POS 3713 – 04
Political Science Research
Fall 2006, Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 3:15, Bellamy 104

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Overview of the Course

How do we learn about the behavior of voters, politicians or interest groups? How do we evaluate the success of public policies? Why are public opinion polls accurate (or, in some cases inaccurate)? Can we make generalizations about politics and policies from a limited amount of information? This course is designed to answer these questions by examining how political scientists collect and analyze data. You will be introduced to a range of techniques to study political phenomenon with a special focus on survey research. This class takes a "hands on" approach to learning the craft of research. You will analyze a data from recent public opinion polls designed to answer questions about political attitudes and behavior. We will also discuss a variety of methods for designing research and collecting data beyond survey techniques. Finally, you will learn basic statistical concepts necessary to test hypotheses using SPSS, a statistical software package that is commonly used in business and government. At the end of the course, you will have developed a theoretical and practical understanding of how to conduct and assess political research. There is some math involved in this course, but at a very basic level. I assume that you have taken an introductory algebra class in junior high or high school.

Required Texts:

Grade Components

Exams – 80%
Homework – 20%

Please note the official University "drop" date. After the drop date y ou must be p assign the class with a "D" average or better to withdraw with a W. If you withdraw after this date and you are failing the class, you will receive an F for your final grade.

Exams - 80%

2 Midterms - the lowest midterm score will be dropped -- 40%
Final Exam – All students are required to take the final exam 40%

The exams in this class will contain a combination of multiple choice, short answer and analytic problems. The exams will cover material from the textbook, class notes and homework. The final exam must be taken by all students and the exam is cumulative.

Make Up Exams: Make-up exams are given only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a *documented* illness or family emergency. If you must miss an exam due to a University sponsored activity, you must provide documentation *prior to the exam* for approval.

Homework - 20%

You will be given 5 homework assignments during the semester. The homework assignments are designed to give you practical experience in analyzing and interpreting data. You will need to use SPSS, a statistical software package to complete the homework. This software is available in the computer labs in Bellamy and in the Library. You may also purchase the student version through most online bookstores.

Your book provides an overview of how to use SPSS. In addition, Yyou will have the option of attending one lab "help session" to learn SPSS (dates TBA). The purpose of the labs is to teach you the "nuts and bolts" of data analysis using SPSS. The TA will cover material in the lab section that is not covered in class.

Due dates on homework TBA.

Attendance

It is essential that you attend class on a regular basis and complete the reading assignments. **The exams will cover material from lecture as well as the readings. You should not expect to score well on the exams if you have not attended class.** If you must miss a class, please make arrangements to get notes from a classmate.

Your participation in class discussions is expected and will be solicited. You will be called upon to react to or comment on material covered in lectures and readings so you should come to class prepared.

CLASS POLICIES

Courtesy in the Classroom

This class has a large number of students in it, so attention to classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distractions. Please, no cell phones, talking during lectures, reading newspapers, etc. during class. If you must have a cell phone to receive emergency calls about kids or other family members, keep it on "vibrate." Please be on time for class and stay until the end. Entering and leaving is distracting to me and to other students. If you must enter late or leave early, please take the seat nearest an exit and enter or leave as quietly as possible. Repeated disruption of class may lead to penalties that reduce your final grade.

Class discussions of political issues can often stimulate strong feelings and heated debate. I ask all of you to respect the opinions of your fellow students, even if you do not agree with them. In simple terms, that means not interrupting other students while they are speaking and not verbally attacking them for their beliefs. While I believe that it is essential to connect theory to current events, I will cut short debates of current events that do not enhance the understanding of course concepts.

Cheating

Don't do it. The penalties for cheating in my class are severe and simply not worth the risk. **Academic dishonesty on even the smallest quiz or assignment can result in you failing this course and facing University disciplinary action.** Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the use of unauthorized information during a quiz or exam, plagiarism, submitting the same paper for multiple courses, or depriving another student of the ability to perform his or her work. If you have questions about University policy on academic dishonesty, please see the Academic Honor System at
http://www.fsu.edu/Books/Student-Handbook/2003codes/honor.html

Note: Many of you will be tempted to work in groups on the homework. I strongly discourage this because it will hamper your ability to answer the questions on your own during the exam. Moreover, it is typically obvious when students copy answers or computer output from one another. Copying homework, even when you have worked the answer out as a group, is a form of cheating and subject to the penalties listed above.

Students with Disabilities

Any student who, because of a disabling condition, may require some special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor **as soon as possible** to make the necessary accommodations. Students should (1) register with the Student Disability Resource Center and (2) bring a letter to the instructor from the SDRC indicating the required accommodations. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other course materials are available in alternate form upon request.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Please note, readings, assignments and test dates may be adjusted during the semester. Changes to schedules will be announced in class.

Week of:	Reading Assignments and Schedule of Exams	Notes
Aug 29	Introduction to Statistics and Research Methods	
Sept 5	The Research Process • Chapter 1	
Sept 12	Collecting and Summarizing Data • Chapters 1 & 2	Homework 1 due Thursday in class
Sept 18	Descriptive Statistics and Graphic Presentation • Chapter 3 & 4	LAB WEEK
Sept 26	Central Tendency and Variability • Chapters 4 & 5	Homework 2 due Thursday in class
Oct 3	**REVIEW AND EXAM 1**	Exam
Oct 10	Relationships between variables - Crosstabs • Chapter 5	Last Day to Withdraw with a W is Friday Oct. 13th
Oct 17	Measures of Association, Nominal and Ordinal Variables • Chapter 6	Homework 3 due
Oct 24	Correlation and Linear Regression - Bivariate • Chapter 7	
Oct 31	Linear Regression - Multivariate • Chapter 7	Homework 4 due
Nov 7	**REVIEW AND EXAM 2**	Exam 2
Nov 14	Sampling, Inference & the Normal Distribution • Chapters 9 & 10	
Nov 21	Hypothesis Testing using the Normal Distribution • Chapters 11 & 12	Thanksgiving week, No Class Thursday
Nov 28	Hypothesis Testing, cont.	

	• Chapter 12	
Dec 5	Hypothesis Testing, Chi-Square • Chapter 13	Homework 5 due
Dec 12	Final Exam -- 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.	