

Political Science 3000
Introduction to Political Research
Fall 2006

MW 10:00-10:50, Lefevre 106

Friday Labs

James Endersby
Office Hours: M 4:00-5:00, F 9:00-11:00
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Course Objectives:

This course is an introduction to the systematic analysis of political phenomena. It examines the meaning of “explanation” and “causal reasoning,” and research strategies designed to make valid causal inferences. The course reviews experimental design, measurement, quantitative and qualitative research methods, hypothesis formulation and testing, and the display of information. For illustrative purposes, the instructors provide substantive examples from several fields of political science (primarily American politics and international relations as well as comparative politics and public policy). The goal of the course is to prepare political science majors for the more analytical upper-level political science courses, to improve their research skills, and to increase their ability to make valid causal statements about political events and behaviors.

The course is required for all Political Science majors. It is useful for others including Political Science minors and those interested in social science research generally. Students will acquire skills useful for more advanced courses as well as for successful careers.

This is also a writing intensive course. Effective writing is encouraged through several writing assignments that require you to think clearly and express your thoughts concisely. Eschew obfuscation!

Your weekly lab on Friday will include exercises to help you learn the material and improve skills. Some of these exercises will emphasize writing and clear communication. Topics, for instance, include questionnaire construction for survey research, designing a research proposal, and creating a report of research results.

Textbooks for Purchase:

Required:

Manheim, Jarol B., et al. 2005. *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science*, 6th ed. New York: Longman.

Schmidt, Diane E. 2005. *Writing in Political Science: A Practical Guide*, 3rd ed. New York: Longman.

Course Requirements:

Two exams, a midterm and a final, will be partly objective but will also include short answers and essays. There will be four short (approximately four page) papers, three of which will be revised and resubmitted. There will also be two in-class exams and weekly exercises in labs, some of which will have a writing component. Each of the last three papers has an initial submission, receives comments on the paper (one week after submission), and a subsequent and final revision (one week after comments are received). You are expected to attend the lectures, your Friday lab, and to participate in weekly exercises in the labs.

As this is a writing intensive course, writing assignments account for a substantial component of the course grade. Moreover, the writing assignments are intended to be vehicles for learning the material covered in the course. Each student will choose from a list of research topics provided in the first lab meeting, and this research topic will serve as a theme for all four writing assignments.

Each of the first three short papers will be submitted twice. One week after your initial submission, your paper will be returned to you with comments regarding content and style. You must then rethink and revise your original paper (and not merely correct grammatical and stylistic errors). Your final grade will be assigned following the subsequent and final revision (due one week after comments are received). Due dates for first and second versions of the papers are identified in the course schedule below. You must submit your first version to receive a grade on the second version.

Following the selection of your research topic, the first paper allows a brief discussion of relevant literature to guide future writing assignments. The second paper asks you to consider a political phenomenon and to define and defend an objective measurement of that phenomenon. The intent is to learn how difficult it can be to operationalize and measure what we often consider commonly observable. The third paper requires you to consider certain types of methodological approaches frequently used in Political Science and to evaluate how appropriate the methods are for given contexts. The goal is to show how some methods are better under some circumstances, but that there is no “best” methodology. The fourth paper lets you create and evaluate quantitative data presentation (figures, tables, or statistics) in order to communicate information effectively to the reader (or hearer). You will locate and analyze data, create and perform an appropriate method of presentation, and discuss its relative merits. Further information on specific writing assignments will be given in class and labs and available from the instructor’s web site.

Grading Policy:

Final course grades are computed from all required work as follows

Two Exams	20.0 % each	40.0 % total
Three writing Assignments, including revision	12.5	37.5
One writing assignment, no revision	7.5	7.5
Friday labs, attendance, & weekly exercises	15.0	15.0
<i>Total Grade</i>		<i>100.0%</i>

The plus/minus system of grading will be used; an A+ will be given for scores at or exceeding 97%, an A for scores 93 and above, an A- for those 90 and above, a B+ for scores 87 and above, and so forth.

Attendance and participation are necessary for a good experience in this course. Overall course grades will be reduced by one percentage point for each absence above four. Labs (and classes) will include several in-class exercises, evaluated solely on participation. You must submit written assignments by the due dates below; late assignments will not be accepted. No make-up examination will be given.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments:

Readings refer to chapters or sections in the Manheim, et al. (M) or Schmidt (S) texts. All readings on the following list should be completed by the first class date shown. Exams will be held in class, papers will be submitted to lab instructors. Of course, the following schedule serves only as an outline and readings and homework may deviate slightly from this schedule as the semester progresses.

Week	Dates	Topic	Readings
1	Aug. 21	Course Introduction; The Research Process	
2	Aug. 23, 28	Thinking Systematically about Politics; A Science of Politics Select research topic, Friday, September 1	M 1, 2; S 1, 2
3	Aug. 30, Sept. 6	Literature, aggregate data, and internet searches <i>No class, Labor Day, Monday, September 4</i>	M 3, 4, 11; S 4, 8 (pp. 133-141)
4	Sept. 11, 13	Operationalization and Measurement Paper 1 first submission due Friday, Sept. 15	M 5
5	Sept. 18, 20	Research Design	M 6; S 3
6	Sept. 25, 27	Sampling; Survey Research I Paper 1 final draft due Friday, September 29	M 7, 8
7	Oct. 2, 4	Survey Research II; Scaling Techniques Paper 2 first submission due Friday, October 6	M 9
8	Oct. 9, 11	Formal and Mathematical Models	Schrodt (online)

9	Oct. 16, 18	Midterm Exam, Monday, October 16 Reporting Results; Writing and Evaluating the Research Report Paper 2 final draft due Friday, October 20	M 22, 23; S 6, 7
10	Oct. 23, 25	Collecting Quantitative Data; Content Analysis	M 14, 10; S 5
11	Oct. 30, Nov. 1	Comparative Political Analysis Paper 3 first submission due Friday, Nov. 3	M 12
12	Nov. 6, 8	Data Presentation and Description	M 15
13	Nov. 13, 15	Summarizing Distributions of One Variable Paper 3 final draft due Friday, November 17 <i>No Class, Thanksgiving Break, Nov. 20-24</i>	M 16
14	Nov. 27, 29	Making Correct Inferences; Relationships between Two (or More) Variables	M 17, 18
15	Dec. 4, 6	Observation and Interviewing Paper 4 due Friday, December 8	M pp. 308-315, 19, 20, 21
Finals	Dec. 11	Final Exam, Monday, 1:00-3:00	

Important Dates to Remember:

Friday, September 1	Research topic selection
Friday, September 15	Paper 1, first submission
Friday, September 29	Paper 1, second submission
Friday, October 6	Paper 2, first submission
Monday, October 16	Midterm Exam
Friday, October 20	Paper 2, second submission
Friday, November 3	Paper 3, first submission
Friday, November 17	Paper 3, second submission
Friday, December 8	Paper 4, submission
Monday, December 11	Final Exam, 1:00-3:00

Honesty:

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. Each student's work must be responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty will automatically receive a grade of F. University regulations also require reporting of incidents of academic dishonesty, which may lead to probation or expulsion.

Accommodation:

If you have special needs, such as those addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act, please notify your instructor immediately. Every reasonable effort will be made to assist you. Students with disabilities who request academic accommodations must register with Disability Services, A038 Brady Commons, 882-4696.

Teaching Assistants:

The labs on Friday are a critical part of this class, and much of the material in the lectures and in the texts leads toward the hands-on training and discussion in the labs. Labs are held in the Professional Building Computer Lab, room 1A in the basement. We are fortunate to have three excellent TAs for the course.

Onawa Lacewell

Labs: A 9:00 and E 10:00
Professional 22, 884-8055
opl7d8@mizzou.edu
Office hours: MW 12:00-2:00. R 10:00-12:00

Mike Rudy

Labs: B 11:00 and C 12:00
Professional 22, 884-8055
marbnd@mizzou.edu
Office hours: MW 12:00-3:00

Rollin Tusalem

Labs: D 1:00 and F 2:00
Professional 22, 884-8055
rftb52@mizzou.edu
Office hours: W 11:00-5:00