**INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL SCIENCE METHODS**

790:300:01

Fall 2014, M/Th 9:50-11:10 in Milledoler 100

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*1. Course Description and Learning Objectives*

Introduction to Political Science Methods offers skills that are central to the understanding, appreciation and critique of political science research. The course also prepares students for doing their own research, especially of a quantitative nature. The course is highly recommended for ALL students considering a senior thesis or independent research as well as those considering an advanced degree. The skills acquired easily extend to research in American politics, public opinion, comparative politics, international relations, and other political science subfields.

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| F:\1 Academics\UVC materials\Core-Curriculum Graphic.jpg | The course also satisfies two SAS Core Curriculum requirements:   * QQ Quantitative and Formal Reasoning (6 credits needed) * ITR Information Technology and Research |

This class is designed to provide fundamental quantitative reasoning and applied research skills. After taking this course, students will both understand and know how to conduct basic research in political science using survey, experimental, and other empirical data. Moreover, students will comprehend the basic building blocks of political science inquiry, know how to do a literature review, be able to formulate and test a research hypothesis of their own, and will become familiar with data analysis using SPSS, a widely-known statistics program.

Lastly, students will become more employable as a by-product of taking this course. Understanding data collection methods and being able to conduct basic data analysis using SPSS are skills that translate readily to work conducted outside the classroom. Jobs in politics, marketing, public relations, business, etc. often require analytical skills like the ones taught in this course. In addition to preparing students for jobs, this class also provides the skills and research experience necessary to take more advanced quantitative reasoning courses (for example: Survey Methods), to conduct further research, or do well in graduate school.

*2. Requirements*

Students will encounter some math in this course, but there is no prerequisite. Students are also required to use SPSS (or Stata) to do basic statistical analysis. SPSS is available in most labs (under class software in PC mode). All students should therefore have access to RU computing resources (<http://www.nbcs.rutgers.edu/ccf/main/schedules/>). SPSS is also available for download from a CD in the SPSS Companion to Political Analysis – one of the required textbooks.

Data: Data are provided on the CD in the SPSS Companion book.

2.1. **The Required Textbook**.

*The Essentials of Political Analysis* (4th Edition) bundled with *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis* by Philip H. Pollock, ISBN 978-1-48337-729-2

Must own a copy by the second week of classes.

2.2. **Sakai.**

Additional readings are available via the course site on Sakai. Students are expected to have completed the required textbook and any supplemental readings before class. Supplemental readings may not noted on the syllabus and will be announced via sakai and assigned as needed.

2.3. **Technology.** Computers and Calculators: Students must use a scientific calculator during quizzes, exams, problem sets, etc. Bring the calculator every class. For reasons that are obvious, you may not use your phone, tablet, or computer during the exams in lieu of a calculator. Students may not share calculators. Laptops are welcome in class, unless they are used for entertainment purposes. I reserve the right to prohibit personal computer use if I think the class will benefit.

*3. Course Grade Distribution*

Exam 1 - 25%

Final Project - 25%

4 Problem Sets - 25%

Attendance/Participation\* - 25%

Total = 100%

\*Attendance 40%; Quizzes 20%; Study Participation 40%

*4. Attendance and Preparedness*

Regular attendance during the course is expected and students are asked to participate meaningfully in class. I reserve the right to call on students by name to check if you are present and if you have done the readings. This means you must show up on time and stay for the entire class. I do not take attendance every class, but I will take a “random sample” to estimate overall attendance. If students are absent, I deduct points. All students will start the semester with 10 points of “assumed perfect attendance.” Each time the student misses an attendance check, 2 points will be deducted. I also reserve the right to hold short unannounced quizzes as a way to gauge comprehension. Unannounced quizzes are part of your attendance grade.

4.1. **Absence Reporting.** If you will miss a class, you must use the University absence reporting website at https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence. This system generates an automatic email notifying me of your absence. Extended absences will compromise your ability to succeed in this course; should you encounter an emergency or situation that you believe will hamper your ability to complete the course requirements, speak to the Dean of Students as soon as possible, do NOT wait until the end of the semester, or when assignments or grades are due.

4.2. **Make-up Policy.** If you are absent for the quiz, midterm, or one of the days the problem sets are due, I will allow for a makeup during office hours ⇐⇒ (*if, and only if*) (A) the absence is reported in a timely fashion (before class and before the assignment due date) and (B) you can document the reason for your absence showing that it was beyond your control. I require a note from a doctor, judge, etc, if you are sick or were in court. If your car broke down, someone in your family needed you to take them to the ER, a sudden death in the family, and similar unfortunate scenarios also all require proof. If you foresee having to be absent, talk to me at the beginning of the semester.

*5. Assessment*

5.1. **Research Participation**. All students have the opportunity to take part in a political science research study. The study is a panel study and will be conducted once a week starting September 22. The experiment will take a total of about 90 minutes, but will run over several weeks of the semester in small time chunks of 5 minutes each. Only the first and last week will be longer (30 minutes). You cannot miss any portion of the experiment because missing one week will render your data useless. You will not receive credit if you miss any part of the study. You will participate via the Web on a set day of your choosing.

If you do not wish to participate in the experiment, you may write a 15-page paper on the origins and causal logic of political science experiments. See me at the beginning of the semester and let me know if you prefer to write a paper instead of gaining research experience.

5.2. **Examinations.** There is one exam. It will include all material from lectures, the textbooks (including information in the text that has not been discussed during lecture), and work done using SPSS. You will need to bring a scientific calculator.

5.3. **Problem Sets.** Completed by hand, in SPSS, or on Sakai, depending on the assignment. There are four short problem sets. Problem sets give students an opportunity to sharpen their math skills and ensure that students are working towards a successful final project. Problem sets are due one week after they are assigned. Students must turn in a hard copy (no emails). Late problem sets are zero points. Any set handed in later than 5 minutes into class time shall be deemed late.

5.4. **Final Project.** The final project of the course consists of a research design. This design should be 8-10 pages in length and contain the following: literature review, hypotheses, methods, and results. The paper features the results from rudimentary data analysis performed by the student. We will go over the requirements for the paper in class and some of the problem sets will provide students the opportunity to begin work on the final project early in the semester. Final projects must be turned in via the Assignments tab on the Sakai website. Final projects must be in MS Word or PDF. No other formats are accepted.

6. **Academic Integrity**

I strictly enforce academic integrity as determined by Rutgers University. A copy of these regulations is available through the University’s website, at: http://ruweb.rutgers.edu/regulations/ book4/427.pdf

Ignorance of these policies is not an excuse for violations. Violations of academic integrity are a serious matter, and I pursue the strictest punitive action in the case of a violation. Serious cases of academic dishonesty include, bur are not limited to:

* Using and/or submitting as one’s own a paper/project that was written by another student in the past
* Using and/or submitting as one’s own a paper/project that was obtained through the Internet, or some other source
* Having someone else write (even partially) or help with the writing of any of the required papers
* Having someone else do any of the computer work required for the project
* Engaging in plagiarism: using any statements (either in a verbatim or paraphrased form) found in other people’s work as one’s own, and without proper citations. All work will be checked for plagiarism using plagiarism-detecting software.
* Cheating on an exam
* Asking a friend to pretend to be you when I call your name to check if you are present.

*7. Course Outline*

*All readings are on Sakai or in the textbook — Unless noted otherwise*.

**Introduction**

**Thurs 9/4** — Course Overview, Syllabus, and Introduction to The Philosophy of Science

(1) Philip H. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analys*is (2012), “Introduction.”

**Mon 9/8** — The Philosophy of Science, continued

(1) Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1934), Ch.1 “A Survey of Some Fundamental Problems.”

(2) Optional: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pseudo-science/

**Thurs 9/11** — Studying Politics & Intro to Data Collection

(1) Warren E. Miller and Donald Stokes, “Constituency Influence in Congress,” The American Political Review (1963) (retrieve via http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu.proxy. libraries.rutgers.edu/)

(2) Janet B. Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, *Political Science Research Methods* (2012), Ch. 8 “Making Empirical Observations.”

**Mon 9/15** — Building Blocks of Political Science Research & Intro to SPSS in class: Data Management; Variables

(1) Philip H. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis* (2012), Ch.1 “Definition and Measurement of Concepts.”

(2) Philip H. Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis* (2012), Ch. 1 “Introduction to SPSS.” Bring Book and/or Laptop with SPSS to class

(2) James Gibson and Richard Bingham, “On the Conceptualization and Measurement of Political Tolerance,” The American Political Science Review. (1982)

**Thurs 9/18** — Measuring and Describing Variables/Central Tendency & Dispersion (SPSS Demonstration: Mean, Median, and Mode)

(1) Philip H. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis* (2012), Ch.2 “Measuring and Describing Variables.”

(2) Philip H. Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis* (2012), Ch. 2 “Descriptive Statistics.” Bring Book and/or Laptop with SPSS to class

(3) Janet B. Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, *Political Science Research Methods* (2012), Ch.11 “Making Sense of Data.”

**Mon 9/22** — Hypotheses and Explanations (SPSS Demonstration: Basic Comparisons between Groups)

**Panel Study Begins**

(1) Philip H. Pollock, The Essentials of Political Analysis (2012), Ch.3 “Proposing Explanations, Framing Hypotheses, and Making Comparisons.”

(2) Philip H. Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis* (2012), Ch. 4 “Making Comparisons.” Bring Book and/or Laptop with SPSS to class

*You should begin formulating a topic for the Final Project.*

**Thurs 9/25** — Basic Math for Political Science Research

(1)  Steven P. Schacht and Jeffrey E. Aspelmeier, Social and Behavioral Statistics (2005), Ch.2 “Basic Mathematical Concepts”

(2)  Chris Spatz, Tales of Two Distributions (2011), Appendix A. “Arithmetic and Algebra Review.”

*Problem Set #1 assigned; Due next week*

**Common Research Methods in American Politics**

**Mon 9/29** — Content Analysis

(1)  Janet B. Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, Political Science Research Methods (2012), Ch.9 “Document Analysis.”

(2)  Max McCombs and Donald Shaw, “The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media.” Public Opinion Quarterly (1972)

**Thurs 10/2** — Sampling

(1)  Janet B. Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, Political Science Research Methods (2012), Ch. 7 “Sampling.”

(2)  Philip H. Pollock, The Essentials of Political Analysis (2012), Ch. 6 “Foundations of Statistical Inference”

(3) Matt Baretto. “Why Pollsters Missed the Latino Vote — 2012.” Latino Decisions

*Problem Set #1 Due at start of class*

**Mon 10/6** — Surveys: Intro to the ANES (SPSS Demonstration: Using ANES data)

(1) Janet B. Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, *Political Science Research Methods*, Ch.10 “Survey Research and Interviewing”

**Thurs 10/9** — Experiments

(1)  Philip H. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Anal*ysis (2012), Ch. 4 “Research Design and the Logic of Control”

(2)  Shanto Iyengar, Mark Peters, and Donald Kinder. “Experimental Demonstrations of the Not-So-Minimal Consequences of Televisions News Programs.” American Political Science Review (1982)

**Mon 10/13** – Qualitative Methods –

(1) Laurence Wylie, *Village in the Vaucluse* (1964), Preface and pgs. 153-165.

(2) Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research,* Ch. 10

*You should have a general topic for your Final Project by now.*

**Statistical Inference**

**Thurs 10/16** — Distributions, Normal Curve, Z-Scores (SPSS Demonstration: Graphic displays of data)

(1)  Steven P. Schacht and Jeffrey E. Aspelmeier*. Social and Behavioral Statistics* (2005), Ch.5,6 “Measures of Variability” and “Locating Points within a Distribution”

(2)  Chris Spatz, *Tales of Two Distributions* (2011), Ch.5 “Other Descriptive Statistics”

(3) Philip H. Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis* (2012), Ch. 6 “Making Inferences About Sample Means.” Bring Book and/or Laptop with SPSS to class

*Problem Set #2 Assigned*

**Mon 10/20**— Significance

(1) Philip H. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis* (2012), Ch.7 “Tests of Significance and Measures of Association”

(2) Philip H. Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis* (2012), Ch. 7 “Chi Square and Measures of Association.” Bring Book and/or Laptop with SPSS to class

**Thurs 10/23** — Guest Lecture: Thomas Glynn (Political Science Librarian - Rutgers)

(1)  Neil J. Salkind, Exploring Research (2011), Ch.3A “Selecting a Problem and Reviewing “Research”

(2)  Neil J. Salkind, Exploring Research (2011) Ch.14 “Writing a Research Manuscript”

**Mon 10/27** — Catch-Up/Review Class

*Problem Set #2 Due at start of class*

**Thurs 10/30** — *Midterm Exam*

*Bibliography due in class Mon 11/3. Counts like a quiz.*

**Mon 11/3**— Correlation

(1) James Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*, (2012), Ch. 8 “Correlation and Linear Regression”

(2)  Chris Spatz, Tales of Two Distributions (2011) Ch. 6 “Correlation and Regression”

*BIBLIOGRAPHY* *DUE*

**Thurs 11/6** — Regression (SPSS Demonstration: Bivariate Regression)

READ AGAIN (pay attention to the regression segments):

(1) Philip Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*, (2012), Ch. 8 “Correlation and Linear Regression”

(2) Chris Spatz, *Tales of Two Distributions* (2011) Ch. 6 “Correlation and Regression”

*Problem Set #3 Assigned*

**Mon 11/10** — Regression Continued (SPSS Demonstration: Bivariate Regression)

(1) Janet Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, *Political Science Research Methods,* (2012), Ch. 13 “Investigating Relationships between Two Variables” only pages 493-526.

*Problem Set #3 Due; Continue work on literature review/research design*

**Thurs 11/13** —Intro to Multiple Regression

(1)  Briefly review: Philip H. Pollock, The Essentials of Political Analysis (2012), Ch. 4: Research Design and the Logic of Control

(2) Philip H. Pollock, The Essentials of Political Analysis (2012), Ch. 8: Correlation and Linear Regression

(3) Philip Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*, (2012), Ch. 8 “Correlation and Linear Regression”

*Problem Set #4 Assigned (Research Question, Hypothesis, Research design; One paragraph)*

**Applied Statistics: Using SPSS**

**Mon 11/17** — SPSS Help (1) Meet in computer LAB Group A (Location TBA)

**Thurs 11/20** — SPSS Help (1) Meet in computer LAB Group B (Location TBA)

*Problem Set #4 Due on Sakai at 5pm (BOTH Groups)*

**Mon 11/24** — Multiple Regression in SPSS – continued

(1) Mendelberg, Tali. 1997. “Executing Hortons: Racial Crime in the 1988 Presidential Campaign.” Public Opinion Quarterly 61:1 (Spring 1997).

**Thurs 11/27** – NO CLASS (FRIDAY SCHEDULE)

**Mon 12/1**— Paper Workshop in Class:

(1) Due in hardcopy today: Literature review (5 pgs), Revised research question, hypothesis, and method

(2) Exchange with partner (Group A/B). “Grade” each other’s work and provide thoughtful feedback

(3) Turn in with comments at the end of class; *Comments count like a quiz*

**Thurs 12/4** — SPSS Help Meet in computer LAB (location TBA) – Group A

**Mon 12/8** — SPSS Help Meet in computer LAB (location TBA) – Group B

**Thurs 12/1** — Final questions for Final Projects

FINAL PROJECTS due Wed 12/18 at 11:55pm on Sakai

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL SCIENCE METHODS FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Due Tuesday 12/9 at 11:55pm on Sakai (dropbox) Worth 20% of your final grade

*1. Research Paper*

Your final project in this course is a research paper. You will select a problem and review the appropriate academic literature, pose and test your own hypothesis. Please note: this assignment sheet is not meant to replace the readings and instructions provided in class. Be sure to re-read your class notes and (1) Neil J. Salkind, Exploring Research (2011), Ch.3A ”Selecting a Problem and Reviewing Research” and (2) Neil J. Salkind, Exploring Research (2011) Ch.14 ”Writing a Research Manuscript,” as well as the class slides from November 10, 2014 before you begin.

* (1) Formulate a research question that can be answered using an edited version of the 2012 American National Election Study data or General Social Survey provided to you in the SPSS Companion. If you prefer, you can locate your own data source, but will have to provide a copy of this data to me.
* (2) Develop an explanation about your research question (e.g. X causes Y, X causes an increase in Y, X and Y are positively related... )
* (3) State a formal hypothesis expressing this explanation
* (4) Read and learn from researchers who have tackled similar questions (Peer-reviewed literature only)
* (5) Analyze the data using the appropriate statistical method
* (6) Write a research paper where you present and discuss your findings
* (7) You must follow the paper format outlined below

1.1. **Paper Expectations & Grading Criteria.**

* State a clear hypothesis. You will be graded on the quality of your hypothesis. A good hypothesis posits a clear relationship between different factors, such as a correlation, or cause. It has to be testable. Part of formulating a good hypothesis is picking the right variables that allow you to test your hypothesis. (2 points)
* Review the appropriate literature. You will be graded on the relevance of the literature you chose. In other words, a good grade reflects that the articles you chose speak directly to your research question. You will be graded on your choice of sources. Are you using peer-reviewed political science, criminal justice or other appropriate sources? Do they talk about public opinion? Are they academic? Are they up-to date or otherwise significant? Are you using at least 5 sources? Are half of them from political science journals? Did you give enough detail? Did you compare and contrast the findings in the literature to each other and relate the findings to your hypothesis? Did you use the literature to show why your hypothesis is relevant?

Did you summarize the literature and restate your hypothesis at the end of the literature review? (5 points)

1. Method: Describe your method, including what the data are that you are using. (Look on the ANES website to learn about the data and how they were collected.) State what statistical method you are using and why. How does your method allow you to test your hypothesis? Provide basic information about your variables (frequencies, descriptives). Talk about them. Test your hypothesis using at least one method and tell a story about what you find. Mention concepts from this semester, e.g. generalizability — showing off that you know something about sampling and can utilize that knowledge to talk about the validity of your findings. (10 points)
2. Discuss your findings. Do they confirm your hypothesis? What are the implications of your research? How do they speak to your literature review? What should be done next? What do you think your results mean? What are the limitations (if any)? (This is where you get to state your own opinion. It is the only place in this paper where you get to offer your own thoughts. (3 points)

1.2. **Paper Format**.

(1) Title Page with Abstract (one paragraph summary of your paper incl. findings; page is not  numbered, nor part of the count)

(2) Introduction (about half a page — clearly states the motivation and relevance of your research question)

(3) Literature Review (about 4 pages)

(4) Hypothesis

(5) Method (description of your data and statistical method — about 1 page)

(6) Results (presentation of your findings — about 2 pages)

(7) Discussion (1-2 page conclusion)

(8) References (a.k.a works cited; bibliography)

(9) Appendix (all your tables and figures go here — properly labeled, formatted, and with significance levels clearly noted)

Your final paper should be 8-10 pages in length (excluding title page, references and appendix). You can chose to use MLA, APA or Chicago for your citation style. Use it consistently. Make sure you cite everything properly. Be careful not to plagiarize (broadly speaking: using someone else’s ideas or words in a way they appear to be yours. For more detail see: http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/plagiarism) Due to the tight grading turnaround time I cannot accept late papers.

Good Luck!