Fall 2015
Scope and Methods of Political Science
POLS 2010-01

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Course Objectives: Why are some nations frequently at war while others tend to get along with their neighbors? What factors do voters consider when selecting among candidates? Are citizens better represented in parliamentary or presidential systems? These are examples of research questions that political science can help answer.

This course will introduce students to the discipline of political science. It will review the discipline and its subfields as well as introduce students to the research process. It will help students to answer the question "what is political science?" as well as the question "is political science really a *science?*" Students will leave this course with both theoretical and practical knowledge on how to ask – and answer empirically – research questions about the political world.

Program Outcomes: This course addresses the following program outcomes:
1. Students will have a basic knowledge of the discipline of political science, including knowledge of the subfields within the discipline, theories that seek to explain political phenomena, and methods for evaluating political statements empirically.

Learning Outcomes: After completing this course, students will be able to:
1. demonstrate basic knowledge of the methods, approaches, and theories used in accumulating and interpreting information applicable to the discipline of political science.
2. demonstrate research skills and utilize the proper methodologies necessary to write a paper in the discipline of political science.
3. demonstrate critical thinking skills to formulate and defend a thesis in written and oral format, by being able to 1) structure and evaluate normative political argument and 2) use evidence to analyze empirical political statements.

Required Texts: There is one required text for this course:

➢ Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. 2012. *Political Science Research Methods.* Seventh Edition. Los Angeles, CA: Sage/CQ Press. ISBN: 978-16087-16890

In addition to the text, there are several required articles (marked with *) located in the Content folder for this class on MyTulane.

Assignments: There will be a midterm exam and an optional final exam in this course. Exams will be closed book; the format of each will be discussed before the midterm. There will also be a research project consisting of four (or five) components. Instructions for the research project are at the end of this syllabus. Attendance and participation will also be factored into the final course grade. These components will contribute to the course grade as follows:

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Research Question	September 22	20
Literature Review	October 27	60
Data Statement	November 10	40
Final Paper	December 13	80 / 180
Midterm Exam	October 22	80
Final Exam	December 13	100
Att./Part.	–	20
TOTAL		**400**

Grading: This course will be graded according to Tulane's plus/minus grading system:

	+		–
A		92.5 and above	90 to 92.4
B	87.5 to 89.9	82.5 to 87.4	80 to 82.4
C	77.5 to 79.9	72.5 to 77.4	70 to 72.4
D	67.5 to 69.9	62.5 to 67.4	60 to 62.4
F		59.9 and below	

Grades will be available by seeing me during office hours. I will not provide grades over email or by phone.

Course Policies: Students are expected to attend each class, to be on time, and to have all course materials read prior to the class in which they are discussed. Please turn off all electronic devices during class. Laptop computers are not permitted in class; please turn them off and put them away before class starts. All assignments must be completed for a student to pass the course. Requests for regrading any exam or assignment must be made no later than one week after it has been returned. No make-ups will be allowed except in very serious circumstances (I reserve the right to determine what is "very serious"). Course incompletes will only be allowed for circumstances in which the student is physically unable to complete the course; the student must otherwise be passing the course in order to be granted an incomplete.

Course Accommodations: If you have any kind of special circumstances, such as a disability, illness, or handicap, or if you are involved with a university activity that requires you to miss class, let me know as soon as possible. This information is confidential. All students attending Tulane University with <u>documented</u> disabilities are eligible and encouraged to apply for services with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Please see me or go to http://tulane.edu/studentaffairs/disability/index.cfm for more information.   Students needing accommodations must provide me a copy of the accommodation granted by ODS at least seven days before an exam.

Course Format: The format for the course will vary. Some classes will primarily consist of lecture, though I will frequently interrupt lecture to call on students to answer questions and give opinions. Other classes will operate as a seminar, and on those days students should be ready to engage one another in discussion. A few classes may consist of workshop sessions, in which case students should be ready to collaborate with me and fellow students to address a practical task. In all circumstances students are encouraged to stop me for questions or comments.

Policy regarding Academic Freedom: In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical thinking, particularly about political ideas, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. Students may disagree with each other at times, or with me. These differences can help enhance class discussion and create an atmosphere where students (and I) will be encouraged to think and learn. In any event, grades will not be adversely affected by any beliefs expressed in class or in assignments.

Policy regarding Academic Integrity: As described in the Tulane University Honor Code, students are expected to uphold the honor and integrity of the academic process. Violations of the Honor Code include, but are not limited to, cheating on an exam (either providing answers to or receiving answers from another student), plagiarism (the use of another author's words or arguments without attribution), and unauthorized collaboration (working with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of any course requirement). If a student commits any violation of the Honor Code, I will pursue disciplinary action as outlined in the Honor Code.

Course Outline:

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
Aug 25	Introduction to the Class	
Aug 27	What is Political Science?	J&R Ch 2, *Isaak
Review	Sept 1 – American	*Ceaser, *Flores-Macias
of	Sept 3 – Comparative	*Boix, *Fleckenstein
the	Sept 8 – International Relations	*Reus-Smit, *Dietrich
Subfields	Sept 10 – Theory & other subfields	*Dryzek, *MacMullen

Sept 15	Research Questions	J&R Ch 1, pp. 74-81
Sept 17, 22	Literature Review **Research Question Due Sept 22**	J&R pp. 81-101, J&R Ch 15, *Berg, *Knopf, *Pasek
Sept 24, 29	Theories in Political Science	*Moore, *Shively
Oct 1	Variables	J&R pp. 102-109
Oct 6	Hypotheses	J&R pp. 109-126
Oct 8, 13	Data	J&R Ch 8
Oct 15	*NO CLASS – FALL BREAK*	
Oct 20	Measurement	J&R Ch 5, *Coppedge
Oct 22	**MIDTERM EXAM**	
Oct 27	Sampling **Literature Review Due Oct 27**	J&R Ch 7, *Geddes
Oct 29	Surveys	J&R pp. 306-341, *Glock
Nov 3	Causal Inference	J&R Ch 6
Nov 5	Historical/Institutional Analysis	J&R Ch 9, pp. 341-346 *Symposium
Nov 10	Descriptive Statistics **Data Statement Due Nov 10**	J&R Ch 11
Nov 12	Hypothesis Testing	J&R Ch 12
Nov 17/19	Bivariate Analysis	J&R Ch 13
Nov 24, Dec 1, 3	Multivariate Analysis	J&R Ch 14
Nov 26	*NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING*	
Dec 13	**FINAL EXAM / PAPER DUE – 1:00 PM**	

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Research Paper Guidelines

- **Step 1 (20 points): Research Question (Due September 22)**

This paper should begin by very clearly stating, "My research question is…" You should then discuss why this topic is important. Why do we care what the answer is? Finally, you should offer some preliminary thoughts on what data you would need to answer this question and where you might find it. This paper should be 1-2 pages.

- **Step 2 (60 points): Literature Review (Due October 27)**

This paper should begin by revising and expanding on the research question paper you turned in two weeks ago. It should thoroughly discuss the topic and why it is important, making sure to address all comments from the first paper.

It should then present substantial literature review. Regarding the literature review:

> "A literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers… In writing the literature review, your purpose is to convey to your reader what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic, and what their strengths and weaknesses are. As a piece of writing, the literature review must be defined by a guiding concept (e.g., your research objective, the problem or issue you are discussing, or your argumentative thesis). It is not just a descriptive list of the material available, or a set of summaries." See: http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/literature-review

Although there is no limit on the number of citations, each paper should include no fewer than ten scholarly works.

Additionally, students cannot rely on material from web sites. Other than using the web to help you find material that has been printed elsewhere (in journals, books, etc.), you should not use the web on this project. Students MUST appropriately cite their sources in the text as well as the bibliography. You must follow a standard citation format (I do not care which one you choose, but you must pick one and use it consistently and correctly).

In writing your literature review, you should be developing hypotheses about your study. For example, if you're asking, "Why did voters vote for Barack Obama in 2012?" then your literature review should include the various hypotheses, including scholarly work that has been done on each hypothesis. So, you might hypothesize that "Democrats were more likely to vote for Obama" or "People who watched the news every day were more likely to vote for Obama."

- **Step 3 (40 points): Data Statement (due November 10)**

This paper should discuss the data you will use to answer your research question. What are these data and where did you/will you find them? Why are these data appropriate for answering your research question? At this point you should also offer some preliminary thoughts about *how* you will analyze the data. For example, if you are looking at the impact of campaign spending on election outcomes, you could examine what percentage of candidates who spend more than their opponents actually win, or calculate a correlation between dollars spent and votes received. This will probably help you discover what other forms of data you will need (e.g. in the latter example of calculating a correlation between dollars and votes, you will not only need campaign finance data, but you will also need election returns/votes data).

This paper should also revise and expand on the hypotheses presented in the paper you turned in a month ago. Hypotheses should be stated more clearly and incorporate the specific data/variables that you just discussed as being necessary to answer your research question.

- **Step 4 (80 points): Research Design (due December 13)**

This paper should first revise and connect the material from the first three parts of the assignment, taking care to incorporate any suggestions/comments I have made on the earlier versions. Specifically, you should have:

- An introductory paragraph or section that introduces the topic, presents the specific research question, and discusses why this is research is important.

- The next section should be a revised literature review. You might need sub-headings that delineate different ideas/theories/hypotheses.

- Then, you'll need a section on the data, clearly indicating your dependent and independent variables, where you will acquire the data, and why they are appropriate for answering your research question.

- Finally, provide a research design. If you do a qualitative analysis, you should discuss how you will select your cases/documents/etc, what type of analysis you will perform on them, and how you will present your findings. If you do a quantitative analysis, you should discuss your analytical techniques and describe (or even include empty examples of) the tables or graphs you would use to present your findings.

- Conclude the paper with some thoughts on unresolved issues, potential problems, or things you might do differently if you were to redo this project.

There is no minimum page limit for Step 4; it is more important that you address all required components of the research design. That said, I think it is unlikely that you can do this in less than 15 or 20 pages.

- **Step 5 (100 points): Final Paper or Final Exam (due December 13)**

At this point you have a choice regarding your final assignment:

- o You may choose to take the Final Exam. It will be worth 100 points and take place on Sunday, December 13th, at 1:00 PM in the classroom. As final exams are scheduled by the Registrar, there are **NO EXCEPTIONS** to this date & time.
- o **OR** you may choose to continue work on your research design and actually complete the research paper. Thus, instead of turning in a completed research design as outlined in Step 4 for 80 points, you would turn in a complete research paper for 180 points. This will include all the components discussed in Step 4 as well as
  - ▪ Instead of a section on where you *would have* acquired the data, you will ACTUALLY ACQUIRE THE DATA, and this section will discuss the details of the data, where you found them, and any alterations/recoding you performed on the data before conducting your analyses.
  - ▪ Instead of a research design, you will have a section describing your analytical methods. Did you use qualitative or quantitative methods? Which specific procedures did you use to generate evidence to answer your research question, and why are they appropriate for this analysis?
  - ▪ Then, YOU WILL ACTUALLY ANALYZE THE DATA and include a lengthy section describing your results. What do the data say? How are we to evaluate your hypotheses? Do the data support or contradict your theory? Your findings should be presented in the text and you should feel free to include tables, charts, graphs, or other graphical presentations of data to the extent that they help to illustrate how your evidence addresses your hypotheses.
  - ▪ Finally, you will have a conclusion. This section should restate the research question and summarize the findings of your analyses. It should ultimately provide an answer to your research question. It should also address unresolved issues and possible next steps should you (or someone else) continue to work on this research question.

As above, there is no minimum page limit for Step 5; it is more important that you address all required components of the research paper. That said, I think one will need 15 or 20 pages for the research design, so a complete research paper should be 20-30 pages (perhaps more if you have large tables or illustrations).

- **INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL STEPS:**
  - o Use 12-point, Times New Roman Font
  - o Use 1-inch margins all around
  - o Insert Page numbers at the bottom
  - o Indent paragraphs & do not put spaces between them
  - o All papers must be turned in as hard copies – please **DO NOT** email them to me.