

Research and Analysis in Political Science Syllabus

(POLS 3302-001)

3 credit hours

Fall 2025

August 25, 2025 to December 4, 2025

Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30am - 10:45am

Classroom: Madla 205

Instructor Information

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1. COURSE OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION

This course seeks to introduce students to basic research design and methodology principles in political science. Some of the topics we'll cover include theory building, hypothesis testing, basic statistical concepts, specific qualitative and quantitative methods, and research ethics.

This course will focus on the foundations of political science research, both qualitative and quantitative. This course will provide a brief introduction to some of the more basic statistical models you might encounter in the wild, but should not be seen as a comprehensive statistics course.

2. COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

After taking this course, you will:

- be able to critically evaluate existing research studies
- have a better understanding of how to use statistical analysis to help generate and answer questions in political science
- use appropriate mathematical and statistical language in oral, written, and graphical forms
- develop and practice quantitative reasoning and literacy skills
- be comfortable conducting independent quantitative or qualitative research

- understand and be able to apply the scientific method to political science research

Regardless of your career path or statistical/mathematical experience, there is something for you in this class.

Course Objectives. Upon completion of this course, students will have a greater understanding and appreciation of political science research, including:

- Theory formation and hypothesis testing
- Qualitative and quantitative methods
- Responsible interpretation and analysis of study results
- Key puzzles and debates in the broader political science literature

3. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Text.

- Johnson, Janet Buttolph, H.T.Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. *Political Science Research Methods*. (9th edition) (2020). ISBN (paperback): 9781544331430

Software. We'll be using the program Microsoft Excel in this course to store, manipulate, and analyze data.

Microsoft Office applications are free to download for students (see the Blackboard course page for more information or contact the Help Desk at Ext. 4357).

4. GRADING

Grade scale. To calculate your grade at any point in this class, divide the number of points you currently have by the total possible points (as found in Blackboard).

Your letter grade in this class will be based on the following scale:

- (A) 90 - 100%
- (B) 80 - 89%
- (C) 70 - 79%
- (D) 60 - 69%
- (F) Below 60%

SUMMARY OF GRADED WORK

There are **600** possible points available in this class. The points are broken down as follows:

- **Participation:** 150 points possible

- **Homework assignments:** 175 points possible (7¹ assignments at 25 points each = 175 points total)
- **Research design components:** 100 points possible
- **Research design (final project):** 100 points possible
- **Final project check-ins:** 50 points possible
- **Syllabus assignment:** 25 points possible

Participation. Active and consistent participation is the key to success in this course. If you are present and able to actively and productively contribute to the weekly discussions, you can expect to earn your full points at the end of the semester.

Homework. Over the course of the semester, there will be a total of 8 homework assignments to complete. See the reading schedule and calendar for specific due dates.

Research Design Components. The final project you'll complete in this course will be a research design (RD). Building an entire research design or proposal from scratch can be daunting, so I've broken it down, piece by piece.

Over the course of the semester, you'll submit four different components of the RD. Please note that some of these components may be larger and more time-consuming than others, so be sure to budget your time accordingly.

Research Design (Final Project). At the end of the semester, you should be able to assemble a final, polished research design based on the pieces you've completed and submitted over the course of the semester. This final research design should represent an actionable project, waiting to be implemented (see Blackboard for examples).

If you've stayed on top of the components and have paid attention to the feedback you receive, putting together your final research design should be a breeze.

Project Check-Ins. In order to keep you on track and address any issues or questions that might come up in your research design projects, you will complete two project check-ins. These short project check-ins will take place one-on-one during our normally scheduled classes, but you will need to submit an outline to Blackboard prior to.

Syllabus assignment. Everything you need to know about the course can be found in this syllabus. To ensure you've carefully read through and understand this syllabus, you'll complete a short syllabus quiz at the start of the semester.

¹There are 8 assignments in all, but I'll only keep your 7 highest scores

5. CLASSROOM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A&M-San Antonio Academic Policies. See the current *A&M University-San Antonio Student Handbook*

Late Work. Staying on top of your work is one of the best ways to do well in the course. Late work will incur a 10% penalty each day it's late, up to two days after the due date; any work submitted after the second day will receive a 0.

Note that incorrect and/or corrupted files will be treated as missing and will receive a 0.

Grade Appeals. If you wish you to contest a grade, you must submit a written appeal over e-mail within one week logically explaining why you feel your assignment should be reviewed.

Classroom Civility. In-class discussions give students a chance to increase their understanding of the material and how it relates to their everyday lives. Students who are not able to participate in an appropriate, productive, or polite manner may be asked to leave the class.

Plagiarism and Cheating. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a 0 for the assignment and may face further punitive actions from the University. I do not take this issue lightly and reserve the right to fail a student from the course for cheating and/or plagiarizing. For more information, please refer to the University's Student Handbook.

Use of Generative AI(Artificial Intelligence). Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are important learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments must be prepared by the student and the student alone. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, AI-generated and/or assisted submissions ² are *not* permitted in this course and will be treated as plagiarism.

Any student suspected of using AI to complete an assignment will be called in for an oral defense of their assignment.

²Including, but not limited to: ChatGPT, Grammarly, Gemini, etc.

E-mail. I respond to student e-mails within 24 to 36 hours on the weekdays, from around 9am to 5pm. You should feel free to e-mail me whenever your schedule allows, but note that I generally do not respond to e-mail on the weekends or after 5pm on the weekdays. Please stay in touch. Should extenuating circumstances arise that prevent you from completing your coursework please let me know as soon as you are able to so we can make arrangements. Do *not* wait until the end of the semester to reach out.

GENERAL COURSE RULES

- You are responsible for ensuring your file submissions are correct (i.e. not the wrong file) and readable (i.e. correct format). Incorrect and/or corrupted files will be treated as missing.
- You should have a consistent, functioning internet connection to take this course. It is your responsibility to ensure that your computer and connection are functioning properly. Please do not try to complete coursework on a mobile phone, if possible.
- Any disruptive or disrespectful behavior will result in a loss of credit for the assignment and possibly a referral to the Office of Student Conduct.
- You are responsible for all information and announcements made in the course. Prepare to log onto Blackboard at least 2 times a week to check for updates, changes, or new information. Read the course home page thoroughly and check announcements daily.

6. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

See the current *A&M University-San Antonio Student Handbook*.

You can find the complete listing of the University's policies and resources under the 'Syllabus and Course Calendar' link on the sidebar in Blackboard.

7. TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: this is a tentative reading and course schedule and is subject to change. I reserve the right to amend this schedule as necessary. I will notify students and post an updated syllabus should changes be made.

"Required reading" refers to the reading you need to have done in advance for that class. Any assigned articles or other media will be available on Blackboard.

All graded work is due by 11:59pmCT of the indicated date. Any work submitted after this date will incur a 10% penalty each day it's late, up to two days.

Unit	Week	Class Meeting Dates	Topic	Reading	Graded Work (due date)
					*All graded work is due by 11:59pmCT on the indicated date
1. Introduction	1	• August 25 • August 27	Course Introduction	☐ 'How to read political science' (located in Week 1 folder in Blackboard)	☐ Syllabus assignment (August 31)
	2	• September 1 – No class • September 3	Introduction	☐ Chapter 1	☐ Homework #1 (September 7)
	3	• September 8 • September 10	The Empirical Approach to Political Science	☐ Chapter 2	
2. Building Blocks	4	• September 15 • September 17	Beginning the Research Process...	☐ Chapter 3 (pay particular attention to pp. 49 – 53)	☐ Homework #2 (September 21)
	5	• September 22 • September 24	The Building Blocks of Social Scientific Research	☐ Chapter 4 (pages 73 – 86)	☐ Research questions (September 28)

	6	- September 29 - October 1* (Project check-in #1)	Building Blocks, continued (Measurement)	☐ Chapter 4 (pages 86 – 100)	☐ *Project check-in #1 (outline due September 30) ☐ Homework #3 (October 5)
3. Causality and Relationships	7	- October 6* - October 8	Establishing Causation	☐ Chapter 6	(*Check in #1, continued as needed)
	8	- October 13 - October 15	Causation, continued; (Testing) Relationships & Theory Building	☐ Chapter 12	☐ Homework #4 (October 19)
4. Project Composition	9	- October 20 - October 22	Testing Relationships & Theory Building, continued	(N/A)	☐ Theory section (October 26)
	10	- October 27 - October 29	Literature Reviews	(Review Chapter 3, pp. 55-69)	☐ Annotated bibliographies (November 2)

	11	• November 3 • November 5*	Data	☐ Chapter 11	☐ Project check-in #2 (outlines due November 4) ☐ Homework #5 (November 9) ☐ Data section (November 9)
5. Quantitative Methods	12	• November 10* • November 12	Descriptive statistics	☐ Pages 30 – 37 (OER text)	(*Check-in #2, as needed) ☐ Homework #6 (November 16)
	13	• November 17 • November 19	ANOVA	☐ Chapter 13 (pp. 299 – 304)	☐ Homework #7 (November 23)
	14	• November 24 • No classes November 26	(Buffer; make-up project check-ins)	N/A	
	15	• December 1 • December 3	OLS	☐ Chapter 14	☐ Homework #8 (December 7) ☐ Final projects (December 10)