

**POLS 2000 (0): Research Methods (CRN 40632)**

3 credit hours

Fall 2014

TR 3:05-4:20pm

Fletcher Hall 201

Instructor: Liz Norell

Office location: PSCI computer lab, Fletcher Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> floor

Office hours: TR 2-3pm, R 4:30-5:30pm, or by appointment

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You should expect a reply to emails within 48 hours.

This course is designed to provide a strong foundation in conducting and evaluating research in political science. Students should expect a challenging but rewarding semester of developing the skills needed to excel in subsequent courses.

**Course description:** Basic techniques in political science research.

**Prerequisite:** MATH 2100, PSY 2010/2040, SOC 2500, or PANM 2050.

**Course outcomes:** The goal of this course is to enable students to achieve the following learning objectives:

- Students will be able to locate, understand, organize, and evaluate published political science research.
- Students will be able to design a wide variety of political science research projects.
- Students will be able to apply basic quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques.
- Students will become prepared to undertake independent research projects in their upper-level political science courses.

Lecture, discussion, readings, assignments, assessments, and structured in-class application exercises will give students the opportunity to achieve these learning objectives.

**Class preparation and participation**

Students are expected to come to class having read and completed all assignments.

Participation is a key component of this course and will enable your learning. Learning science has shown that engaged participation in class enhances learning. Thus, I encourage you to ask questions, participate in class, and remain engaged.

**Attendance**

Attendance is vital to succeeding in this course, as much of our learning will occur during class time. Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Absent students are responsible for making arrangements to obtain missed lecture notes, handouts, announcements, etc., from other students. Asking your professor, "Did we do anything

important in class?" is not a winning strategy. Attendance is not graded directly, but your predecessors' grades and absenteeism rates have been strongly and inversely correlated.

### **Academic integrity**

Careful adherence to standards of academic integrity is expected of all students. Students are responsible for ensuring that they understand and follow these standards. Students are expected to adhere to the UTC honor system. To protect the academic integrity of this university and this course, the instructor takes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty very seriously and seeks the most severe sanctions available in response to instances of academic dishonesty.

### **Textbook**

We will be using this book in our class:

Pollock III, Philip H. 2012. *The Essentials of Political Analysis, Fourth Edition*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

You may find this at the bookstore, but you may also find far less expensive used copies from Amazon. Please plan to have this book in hand for Week 2. We will be reading and completing exercises out of it.

The following abbreviated APA style guide is strongly recommended and will be helpful when writing papers for other courses as well:

Perrin, R. (2011). *Pocket Guide to APA Style* (4th edition). Boston: Houghton Mifflin. ISBN: 9780495912637.

Other reading assignments may be assigned throughout the semester. They are also considered required assignments; they will be announced in class and on Blackboard, and posted as PDFs on Blackboard. Due dates for specific reading assignments will be announced in class and on Blackboard.

### **Late work**

Turning in work late is discouraged and carries with it substantial penalties. Namely, work submitted late will be assessed a penalty of 10% per day. For example, if you turn in an assignment the morning after it is due, you will lose 10% of your assessed grade. If you turn in an assignment one week late, you will lose 70% of your assessed grade. It is therefore to your benefit to turn in work on time.

### **Course Assignments**

There will be a number of different assignments throughout the semester:

- **Readings.** There will be a reading assignment before each class. Students are expected to complete these assignments. Occasional start-of-class quizzes will test your completion of these readings.

- **Homework exercises.** Each week, you will be given a homework exercise/problem set to complete in which you will apply the concepts we have learned that week. These will either be assigned out of our textbook or will be posted on Blackboard. Your responses to the weekly homework sets should be typed and submitted via Blackboard. You will have one week to work on them. You are allowed to collaborate on these, but you should turn in your own effort each week.
  - **SPSS exercise.** We will spend at least a couple of class sessions working in SPSS towards the end of the semester, to get some hands-on experience working with data analysis. You will be responsible for completing two problem sets/homeworks in SPSS to demonstrate you have acquired the skills needed to perform basic statistical analysis in SPSS.
- **Research design paper.** Throughout the course of the semester, you will be working on a proposal for a research study on a question of interest to you. The craft of the research proposal will take place in stages through the semester.

### **Grading**

Your grade in this course will be determined as follows:

- Homework assignments/exercises (lowest one dropped): 25%
- Daily quizzes: 10%
- Midterm & final exams: 12.5% each/25% total
- Research design: 30%
- Peer review of the research design: 10%

A (90 – 100%) = Excellent; all expectations met or exceeded; explicitly demonstrates thorough understanding; no substantive shortcomings or only minor shortcomings; presentations are well organized, help other students learn course content, and add value above existing course content; writing is well organized and adheres to rules of grammar, spelling, and syntax with no or very few exceptions

B (80 – 89%) = Good; most or all expectations are met; explicitly or implicitly demonstrates good, if not thorough, understanding; only minor substantive shortcomings; presentations are well organized and help other students learn course content; writing is generally well organized and mostly adheres to rules of grammar, spelling, and syntax

C (70 – 79%) = Satisfactory; directions are followed, most expectations are met but with at least one significant shortcoming; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding; presentations demonstrate understanding of the content but do little to help other students learn the content; writing is organized well enough and with enough technical accuracy to be understandable

D (60 – 69%) = Passing, but less than satisfactory; directions only partially followed; more than one significant shortcoming; deficiencies indicate only the most rudimentary level of understanding; presentations demonstrate poor preparation and do not contribute to other students' learning; and/or writing is difficult to understand

F (0 – 59%) = Failing; not completed or directions not followed; deficiencies indicate lack of understanding; presentations waste class time; and/or incoherent writing

**Exams.** You will take two cumulative exams; for each exam, you will be allowed to bring two 8.5" x 11" one-sided pages of your own personal notes to the exams. Exams must be completed during the time allotted. Make-up exams will not be offered except in extraordinary circumstances, such as documented emergencies, at the convenience and discretion of the instructor, using an alternative exam (such as an oral exam).

**Research design/proposal paper.** Because this course is designed to prepare you to evaluate and conduct research, we will spend the semester preparing a research design/proposal paper as our term project. This paper will have several key components, which we will complete in stages throughout the semester:

- Identification of a novel research question (or questions) you wish to answer.
- A synthetic literature review in which you present relevant prior research on this question.
- Presentation of research hypotheses about your expectations should you answer your research question(s).
- Description of what kind of data you could use to answer your research question(s) and how you would use those data to answer your question(s).
- Concluding remarks about the significance of this research project and its contribution to our understanding of your research question(s)/topic.
- Peer review of two of your classmates' papers.

This will be a substantial portion of your final grade; the project will help you leave this course well prepared to conduct research in your upper-level political science courses.

### **Blackboard**

Students are responsible for submitting assignments and accessing readings and other course materials on Blackboard. Many supplemental study aids are also available on the course Blackboard page. Blackboard may be accessed at <http://utconline.utc.edu>. Students who are unfamiliar with Blackboard, especially the assignment and quiz functions, should enroll in the UTC Online Student Training course (<http://utconline.utc.edu/StudentResources/StudentTraining.php>).

Blackboard is available at this URL: <http://www.utc.edu/learn>

Use the same login you use for MyUTC.

### **Supplemental Texts**

In addition to the recommended textbooks, the instructor's lectures will draw from the sources cited below, which may serve as helpful supplementary reading for students.

Babbie, E. (1995). *The Practice of Social Research* (7<sup>th</sup> edition). Belmont, California: Wadsworth.

Chalmers, A. F. (1999). *What is This Thing Called Science?* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Indianapolis: Hackett.

Johnson, J. B. (2005). *Political Science Research Methods* (5<sup>th</sup> edition). Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Miles, M. B., and Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Ricci, D. M. (1984). *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Shively, W. P. (2005). *The Craft of Political Research* (6<sup>th</sup> edition). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

### **A note about assignments**

All papers and other written assignments in this class should be submitted to UTC Learn (Blackboard) text-matching software (SafeAssign) for review and to analyze for originality and intellectual integrity. By submitting your paper online, you agree to have your paper included in the institutional repository of digital papers. If the results of the review indicate academic dishonesty, disciplinary action may be taken against the student as outlined in the UTC Student Handbook.

### **Accommodation**

If you are a student with a disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) and think that you might need special assistance or a special accommodation in this class or any other class, call the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 425-4006 or come by the office, 102 Frist Hall.

### **Counseling Center**

If you find that personal problems, career indecision, study and time management difficulties, etc. are adversely impacting your successful progress at UTC, please contact the Counseling and Career Planning Center at 425-4438.

### **Honor Code Pledge** (for reference)

I pledge that I will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid on any test or assignment. I understand that plagiarism constitutes a serious instance of unauthorized aid. I further pledge that I exert every effort to insure that the Honor Code is upheld by others and the I will actively support the establishment and continuance of a campus-wide climate of honor and integrity.

**Tentative Course Schedule** – subject to change; check Blackboard for latest info

<b>Week Dates</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings assigned</b>	<b>Assignment due on Thursday**</b>
Week 1 Aug. 19, 21	Introduction to course, syllabus	Polluck intro	Plagiarism tutorial/quiz
Week 2 Aug. 26, 28	Concepts & measures	Polluck Ch. 1	pp. 23-24, Qs 1-6
Week 3 Sept. 2, 4	Variables	Polluck Ch. 2	pp. 45-46, Qs 1-4
Week 4 Sept. 9, 11	Explanations, Hypotheses, Comparisons	Polluck Ch. 3	pp. 71-76, choose any 6 questions
Week 5 Sept. 16, 18	Research Design	Polluck Ch. 4	pp. 97-99, Qs 1-5
Week 6 Sept. 23, 25	Making Controlled Comparisons	Polluck Ch. 5	pp. 118-120, Qs 1-3 ⊕
Week 7 Sept. 30, Oct. 2	Writing a literature review; <b>midterm exam Oct. 2 in class</b>	TBA	TBA
Week 8 Oct. 7, 9	Statistical inference	Polluck Ch. 6	pp. 152-154, Qs 1-6
Week 9 Oct. 14, 16	Significance, association	Polluck Ch. 7	pp. 177-179, Qs 1-5
Week 10 Oct. 23	Fall break; catch-up day		⊕
Week 11 Oct. 28, 30	Correlation & regression	Polluck Ch. 8	pp. 206-210, Qs 1-6
Week 12 Nov. 4, 6	Logistic regression	Polluck Ch. 9	pp. 235-236, Qs. 1-2 ⊕
Week 13 Nov. 11, 13	SPSS lab time	-	SPSS exercise 1 (see Blackboard)
Week 14 Nov. 18, 20	SPSS lab time	-	SPSS exercise 2 (see Blackboard)
Week 15 Nov. 25	Wrapping up	Polluck Ch. 10	

\*\* Assignments due by start of class on Thursdays. Turn them in on Blackboard.

**Final exam:** Saturday, December 6, 3:30-5:30pm

⊕ **Key paper deadlines:**

- **Research question(s) due:** Thursday, September 25 (start of class)
- **Literature review section due:** Thursday, October 23 (start of class)
- **Hypotheses & research design section due:** Thursday, November 6 (start of class)
- **Final drafts of papers due:** Tuesday, Nov. 18 at midnight
- **Peer reviews begin:** Wednesday, Nov. 19
- **Peer reviews due:** Tuesday, November 25, midnight
- **Final paper due:** Tuesday, Dec. 2, midnight