

**POLS 251.090 POLITICS & POLITICAL INQUIRY II:  
"THE SCOPE & METHODS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE"  
FALL 2009  
TUESDAY & THURSDAY 5:30-6:45  
EDUCATION CENTER 110**

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**Ning Network:** <http://pols251lapira.ning.com/>

*Doubt is the beginning, not the end, of wisdom.*  
Chinese proverb

The aim of this course is to give you the knowledge, tools, and confidence to think critically as a political science major, as a college student, and as an informed citizen about the world around you, and to prepare you to use these skills in the professions and communities to which you will belong when you graduate. Rather than blindly trusting supposed experts or filtering all political information through your ideological biases (whether you are conscious of them or not), you will learn how to make reasoned judgments based on systematic inquiry and the appropriate interpretation of empirical evidence.

This course is the second in a six credit-hour sequence required of all political science majors. The first half of the sequence provided an introduction to the conceptual and historical development of normative political thought. POLS 251 is designed as an introduction to the nature and practice of empirical inquiry in contemporary political science. We will pay careful attention to how normative and empirical analyses differ and complement one another throughout the discipline of political science. The course is intended to introduce you to the scope of political science as an academic discipline and to help you understand the various methodologies and approaches to the study of politics.

To be clear, this course is *not* a statistics class, though we will be focusing chiefly on the logic of inference that underlies all social science, including those studies that apply statistical techniques to meaningful political questions. I encourage you instead to think of this as a *reading-and-writing in the discipline* workshop. You will not be expected to independently calculate inferential statistics, but you will be expected to understand the research process, interpret existing literature, and critically respond to others' work, even if that work uses complex statistical methods that even some political science PhD's find intimidating. To this end, you will write a "research design proposal" on any relevant topic you choose. This paper will require you to select a topic, review the literature, and develop a research strategy intended to answer a previously unanswered question.

## Course Format

I have organized this class around five broad themes: (1) Thinking Like a Scientist; (2) Thinking Like a *Political* Scientist; (3) Ethics in Research; (4) Observing the Political World; and, (5) The Logic of Inference.

This class is designed as a combination lecture/classroom activity format. First, my lectures will coincide with the readings, but I will not simply regurgitate the material or summarize your reading for you. I will write my lectures with the assumption that you've completed the readings, and each day's topic will build on previous material. So don't fall behind or what I say won't make any sense! Second, we will extensively use the course Ning social network to apply the material to tangible questions. Finally, we will use class time to work in small groups on data analysis, the research design project, and other activities.

## Course Goals and Learning Objectives

In addition to the critical social scientific analytical skills that you will develop throughout the course, I expect you to be able to:

- Read for comprehension, critically analyze text, and write effectively in all assignments and examinations;
- Comprehend the political positions of others and defend your own views;
- Distinguish between normative and empirical propositions about the social, economic, cultural, and political world;
- Apply theories and concepts of normative political thought to new and interesting empirical questions;
- Foster the communication, collaboration, and negotiation skills necessary to cooperate and compete with others in the public sphere.

## Course Materials

The following texts are required and have been ordered through the College of Charleston Bookstore. If you choose to purchase these texts from other sources, be sure to buy the correct editions.

1. Johnson, Janet Buttolph, HT Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. 2008. *Political Science Research Methods*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Washington: CQ Press.  
ISBN: 9780872894426
2. Ehrlich, Robert. 2003. *8 Preposterous Propositions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.  
ISBN: 9780691099996
3. Baglione, Lisa. 2007. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science*. New York: Wadsworth.  
ISBN: 9780495092629

This text is not required, but strongly recommended:

4. Keller, Dana K. 2006. *The Tao of Statistics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.  
ISBN: 9781412913140

Note that American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 allows for a tax credit of up to \$2,500 for textbook purchases, so be sure to save your receipts. For more information, go to <http://www.textbookaid.org/>.

Additionally, I will periodically direct you to additional readings that will be either privately available for course use only on WebCT or Addlestone Library web-based resources (e.g., J-STOR), or publicly available on the Internet.

### **Student Responsibilities**

*Conduct and Honor Code.* I expect you to strictly adhere to the College's conduct and honor codes. I encourage you to re-acquaint yourself with the College's policies (<http://www.cofc.edu/generaldocuments/handbook.pdf>), but simply put...don't cheat. Period. This advice will be especially significant for those of you who will be writing research designs in this class on topics assigned as term papers in other political science classes.

*Attendance and Preparation.* I require regular class attendance, on-time arrival, and careful preparation for each class. Though I have no hard definition of regular, on-time class attendance, a reasonable guide is a total of six excused or unexcused absences. Unless you have documentation from the College that you are experiencing extreme hardship, I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. An "absence memo" does not constitute an "excuse," it is merely a reason for your absence, to which I am indifferent. I count two late arrivals as one absence even though you are physically present. Though I may not always take formal attendance, I will know if you are chronically late or absent and will hold you accountable for your choices, so make them wisely.

*Assignments.* There will be at least thirteen in-class and take-home assignments throughout the course, and portions of the research design (including an oral defense) are due on seven different occasions. All reading and written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date listed on the schedule unless otherwise instructed in the assignment. I have purposely scheduled assignment due dates to coincide with course material, so late assignments interfere with my ability to timely evaluate your work. Because that is unfair to students who do produce assignments on time, as well as an undue burden on my extremely busy personal and work schedule, I will reduce every assignment by one +/- unit for every business day late regardless of the reason.

*Classroom Technology Policy.* All devices other than the machine at your assigned station should be turned off during class. Computers may only be used for purposes immediately related to the class, such as taking notes, and as instructed for in-class assignments. I will ask you to leave the room if you disrupt the class by texting, receiving a phone call, browsing the Internet, or any other reason. Doing so is rude, and I have no qualms about embarrassing you in front of your peers. If I ask you to leave, I will count it as an absence.

*Special Circumstances.* Please inform me by the end of the first week of classes of any special circumstances such as a diagnosed (or undiagnosed) disability, learning challenges, or team and student organization membership that requires travel during the semester. I

am happy to accommodate you if we can agree on how to best meet your needs in the beginning of the semester. If you are a SNAP student eligible for accommodations, you must provide me with a copy of the notification letter you have been given by the SNAP office well before the need for any accommodation arises.

### **Grading Policy**

My evaluation of your work centers on the research design proposal you will write throughout the semester, though a significant portion of your final grade consists of at-home and in-class assignments. The points and final grade percentages are as follows:

	<u>Points</u>	<u>Grade %</u>
At-home / In-class Assignments (10 @ 10 points each)	100	20
Research Question	25	5
Annotated Bibliography	50	10
Literature Review	50	10
Introduction	50	10
Research Design	50	10
Peer Reviews	50	10
Final Draft	100	20
Oral Presentation	25	5
	<hr/> 500	<hr/> 100

There will be thirteen at-home / in-class assignments for ten points each; the three lowest scores, including missing grades, will be dropped. There will be no opportunities to make up missed at-home / in-class assignments. These exercises are designed for you to engage the material with your peers, and will primarily be completed through the course Ning social network.

The research proposal is divided into several portions, each of which is a crucial part of the writing process. All told, the research design constitutes 80% of your final grade. At each stage you will be required to (1) revise the portions that were previously assigned and (2) write the newly assigned portion. Grades for each stage will be applied to both the revision of previous work and to the new portion. I will provide additional details on these assignments throughout the semester.

## Schedule

Week	Day	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
1	Tuesday	08/25/09	Introduction		
	Thursday	08/27/09	Thinking Like a Scientist	Ehrlich 1-5	Assignment #1
2	Tuesday	09/01/09	Thinking Like a Scientist	Ehrlich 6-10	Assignment #2
	Thursday	09/03/09	Writing a Research Paper	Baglione 1-2	Assignment #3
3	Tuesday	09/08/09	Writing a Research Paper	Baglione 4-5 & JR 5	Assignment #4
	Thursday	09/10/09	Writing a Research Paper	Baglione 6 & JR 6	
4	Tuesday	09/15/09	Thinking Like a <i>Political</i> Scientist	JR 1-2	Assignment #5
	Thursday	09/17/09	Thinking Like a <i>Political</i> Scientist		Assignment #6
5	Tuesday	09/22/09	Thinking Like a <i>Political</i> Scientist	JR 3	Paper #1: Research Question
	Thursday	09/24/09	Thinking Like a <i>Political</i> Scientist		Assignment #7
6	Tuesday	09/29/09	Thinking Like a <i>Political</i> Scientist	JR 4	Paper #2: Annotated Bib.
	Thursday	10/01/09	Thinking Like a <i>Political</i> Scientist		Assignment #8
7	Tuesday	10/06/09	Ethics in Research	Baglione 7-9	
	Thursday	10/08/09	Ethics in Research		Paper #3: Literature Review
8	Tuesday	10/13/09		FALL BREAK - NO CLASS	
	Thursday	10/15/09	Observing the Political World		
9	Tuesday	10/22/09	Observing the Political World	JR 8-9	Assignment #9
	Thursday	10/24/09	Observing the Political World		
10	Tuesday	10/27/09	Observing the Political World	JR 7 & 10	Assignment #10
	Thursday	10/29/09	Observing the Political World		Paper #4: Introduction
11	Tuesday	11/03/09	The Logic of Inference	JR 11	Assignment #11
	Thursday	11/05/09	The Logic of Inference		Assignment #12
12	Tuesday	11/10/09	The Logic of Inference	JR 12	Assignment #13
	Thursday	11/12/09	The Logic of Inference		
13	Tuesday	11/17/09	The Logic of Inference	JR 13	Paper # 5: Research Design
	Thursday	11/19/09	The Logic of Inference		
14	Tuesday	11/24/09	The Logic of Inference		Paper #6: Peer Reviews
	Thursday	11/26/09		THANKSGIVING BREAK - NO CLASS	

15	Tuesday	12/01/09	Student Presentations	
	Thursday	12/03/09	Student Presentations	
16	Tuesday	12/08/09		READING DAY - NO CLASS
	Thursday	12/10/09		Paper #7: Final Draft

Baglione = *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science* (Wadsworth, 2006)

Ehrlich = *8 Preposterous Propositions* (Princeton University Press, 2003)

JR = *Political Science Research Methods*, 6th Edition (CQ Press, 2008)