

Doing Research in Political Science

POLI: 205

FALL 2015

EDUCATION CENTER 109

205-01: 12:15-1:30PM T R

205-02: 1:40-2:55PM T R

Instructor: Dr. Matthew Nowlin

Office: 114 Wentworth, #102

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-3pm and by appointment

Contact: Please allow 24 hours for a response

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Office Phone: (843)953-0279

See the **course website** for updates

Course Description

From the course catalog: *An introduction to the techniques and strategies researchers in politics use to study and understand the political world.*

This is an undergraduate course in social science research methods and data analysis. It is designed to introduce you to the use of political analysis, begin an exploration in the exciting worlds of quantitative research methods, and help you practice basic analytical methods for understanding political and social phenomena.

In addition and as stated in the Kellstedt and Whitten text, this course will help prepare you to 1) consume academic political science research in your other courses, 2) become a better consumer of information, and 3) start you on the road to becoming a producer of scientific research. We will cover a lot of material in this course, **therefore it is imperative that you come to class having done the readings and prepared to participate.**

As we progress, we will spend part of the semester on the tools and techniques of quality research design; the basic statistical skills that give you an understanding of the appropriate uses and mis-uses of these tools and techniques; and on finally we will learn to do data analysis in *R*, a statistical programming language.

In the first part of the course we will review the features of science, the scientific method, and core concepts in empirical research. Topics include theory development, how to formulate hypotheses, and how political scientists think about causality. The first section is intended to enhance your critical and social scientific thinking skills while also helping you distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly research. The next section introduces students to the components of a research design. We will cover the features of experimental and non-experimental designs, review the fundamentals of statistical inference, and cover survey research. This section is intended to provide you with a working knowledge of the methods used by academic political scientists and help you design your own research. The third part of the course will focus on “doing” research and

we will have several lab sessions where we will be performing data analysis using the statistical programming language *R*. Topics will include the exploring and visualizing of data and examining relationships between two variables. Finally, we will discuss and learn how to apply Ordinary Least Squares regression, the “workhorse” of empirical social science research, to test hypotheses.

NOTE: This classroom is equipped with computer at each workshop, however we will only use the computer on certain days and for specific purposes. Therefore, **the computers must remain off unless we are using them for class**. In addition, **all phones and laptops must remain put away** unless you are asked to use them for class purposes. *Notes should be taken by hand, with pen and paper. You learn better that way.*

I recommend taking notes using the [Cornell Method](#)

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

The goals for this course are to:

- Identify and explain current academic research projects in politics.
- Enhance critical and social scientific thinking skills to distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly approaches.
- Develop research questions that are answerable with a variety of methods.
- Demonstrate some of the methods used by scholars of politics.
- Develop skills in designing a research project.

Required Textbook

The following book is required and *additional readings will be provided on OAKS*

KW: Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Cambridge University Press. 2nd Ed.

Required Software

You are also required to download *R* and *RStudio* on your home computer and/or laptop. Both programs are open-source and available at no cost. In addition, both are available on the computers in the classroom. For more information and instructions for downloading *R* and *RStudio* go to the [R Help](#) section of the course website.

While not required, I strongly recommend the use of citation manager software such as [Zotero](#) or [Mendeley](#).

Course Requirements and Grading

Performance in this course will be evaluated on the basis of a research design, ten reading quizzes, four in-class lab assignments, four homework assignments, and a comprehensive final exam.

Points will be distributed as follows:

Assignment	Points Possible
Research Design	300 points (total)
10 Reading Quizzes (20 pts each)	200 points
Data Analysis Project	200 points
4 In-class Lab Assignments (25 pts each)	100 points
4 Homework Assignments (25 pts each)	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
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Total	1000 points

Specific requirements for each assignment will be available on the [course website](#) and discussed in class. *You must be present during the in-class lab assignments to receive credit, no make-ups will be allowed.*

NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED

Attendance

Attendance is expected and mandatory for this course and will be taken each class period. You are allowed to miss two classes without penalty. The penalties for missing 2 or more classes are as follows:

Absences	Penalty
2	None
3	40 points
4	60 points (100 points total)
5	80 points (180 points total)
6	120 points (300 points total)
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7+	Grade of WA

Grades

- A: 94 to 100%
- A-: 90 to 93%
- B+: 87 to 89%
- B: 83 to 86%
- B-: 80 to 82%
- C+: 77 to 79%
- C: 73 to 76%
- C-: 70 to 72%
- D+: 67 to 69%
- D: 63 to 67%
- D-: 60 to 62%

- F: 59% and below

Cheating or Plagiarism:

A grade of zero will be given to anyone cheating on any exam, homework assignment or committing plagiarism in a paper. As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own ideas, the words, writings, music, graphs/charts, etc that were created by 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 have the permission of that person. It does not matter from where the material is borrowed—a book, article, material off the web, another student's paper—all constitute plagiarism unless the source of the work is fully identified and credited. Plagiarism is cheating and a violation of academic and personal integrity and will not be tolerated. It carries extremely serious consequences. To avoid plagiarism it is necessary when using a phrase, a distinctive idea, concept or sentence from another source to reference that source in your text, a footnote, or end-note. Please contact me if you need assistance in citing a source.

For more information on plagiarism see the [library website](#)

Center for Student Learning

I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning's (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies, speaking & writing skills, and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL [website](#) or call (843)953-5635.

Students with Disabilities:

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply at the [Center for Disability Services](#) located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me at least one week before any accommodation is needed.

Religious Holiday Policy:

It is the policy of the College to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays. Please see me immediately if you will need to miss class any time during this semester.

Course Schedule and Readings: Fall 2015

SUBJECT TO CHANGE. All changes will be announced in class.

READINGS SHOULD BE DONE PRIOR TO CLASS. Readings on the OAKS course page are under Content -> Readings.

ALL ASSIGNMENTS AND QUIZZES ARE DUE BY 11:59pm ON THE DUE DATE, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

FOR READING QUIZ INSTRUCTIONS SEE THE [COURSE WEBSITE](#)

KW: Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. Cambridge University Press. 2nd Ed.

- August 25th: **Course Introduction and Political Science Research**

- *Readings:*

- * Johnson and Reynolds Chap 1: “Introduction” on [OAKS](#)
- * [‘We Need to Take a Look at the Data’: How 2 Persistent Grad Students Upended a Blockbuster Study](#)

- September 1st: **Political Science?**

- *Readings:*

- * Rosenberg Chap 2: “The Methodological Divide: Naturalism Versus Interpretation” on [OAKS](#)
- * KW Chap 1
- * **Quiz 1 due September 2nd** on [OAKS](#)

- September 8th: **Theory Building and Hypothesis Testing**

- *Readings:*

- * KW Chap 2
- * **Quiz 2 due September 7th** on [OAKS](#)

- September 15th: **Research Question and Literature Review**

- **September 15th class will meet at the [Addlestone Library Room 122](#)**

- *Readings:*

- * Johnson and Reynolds Chap 3: “Beginning the Research Process” on [OAKS](#)
- * **Homework 1 due September 17th.** *Due before class in the dropbox on [OAKS](#).*

- September 22nd: **Causality and Research Design**

- *Readings:*

- * KW Chap 3
 - * KW Chap 4
 - * **Quiz 3 due September 21st** on **OAKS**
 - * **Quiz 4 due September 23rd** on **OAKS**
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- September 29th: **Research Design and Data**

- *Readings:*

- * Silverman Chap 2: “What You Can (and Can’t) Do with Qualitative Research” on **OAKS**
 - * **A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research**
 - * **Homework 2 due October 1st.** *Due before class in the dropbox on OAKS.*
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- October 6th: **Quantitative Data and Measurement**

- Introduction to *R*

- *Readings:*

- * KW Chap 5
 - * **Quiz 5 due October 5th** on **OAKS**
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- October 13th: **Probability and Statistical Inference**

- *Readings:*

- * KW Chap 6
 - * **Quiz 6 due October 12th** on **OAKS**
 - * **R Lab 1 October 15th**
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- October 20th:

- **FALL BREAK: No class October 20th**

- * **Introduction and Literature Review due October 22nd.** *Due before class in the dropbox on OAKS.*

- Data Sources

- October 27th: **Association of Variables**

- *Readings:*
 - * KW Chap 7
 - * **Quiz 7 due October 26th** on **OAKS**
 - **R Lab 2 October 29th**
 - **Homework 3 due November 3rd.** *Due before class in the dropbox on OAKS.*
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- November 3rd: **Simple Regression**

- *Readings:*
 - * KW Chap 8
 - * **Quiz 8 due November 2nd** on **OAKS**
 - **R Lab 3 November 5th**
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- November 10th: **Multiple Regression I**

- *Readings:*
 - * KW Chap 9
 - * **Quiz 9 due November 9th** on **OAKS**
 - **In-Class Workshop November 12th**
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- November 17th: **Multiple Regression II**

- *Readings:*
 - * KW Chap 10
 - * **Quiz 10 due November 16th** on **OAKS**
 - * **R Lab 4 November 19th**
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- November 24th: **Research Designs Due**

- Discuss Research Designs and Data Analysis Project
 - **Thanksgiving Break: Nov 25th–29th**
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- December 1st: **Regression Diagnostics**

- **Homework 4 due December 3rd** *Due before class in the dropbox on OAKS.*
- Review for final
- **Data Analysis Project due December 7th**

- **FINAL EXAM**

- Section 01 Thursday December 10th 12pm to 3pm
 - Section 02 Tuesday December 14th 12pm to 3pm
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