College of Charleston

POLI 205 Section 03: Doing Research in Politics

Fall 2019

MWF: 2:00pm-2:50pm

Campus Location: Education Center (ECTR); Room 110

Instructor Information:

Kendall D. Deas, Ph.D
Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science
Department of Political Science
Honors College; (Faculty Fellow)
Office: 108 Berry Hall
Email: deaskd@cofc.edu
(843) 953-7154 [office]; (803) 468-1121 [cell]

Office Hours:

Monday; (3pm-4pm); (By Appointment)

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the world of social science and in particular political science. This course introduces students to qualitative and quantitative analysis of politics. As a student in this course, you will gain an understanding of what it means to be “science literate,” learn how to formulate a research question, and determine how to answer it using the proper research methodology. Students will explore research strategies, research designs, and the interpretation of research results. Students will be required to understand how to examine qualitative and quantitative data and understand what it means. Students will learn the value of social science research and how to undertake the research process in the most efficient way possible. The primary goal of this course is to strengthen skills necessary for the research enterprise as it concerns the field of political science.

Required Course Texts:

Note: The course textbook is available for purchase at the main campus bookstore (Barnes & Nobles; 160 Calhoun Street). There will also be peer reviewed articles you will be assigned to read periodically and these will be posted in the course Oaks site by the instructor.

Learning Outcomes and Course Specific Objectives:

Students who complete this course should be able to accomplish the following:

1. Identify and explain current academic research projects in politics
2. Enhance critical and social scientific thinking skills in order to distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly approaches
3. Develop research questions that are answerable with a variety of methods
4. Demonstrate some of the methods used by scholars of politics. This includes how data are collected and analyzed, and the strengths and weaknesses of different methods
5. Develop skills in designing a research project

General Education Social Science Learning Outcomes:

Students will earn social science general education credit for completing this course. Students can apply social science concepts, models, or theories to explain human behavior, social interactions, or social institutions. Students will be assessed on this outcome through a required politics memo written assignment

Department Objectives:

This course is also designed to help students meet many of the Department of Political Science’s learning objectives. Specifically, the course will help students:

- Demonstrate understanding of readings, analyze texts critically, and effectively write research papers
• Demonstrate knowledge of the variety of methods used by scholars of politics and understand which methodological approaches are appropriate where and choose their own methodological approaches for research papers
• Demonstrate mastery of the independent research process

Course Assignments:

It is preferred that all writing assignments be submitted in the Oaks dropbox for this course. However, if students experience a complication with the system, it will also be acceptable to submit assignments through campus email or submit a hardcopy to the instructor.

Assignment 1: Discussion Prompts

Students will respond to 6 discussion prompts throughout the course. The discussion prompts will be questions for analysis that extend from the weekly readings and class discussions on social science research. These written assignments should be about 300-350 words in length (1.5 or double spaced; 11 or 12 point font). They should be completed in a word document and uploaded into an assignment dropbox for the course. If there are complications, they can also be emailed or a hardcopy can be submitted to the instructor. The due dates for these assignments are indicated in the syllabus but can be changed at the discretion of the course instructor; (100 pts).

Assignment 2: Research Design Proposal and Literature Review

Students will write a 10 page research design proposal and accompanying literature review. Proposed topics should be submitted via email to the instructor by October 1st. The literature review should include no less than 10 sources. Extensive instructions will be given throughout the semester for both the required research design proposal and literature review. As there is no final exam for this course, this assignment will be due the day of the scheduled final exam for the course by the College; (100 pts).

Assignment 3: Research Presentation

Each student will be responsible for presenting their research design proposal. Each presentation should be about 15 minutes (i.e. 10 minutes to discuss your research design and 5 minutes for Q&A). We will have student presentations of their research designs during the month of November; (100 pts).
Assignment 4: Midterm Examination

The midterm exam will be 2 written essay responses. Students will be given 4 essay questions of which they are to select only 2 to answer worth 50 points each. There will be a short review session for the midterm exam; (100 pts).

Assignment 5: Homework Assignments

Small Assignments: There will be a few small homework assignments that focus on a specific piece of the research puzzle in the social sciences and political science in particular. Instructions for these assignments will be given by the instructor later in the course; (100 pts.)

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance will be taken for this course. All students are expected to attend class with due diligence. Students who miss more than 4 classes will be dropped from this course. Absences will only be excused with a medical note or personal/family emergencies, a formal discussion with the instructor, and documenting the absence. Students with a legitimate, documentable reason may require an absence memo by bringing documentation to the Office of the Associate Dean of Students at 67 George Street, where the student may fill out a brief form with a schedule of missed class/classes, dates missed and the names of the appropriate professors and advisor. There is a class participation grade and missing classes will negatively impact this area of assessment for the course. No texting or use of social media in class and excessive use will result in points deducted from the final grade.

Honor System:

All students are expected to comply with the honor code of the College of Charleston. Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. Incidents where the instructor determines the student’s actions are related more to a misunderstanding will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student’s file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The F is permanent. The
Students may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal), or expelled (permanent removal), from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration such as working together without permission is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others’ exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance. Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor. Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at: http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honorsystem/studenthandbook/index.php

Late Work:

Late assignments will be penalized 5 points per day. In addition, students must contact me within 24 hours of a missed exam and present a legitimate reason for missing the exam. If a student does not contact me, or if the reason is not legitimate, the student will automatically fail the exam and will not have an opportunity for a make-up test.

Course Evaluations:

We will devote a small portion of class time for students to complete the online evaluations for the course.

Americans with Disabilities (ADA):

1. Any student eligible for an needing accommodations because of a disability is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class or as soon as the student has been approved for services so that reasonable accommodations can be arranged.
2. The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply for services at the Center for Disability Services/SNAP located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me one week before accommodation is needed.
3. This College abides by section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see an administrator at the Center for Disability Services/SNAP or call 1-(843)-953-1431 so that such accommodation can be arranged.

Writing Lab:

I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Lab in the Center for Student Learning (Addlestone Library; first floor). Trained writing consultants can help with writing for all courses. They offer one-to-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and
developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, please call 1-(843)-953-5635 or visit http://csl.cofc.edu/labs/writing-lab/

Center for Student Learning:
I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies, speaking and writing skills, and course content. They offer tutoring, supplemental instruction, study skills appointment, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information, regarding these services, please visit the CSL website at http://csl.cofc.edu or call 1-(843)-953-5635.

Campus Closure and Inclement Weather:
If the College of Charleston closes and members of the community are evacuated due to inclement weather, students are responsible for taking course materials with them in order to continue with course assignments consistent with instructions provided by faculty. In cases of extended periods of institution-wide closure where students have relocated, instructors may articulate a plan that allows for supplemental academic engagement despite these circumstances.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Prompts</td>
<td>100 (max. 100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Design Proposal and Literature Review</td>
<td>100 (max. 100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Presentation</td>
<td>100 (max. 100%)</td>
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<td>Midterm</td>
<td>100 (max. 100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework Assignments/Class Participation</td>
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### Total Points-(500 pts)

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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91-92</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>86-88</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>84-85</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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### Course Reading and Assignment Schedule: (Note: Specific course reading will be assigned daily in class)

**Week 1-August 21st and 23rd**
- Course introductions
- What are the expectations for this course?
- What are career paths for political scientists?
- What constitutes social science research?

**Week 2-August 26th, 28th, and 30th**
- Topic: Studying Politics Scientifically
- Readings: Kellstedt and Whitten; (Chapters 1-2)
• Key Questions: What types of questions do political scientists try to answer using research? What is empirical research? What is theory and why is it important?

Week 3 September 4th and 6th
• Topic: Studying Politics Scientifically II
• **September 2nd; Labor Day; (no class)**
• Readings: Kellstadt and Whitten; (Chapter 3); Knopf: Doing a Literature Review
• **Discussion Prompt 1 Due: September 6th (midnight)**
• Key Questions: What is a literature review and why is it important? How do political scientists use hypotheses? Can the research methods of natural scientists work when studying people and institutions?

Week 4 September 9th, 11th, and 13th
• Topic: Research Design I
• Readings: Kellstadt and Whitten; (Chapter 4)
• Key Questions: Why is research design important? What are some common types of research designs? What are the pros and cons of quantitative and qualitative research?

Week 5 September 16th, 18th, and 20th
• Topic: Research Design II
• Readings: Kellstadt and Whitten; (Chapter 4; continued)
• Key Questions: What is internal validity? How do you evaluate a study’s internal validity? What is external validity? How do you evaluate a study’s external validity?

Week 6 September 23rd, 25th, and 27th
• Topic: Measurement I
• Readings: Kellstedt and Whitten; (Chapter 5)
• **Discussion Prompt 2 Due: September 25th (midnight)**
• Key Questions: What are some common levels of measurement? Why is measurement important?

Week 7 September 30th, October 2nd and 4th
• Topic: Measurement II
• Readings: Kellstedt and Whitten; (Chapter 5; continued)
• **Homework Assignment Due October 4th:** Go online and take the RACE IAT test (link on Oaks)
• Psychology’s RACE IAT Isn’t Up For the Job:
• Key Questions: What is reliability and why is it important? What is operational validity? How can you assess a measure’s reliability and operational validity?

**Week 8 October 7th, 9th, and 11th**

• Topic Sampling
• Readings: Pew Research Center: Sampling
• **Friday October 11th:** (Midterm Exam)
• Key Questions: Why do social scientists make the decision to sample? What are some of the common types of sampling?

**Week 9 October 14th, 16th, and 18th**

• Topic: Survey Research
• Readings: Qualtrics, Introduction to Survey Research
• **October 14th:** (Fall Break)
• **Discussion Prompt 3 Due:** October 18th (midnight)
• Key Questions: Why does survey research play such an important role in the social sciences? What are the advantages and disadvantages of survey research?

**Week 10 October 21st, 23rd, and 25th**

• Topic: Making Empirical Observations
• Readings: None
• Key Questions: What is the difference between direct and indirect observation?

**Week 11 October 28th, 30th, and November 1st**

• Topic: Content Analysis
• Readings: Cooper, Knotts, and Haspel, 2008
• Key Questions: What is content analysis? What are the pros and cons to this type of research approach?
• Discussion Prompt 4 Due: November 1st (midnight)

Week 12 November 4\textsuperscript{th}, 6\textsuperscript{th}, and 8\textsuperscript{th}

• Topic: Descriptive Statistics I
• Readings: Kellstadt and Whitten; (Chapter 6)
• Key Questions: What are some common measures of central tendency? What are some common measures of dispersion? When would you use measures of central tendency and/or measures of dispersion?

Week 13 November 11\textsuperscript{th}, 13\textsuperscript{th}, and 15\textsuperscript{th}

• Topic: Descriptive Statistics II
• Readings: Kellstadt and Whitten; (Chapter 6; continued)
• Discussion Prompt 5 Due: November 13\textsuperscript{th} (midnight)
• Key Questions: What are some basic types of graphs and figures that can be used to describe data?

Week 14 November 18\textsuperscript{th}, 20\textsuperscript{th}, and 22\textsuperscript{nd}

• Topic: Statistical Significance I
• Readings: Kellstedt and Whitten; (Chapter 7)
• Key Questions: What does it mean to have statistically significant findings? What is the null hypothesis?

Week 15 November 25\textsuperscript{th}

• Topic: Statistical Significance II
• Readings: Kellstadt and Whitten; (Chapter 8)
• Key Questions: What is a confidence interval? How do you read a table with statistical results? What is a crosstab and how is it interpreted?
• November 27\textsuperscript{th}, and 29\textsuperscript{th}; (Thanksgiving Break; No Class)

Week 16 December 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 4\textsuperscript{th}, and 6\textsuperscript{th}

• Topics: Measures of Association/Regression I
• Readings: Kellstadt and Whitten; (Chapter 8-continued and Chapter 9)
• Key Questions: What are some common measures of association and when would you use them in research? What is a direct relationship and what is an indirect relationship? What is regression? Why is it such a popular statistical technique?

• Discussion Prompt 6 Due: December 2nd (midnight)
• December 3rd (Reading Day; Research Design Proposal and Literature Review Due during final exam period)

Note: There is no final exam for this course. Students will submit their research design proposal and literature review in lieu of a final examination on the day finals are scheduled by the College for this course