utep.edu)

## **Course Description (from Undergraduate Catalog)**

Help students learn how to carry out research and write papers in political science. Topics include the scientific method, research design, data sources, statistics, and qualitative research. The course introduces appropriate formats for papers in the discipline and reinforces writing skills.

## **Course Overview and Objectives**

The purpose of this class is to make the student familiar with the basic research techniques employed not only by political scientists, but also many other social science disciplines. In this class, the student 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 up to and including ordinary least squares regression.

## **Course Learning Objectives**

This course will be difficult but help from me and our TA will be plentiful. By the end of this course you will be able to:

- write original research papers at a college level
- digest political science (and other social science) research
- engage in basic statistical analysis
- present original research in public

## **UTEP Edge**

The UTEP Edge is our philosophy that acknowledges the many assets our students bring to the University. We provide a variety of high-impact experiences both in and out of the classroom through work of our faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners that build on these assets and talents. Many of the assignments and discussions in this class will

further develop the talents you bring to this class such as developing your communication skills, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem solving.

- Communicate information clearly and effectively (orally and written)
- Use real world data and digital tools to conduct original statistical analysis
- Use team work for collective learning in order to produce better outcomes

### **Texts**

King, Gary, Koehane, Robert R., and Sidney Verba. 1994. Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research. Princeton University Press

Pollock, Philip H. 2019. The Essentials of Political Analysis, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. CQ Press

Pollock, Philip H. 2018. An STATA Companion to Political Analysis, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. CQ Press

### **Technology Requirements**

Course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

You will need to have access to a computer/laptop. Not required, the class will be easier with a webcam and a microphone. You will need to download or update the following software: Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Reader, and STATA. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course.

STATA can be downloaded at [here](#).

If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about [Microsoft Office 365](#) and follow the instructions.

**IMPORTANT:** If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP [Help Desk](#) as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

## **Grading**

Weekly assignments at 5% each: 40%

Resume **Due September 13<sup>th</sup> to Blackboard**– 5%

Resume Peer Review – 5%

Topic chosen from available data sources **Due September 13 via email** – 5%

Literature Review **Due November 1<sup>st</sup> to Blackboard** - 5%

Literature Peer Review – 5%

Final Draft **Due November 25<sup>th</sup> to Blackboard**– 5%

Final Paper Peer Review – 10%

Final paper **Due December 6** – 15%

Final Exam – 5%

**Resume:** Students are responsible for uploading they resume as an attachment to the corresponding Blackboard Discussion board. Due September 13<sup>th</sup> by midnight as an attachment to Blackboard.

**Resume Peer Review:** Students are responsible for reviewing 3 other students' resumes for clarity of information, presentation, and formatting. They should provide suggestions and *not just* encouragement. The peer reviews are to be completed within a week of the assignment due date.

**Topic Choice:** The purpose of this assignment is for students to think about the relationship between two variables/concepts from the available datasets provided by the book ([https://edge.sagepub.com/system/files/stata\\_datasets\\_1.zip](https://edge.sagepub.com/system/files/stata_datasets_1.zip)). The variables must come from the same data set and your choice must identify the direction of the relationship (IE: As individuals attend church more often, they are more likely to approve of the Republican Party). Your dependent variable needs to be continuous.

**Literature Review:** This assignment is the most misunderstood of this class historically. Most of you, if you have done a literature review, have not done one correctly as to be included in a scholarly paper. The purpose of this assignment is for you to generate the front half of your final paper, up to the methodology section. This includes and introductions, theory section, and hypothesis. I will provide you with examples on Blackboard, but a literature review in a social science paper is not a regurgitation of the sources you have read about your selected topic. The literature review section is commonly called the theory section, and it is the part of the paper where you use existing literature to develop a theory which attempts to explain the phenomon which you are going to examine. This section should tell a story, through the literature, that leads the reader to how you formulate your hypothesis(es).

For this assignment, you will read and synthesize a **minimum** of ten sources from scholarly outlets. These can include books, peer reviewed articles, or law reviews. Most of your sources can be obtained through [JSTOR](#), or through [Google Scholar](#). It should include an introduction, a theory section, and conclude with your hypothesis(es). This,

once revised through peer review and my grading, will comprise the first half of your final paper. It is due November 1<sup>st</sup> by Midnight to Blackboard discussion forum as an attachment.

**Literature Review Peer Review:** Students will need to peer review 3 of their colleagues' papers and provide substantive comments as a reply on Blackboard forums. The review can be for grammar, flow, spelling, content, etc. These need to be actual reviews, as the goal of this assignment is to make the papers better, not just encourage other students. Though encouragement is appreciated as well. Students will have a week to review each other's papers.

**Final Draft Due:** The purpose of the draft being due is the same as the literature review. The final draft will utilize the techniques you have developed, including regression and graphics. I will not be reviewing this final draft, but your colleagues will. This is due November 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Final Draft Peer Review:** Students will need to peer review 2 of their colleagues' papers and provide substantive comments as a reply on Blackboard forums. These critiques are meant to improve the quality of the paper, including flow, spelling, analysis, etc. These reviews are due December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Policies**

First off, due dates in this class are mostly fungible. We all have a lot going on and are under unprecedented stress. While we still need to get things done, our timeline should reflect that. The weekly assignments and research paper are time consuming, and I would advise working on them early. The syllabus will list "due dates," and I would urge you to follow them for the TA and my sanity, as well as your own. Furthermore, if you miss submitting the literature review and final draft, your grade for the Final Paper will suffer because you won't have the feedback from your fellow students and me. **The final (and concrete) deadline for all assignments will be 11:59pm on December 6<sup>th</sup>.**

Information for the students will be communicated in three ways 1. Via Video; 2. Through Blackboard. 3. Through email. The only email address I will use to contact you is your official "utep.edu" account. This means as a requirement of this course you will need to regularly check this account if you do not already. "I did not receive notification," is not a valid excuse.

I fully understand that the homework assignments will likely be completed in a group setting, in fact I urge it. I recommend, and will attempt to facilitate, you all working in small groups via Blackboard video chat. It will help problem-solving when the TA and I am not available. **However, each individual is responsible for their own write up.** What this means is that I expect zero borrowing from other students with regards to what is turned in to me. See the Academic Honesty and Integrity section below if there are any questions.

## **COVID-19 Precautions**

You must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at [screening.utep.edu](https://screening.utep.edu). If you know of anyone who should report any of these three criteria, you should encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to [COVIDaction@utep.edu](mailto:COVIDaction@utep.edu).

For each day that you attend campus—for any reason—you must complete the questions on the UTEP screening website ([screening.utep.edu](https://screening.utep.edu)) prior to arriving on campus. The website will verify if you are permitted to come to campus. Under no circumstances should anyone come to class when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, and alternative instruction will be provided. Students are advised to minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection.

Wear face coverings when in common areas of campus or when others are present. You must wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times in this class. If you choose not to wear a face covering, you may not enter the classroom. If you remove your face covering, you will be asked to put it on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear a face covering and follow preventive COVID-19 guidelines will be dismissed from the class and will be subject to disciplinary action according to Section 1.2.3 *Health and Safety* and Section 1.2.2.5 *Disruptions* in the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures.

*(classes with on-campus meetings)* Please note that if COVID-19 conditions deteriorate in the City of El Paso, all course and lab activities may be transitioned to remote delivery.

### **Grading Scale:**

The following numerical averages translate into final course grades:

- 90: A (4.0)
- 80-89: B (3.0)
- 70-79: C (2.0)
- 60-69: D (1.0)
- 60: F (0.0)

### **Academic Honesty and Integrity:**

Per UTEP policy: 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 (HOOP) and available in the Office of the Dean of Students and the homepage of The Dean of Students at [www.utep.edu/dos](http://www.utep.edu/dos), may result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to failing a grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.

### **Special Needs:**

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.*

### **Course Outline**

Week 1 – August 24-30

- Introduction/Syllabus/Intro to Stata
- The Science of Political Science
  - KKV Chap 1

Week 2 – August 31-September 6

- The Description of Quantities
  - KKV Chap 2
- What Causality Means and Does not Mean
  - KKV CHP 3

Week 3 - September 7-13

- Observing and Choosing what to Observe

- KKV Chp 4
- Mistakes Not to Make
  - KKV Chp 5
  - Resume to be uploaded to Blackboard forum for peer evaluation, Paper Topic Due Blackboard forum

Week 4 – September 14-20

- How to Increase Observations and Why it is Important
  - KKV Chp 6
  - Resume due to Blackboard
- Conceptual and Operational Definitions
  - Essentials Chp 1 & 2

Week 5 – September 21-27

- Descriptive Statistics
- Hypothesizing and Comparing
  - Exercise from Companion CHP 2 due.

Week 6 – September 28-October 4.

- Transforming and Manipulating Data
- The Logic of Controls
  - Essentials CHP 4
  - Exercise from Companion CHP 3 due.

Week 7 – October 5-11

- Employing the Logic of Controls
  - Essentials CHP 5
  - Exercise from Companion CHP 4 due.

Week 8 – October 12-18

- Employing the Logic of Controls, cont
  - Essentials CHP 5, cont
  - Exercise from Companion CHP 5 due.

Week 9 – October 19-25

- The Math and Logic of Statistical Inference
  - Essentials chp 6
  - Begin Companion CHP 6

Week 10 – October 26-November 1

- Tests of Significance
  - Exercise from Companion CHP 6 due.
  - Begin Companion CHP 7
  - Essentials chp 7
  - Literature Review Due (Blackboard Post and Assignment upload)

Week 11 – November 2-8

- Correlation Analysis
- Linear Regression
  - Essentials CHP 8
  - Exercise from Companion CHP 7 due.

Week 12 – November 9-15

- Linear Regression, cont
  - Essentials CHP 8, cont
  - Companion chp 8

Week 13 – November 16-22

- Linear Regression with Interactions and Dummy Variables
  - Exercise from Companion CHP 8 Due
  - Begin Companion CHP 9

Week 14 – November 23-29

- On November 25<sup>th</sup>, upload a final draft (not final copy) of your paper to Blackboard
- Companion CHP 9 Due
- Enjoy the break

Week 15 November 30-December 6

Make up Week. Finish everything before the hard deadline.

Dec 6 – Final Paper Due

**Final Exam – Open on Blackboard from December 7 – December 11**