

Introduction to Political Science Methods (790:300:04)

Spring 2017

T/Th 6:10-7:30 in FH-A4 CAC

(Lab sessions meet in Rooms 1230 in Rutgers University Academic Bldg during the regular class time. The schedule for the lab sessions are available on p.3)

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Office Hours: Tue. 1:10-2:00 RSC Atrium, Wed. 12:15-1:00 Hickman 316

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.



The course also satisfies two SAS Core Curriculum requirements:

- QQ Quantitative and Formal Reasoning
- 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.

In short, this class provides substantial building blocks for academic work while at Rutgers and practical job skills for many data- and analysis-intensive fields.

2. Requirements

Students will encounter some math in this course, but there is no prerequisite. Students are also required to use SPSS 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.

The Required Textbook.

The Essentials of Political Analysis (5th Edition) bundled with *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis* by Philip H. Pollock, ISBN 978-1-5063-2892-8.

You must own a copy by the second week of classes. Purchasing a used 4th edition set is acceptable but you will not have updated exercises in the workbook and will not have links to online resources. All other readings are in 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 will not necessarily be noted on the syllabus and will be announced via sakai and assigned as needed.

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.

3. Course Grade Distribution

Midterm - 25%

Final Project - 25%

2 Problem Sets - 20%

Attendance to lectures - 20%

Attendance to lab sessions - 10%

Midterm. The midterm 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.

Final Project. The final project of the course consists of a research design. This design should be 5-7 pages in length (double-spaced in Time New Roman, 12 fonts; pages not counting tables and figures as well as the list of references) and contain the following: introduction (1 pages), literature review (2 pages), hypotheses (with bullet points), methods (1 page; description of your data, variables, unit of analysis, and statistical models you used), and results (2 pages; interpretation of figures and tables you produced and substantive conclusion of your study, that is, what you learned from it) with section headings (be organized). 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 Sakai website in PDF. No other formats are accepted. Projects MUST include data analysis in the body of the paper; projects that lack such analysis will be deemed inadequate. Late submissions will get 50% off the total points earned.

Problem Sets. Completed by hand or using SPSS 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. Each assignment is due at the beginning of the class and should be submitted in two formats: 1) a hardcopy and 2) a pdf file submitted to the Sakai's class website. (Do not email your homework to the instructor.) Any set handed in later than 5 minutes into class time shall be deemed late. Students will lose 50% of the total points of the given assignment for submitting it late on the due date. Submissions past the due date will receive only 30% of the points earned.

Attendance. Regular attendance during the course is expected and students are expected to participate meaningfully in class. You must show up on time and stay for the entire class to receive credit for attendance. Any legitimate excuses (e.g. family or religious affairs) will be taken into consideration only when you consult with the instructor at least two weeks ahead AND with ****officially documented proof****. If you do not have any documented proof, you do not need to discuss your absence. Attendance during lectures is worth 20% of your grade, and attendance and participation during lab sessions is worth another 10% of your grade.

Misbehavior. In addition, any disruptive behavior (e.g. sleeping, talking outside of regular discussion, using cell phones, web surfing and insulting other people in the class, etc.) during the class will cost you ****a full letter grade down**** for each time detected. You can use laptops but they should be used only for course-related activities (e.g. taking notes) but not for internet surfing. In addition, it is very important for you to be polite and respectful when you are communicating with your instructor in any means including emails.

Letter Grades. The thresholds for the letter grades at the end of the semester will be determined based on the distribution and the satisfactory performance of the class.

Lab sessions will be held on the dates shown below, in rooms 1230 in the new Rutgers Academic Building, 15 Seminary Place, during the regular class time (6:10-7:30) on the following dates:

Thursday 2/9

Thursday 2/23

Thursday 3/9

Thursday 3/30

Thursday 4/13

Tuesday 4/25

Thursday 4/27

Make-up Policy. Note: Make up exams will be permitted only under the gravest of circumstances with appropriate ****documentation****. Personal travel plans, sickness without hospitalization, death of beloved ones (other than that of parents, brothers and sisters), or schedule conflicts are not legitimate reasons for requesting to take an exam at a different time. If your car broke down, someone in your family needed you to take them to the ER, and similar unfortunate scenarios also all require officially documented proof. If the reason for absence is something you can foresee, you should talk to me at least two weeks prior to the midterm.

4. Academic Integrity

I fully subscribe to the university's policy on academic and require proper footnoting in an acceptable format such as found in the APA Handbook or the Chicago Manual of Style. You can find these in the library, and I will distribute basic guidelines with the assignment. Plagiarism (quoting directly without quotation marks and/or citing the source, paraphrasing inadequately with or without citing the source), cheating, and fabricating of sources will be dealt with in accordance with university policies. Details of these are here:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>. Please familiarize yourselves with university policy. I have found that most instances of plagiarism have occurred out of ignorance, but Rutgers University insists on following a standard response procedure and in any case ignorance is NOT an acceptable excuse for plagiarism. All instances of suspected plagiarism and cheating will be evaluated in accordance with university procedures.

I encourage you to take this tutorial on plagiarism and how to avoid it:

<http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/EducationalModules/Plagiarism/>

Serious cases of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- Using and/or submitting as one's own a paper/project that was written by another student in the past or written by yourself for a previous class;
- 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) 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 do an attendance check.

Course Outline

Tue 1/17: Course Overview

Pollock, "Introduction."

Thu 1/19: Research questions, literature reviews, and the term paper

Brynam, Ch.2

Tue 1/24: Defining what we are studying: Variables

Pollock, Ch.1 "Definition and Measurement of Concepts."

Thu 1/26: Measuring and Describing Variables

Pollock, Ch.2 "Measuring and Describing Variables."

Tue 1/31: Hypotheses and Explanations

Pollock, Ch.3 "Proposing Explanations, Framing Hypotheses, and Making Comparisons."

Thu 2/2 & Tue 2/7: Research Design

Pollock, Ch.4 “Research Design and the Logic of Control”

Thu 2/9

****Lab Session 1** (Room 1230 at Rutgers Academic Building, 15 Seminary Place)**

SPSS Workbook, Ch.1-2

Tue 2/14: Controlled comparisons

Pollock, Ch.5 “Making Controlled Comparisons”

Thu 2/16 & Tue 2/21: Sampling

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

Pollock, Ch.6 “Foundations of Statistical Inference”

[Problem Set #1 Assigned on Tue 2/21](#)

Thu 2/23

****Lab Session 2****

SPSS Workbook, Ch.3

Tue 2/28: Literature Review

Baglione, *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*, Ch.3

Thu 3/2: Midterm Review

Problem Set #1 due at the beginning of class on Thu 3/2

Tue 3/7: **Midterm**

Thu 3/9

****Lab Session 3****

SPSS Workbook, Ch.4-5

Tue 3/14 & Thu 3/16: Spring Recess (No Class)

Tue 3/21 & Thu 3/23: Tests of Statistical Significance

Pollock, Ch.7 “Tests of Significance and Measures of Association”

Tue 3/28: Correlation and Linear Regression

Pollock, Ch.8 “Correlation and Linear Regression”

Thu 3/30

****Lab Session 4****

SPSS Workbook, Ch.7

Tue 4/4: Correlation and Linear Regression (continued)

Pollock, Ch.8 “Correlation and Linear Regression”

Thu 4/6: Intro to Multiple Regression

Singleton & Straits, Ch.16 “Multivariate Analysis”

[Problem Set #2 Assigned](#)

Tue 4/11: Review for the final paper

Presentation of several research papers, review of paper structure

Thu 4/13

****Lab Session 5****

SPSS Workbook, Ch.8

Tue 4/18: Experimentation

Singleton & Straits, Ch.7 “Experimentation”

Thu 4/20: Surveys

Singleton & Straits, Ch.9 “Survey Research”

Problem Set # 2 due at the beginning of class (including the introduction, literature review, hypothesis, and the data description of the final paper)

Tue 4/25

****Lab Session 6**** (Attendance is optional.)

Thu 4/27

****Lab Session 7**** (Attendance is optional.)

Tue 5/4

****Final paper due by 11:59pm****