PSCI2300 The Study of Politics

Section 002
Spring 2011
Department of Political Science
University of North Texas
Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:20 WH 316

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Course Description
This course introduces the strategies and techniques of scientific methods in the discipline of political science. Students are expected to learn how to examine various types of political phenomena with an appropriate approach. For this goal, this course covers topics including research design, causal inference, hypotheses and variables, measurement, and basic statistical techniques. What you learn in this course will help you read social science literature in your other classes, do original research in those classes, and allow you to become an informed participant in political discussion and debates in your life.

Assignments and Grading
Homework (30% of your grade, 5% for each of the six assignments): Students will be asked to complete one or more exercises. Assignments include short essays on topics learned in the course, basic math calculation using statistical formulas, and SPSS exercises. Assignments will be given at least one week in advance of the due date. You must turn in your assignments on time in class, as I will not accept late assignments except for a very special situation. I will not accept your assignments emailed to me or left in my office/mailbox except for a special situation. If a student does not turn in a weekly assignment on time, s/he will receive a zero for the assignment.

Research Project (30% of your grade): Each student will design and implement an original research project that involves analyzing political science data and reporting your findings.
Results of your research will be reported in a final paper (at least 8 pages, but less than 15 pages) due on May 3, 2pm. Details will be provided on a separate assignment handout. Note that I do not accept late papers except for a very special situation. Again, I will not accept a paper emailed to me or left in my office/mailbox except for a special situation.

**Exams** (40% of your grade, 20% for each exam): Two in-class exams will be given to students. Exams include short essays on topics learned in the course. The first exam will be held in class on February 24. The final exam will be held on May 10, 1:30-3:30.

**Assigned Readings**
The required text for this course is


You are expected to have read assigned chapters before you come to class. Should class have to be canceled due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, the material scheduled for the missed class will be covered the next time the class meets.

**Attendance and Participation**
Attendance and participation will not directly be a part of your grade. But I expect that you will attend all class meetings. Much of what I cover in class may not be in the readings, so it is important to come to class, take notes, and question about materials you do not understand.

**Students with Disabilities Statement**
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 believe you need additional information, please see the attached paper.

**Plagiarism Statement**
As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one’s own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of that person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please see the attached paper.

**Copyright Statement**
The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By “handouts,” I mean all materials
generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

**Course Schedule**
Below is a tentative schedule of topics and reading assignments for the course. If schedule changes become necessary, I will make an announcement in class.

**Week 1** (1/18 and 1/20): Course Introduction

   No reading assignment

**Week 2** (1/25 and 1/27): Political Science as Science

   J&R Chapters 1 and 2

**Week 3** (2/1 and 2/3): Research Questions, Hypotheses, and Variables

   J&R Chapter 3

**Week 4** (2/8 and 2/10): Research Design

   J&R Chapter 5

**Week 5** (2/15 and 2/17): Measurement and Literature Review

   J&R Chapters 4 and 6

**Week 6** (2/22 and 2/24): Exam Week

   Study day, Monday, 2/22
   In-class exam, Wednesday, 2/24

**Week 7** (3/1 and 3/3): Sampling

   J&R Chapter 7

**Week 8** (3/8 and 3/10): Survey Research and Univariate Data Analysis I

   J&R Chapters 10 and 11
   Lab session, Wednesday, 3/10

**Week 9** (3/15 and 3/17): Spring Break

   No class
Week 10 (3/22 and 3/24): Univariate Data Analysis II

J&R Chapter 11


Lab session, Thursday, 3/24

Week 11 (3/29 and 3/31): Bivariate Data Analysis I

J&R Chapter 12

No class on 3/31 because of conference attendance

Week 12 (4/5 and 4/7): Bivariate Data Analysis II

J&R Chapter 12

Lab session, Thursday, 4/7

Week 13 (4/12 and 4/14): Bivariate Data Analysis III

J&R Chapter 12

Lab session, Thursday, 4/14

Week 14 (4/19 and 4/21): Bivariate Data Analysis IV

J&R Chapter 12, 4/19

Lab session, Thursday, 4/21

Week 15 (4/26 and 4/28): Regression Analysis

J&R Chapters 12 and 13

Lab session, Thursday, 4/28

Week 16 (5/3 and 5/5): Pre-Final Week

Review session, Tuesday, 5/3

Research paper due in class, 5/3

Study day, Thursday, 5/5

Week 17 (5/10): Exam Week

Final exam at 1:30-3:30, Tuesday, 5/10