Research and Analysis in Political Science Syllabus

(POLS 3302-001)

3 credit hours

Spring 2024
January 15, 2024 to April 29, 2024

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11pm - 12:15pm
Classroom: CAB 219

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.

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.

2. Course Prerequisites and Objectives

GOVT 2305 and 2306. Meet TSI college-readiness standard for Reading and Writing; or equivalent.

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

Recommended Reading.

- Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. (1994) ISBN (paperback): 0691034710

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).

Articles. Any required articles will be posted to Blackboard.

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

- **Participation**: 200 points possible
- **Assignment Portfolio**: 100 points possible
- **Research design components**: 100 points possible
- **Research design (final project)**: 100 points possible
- **Syllabus assignment**: 25 points possible

Participation and Discussion Lead. Active and consistent participation is the key to success in this course. in lieu of a weekly discussion board, you'll be asked to prepare a short discussion based on the week's reading before you come to class. Once in class, I will randomly select one student to lead a short 5-10 minute discussion at the beginning of class. Depending on class size and number of sessions, you may be called on to lead up to 2 sessions over the course of the semester.

If you are present and able to contribute to the weekly discussions (both as a presenter and a participant), you can expect to earn your full points at the end of the semester.

Assignment Portfolio. Over the course of the semester, there will be a total of 10 ~~9~~ (in-class) labs and activities. You may be asked to prepare or read some material ahead of class for these activities, but the bulk of the activity will be completed in class. You will submit the activities to a journal portfolio on Blackboard. The final portfolio (the collection of all completed assignments) will be due at the end of the semester.[1]

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.

[1] While there is only one due date for this portfolio, I would strongly recommend completing and submitting the assignments ASAP

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.

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.

5. Classroom Policies and Procedures

Make-Up Policy. I do *not* accept late work. Period. No exceptions. However, I will offer one make-up assignment at the end of the semester to replace up to 25 points of low or missing work. This will be the only makeup offered for the semester, barring extenuating circumstances, which I will address on a case-by-case basis.

Classroom Civility. We may touch on some sensitive topics, and rudeness or inappropriate comments will not be tolerated at all. In-class discussions give students a chance to increase their understanding of the material and how it relates to their everyday lives. As such, discussions will *not* be a platform or a license for un-civil behavior. Rude, sexist, racist, homophobic, or otherwise uncouth language is not welcome and will be penalized. Students who are not able to participate in an appropriate, productive, or polite manner may be asked to leave the class.

E-mail. I respond to student e-mails within 24 to 36 hours on the weekdays, from 9am to 5pm (ish). I generally do not respond to e-mail on the weekends, so your best bet is to contact me during 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.

Etiquette. When you contact me (or any other faculty for that matter), please observe appropriate e-mail formatting guidelines and etiquette. To insure a timely response, please include the following in your e-mail:

- A descriptive subject in the subject line that includes your (1) course number and section (found at the top of this syllabus) and (2) a brief description of the subject matter

- An appropriate greeting with the recipients preferred title (Dr. Naasz or Professor Naasz are both appropriate)
- A brief description of the reason for the e-mail
- Full sentences with punctuation
- Your full legal name (as it appears in the class roster)

General Course Rules.

- You must 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. Technical problems are never an excuse for failed or incomplete work.
- Always maintain professional and respectful language, both in emails and in your online coursework.
- 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. Racism, sexism, homophobia, or any other forms of bigotry are not acceptable in this class.
- You are responsible for all information and announcements made in the course. Prepare to log onto Blackboard at least 3 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 should 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 on the indicated date. Please note the due dates in the parentheses (under 'Graded Work' heading) in your calendar as late work is not accepted.

Unit	Week	Dates Face-to-face meetings	Topic	Reading	Graded Work (due date) *All graded work is due by 11:59pm CT on the indicated date	Notes
1. Introduction	1	January 14 – 20 January 16 January 18	Course Introduction	N/A	☐ Syllabus assignment (January 20)	Familiarize yourself with the Blackboard course *For next week:* *Read through articles posted in Week 1 folder; pay attention to similarities and differences between the two
	2	January 21 – 27 January 23 January 25	Introduction	*Chapter 1	☐ PORTFOLIO ACTIVITY #1	
	3	January 27 – February 3 January 30 February 1	The Empirical Approach to Political Science	*Chapter 2 *'Evaluating Sources' (found in BB Week 3 folder)	☐ ACTIVITY #2	*For next week:* *Bring 2-3 general research topics you're interested in studying

2. Building Blocks	4	February 4 – 10 February 6 February 8	Beginning the Research Process…	*Chapter 3 (pay particular attention to pp. 49 – 53)	□ ACTIVITY #3 □ RD Component #1: Research Question (February 10)	
	5	February 11 – 17 February 13 February 15	The Building Blocks of Social Scientific Research	*Chapter 4 (pages 73 – 86)		
	6	February 18 – 24 February 20 February 22	Building Blocks, continued (Measurement)	*Chapter 4 (pages 86 – 100)	□ ACTIVITY #4	
3. Causality and Relationships	7	February 25 – March 2 February 27 February 29	Establishing Causation	*Chapter 6		For next week: *Download and read through the 'Correlation Worksheet' for next week's classes
	8	March 3 – 9 March 5 March 7	Causation, continued	*Chapter 12	□ ACTIVITY #5	

	9	March 10 – 16	(SPRING BREAK)			
4. Project components	10	March 17 – 23 March 19 March 21	Theory Building		☐ ACTIVITY #6 ☐ RD #2: Theory (March 23)	
	11	March 24 – 30 March 26 March 28	Literature Reviews	(Review Chapter 3, pp. 55-69)	☐ ACTIVITY #7 ☐ RD #3: Annotated bibliography (March 30)	
	12	March 31 – April 6 April 2 April 4	Data	*Chapter 11	☐ RD #4: Data report (April 6)	*For next week:* *Download and read through the 'Data Worksheet' for next week's classes
5. Quantitative Methods	13	April 7 – 13 April 9 April 11	Descriptive statistics	*Pages 30 – 37 (OER text)	☐ ACTIVITY #8 ☐ QR Module #2: Data (April 13)	
	14	April 14 – 20 April 16 April 18	ANOVA	*Chapter 13 (pp. 299 – 304)	☐ ACTIVITY #9	

	15	April 21 – 27 April 23 April 25	OLS	*Chapter 14	□ ACTIVITY #10 □ Assignment portfolio - all (April 27)	
	(16)	N/A	N/A		Final projects (May 4)	*April 29: Last day of classes*