Doing Research In Politics

POLI 205
Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:50-12:05
Maybank 316

Instructor:     Dr. Annette Watson
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Office:        Political Science Department, 114 Wentworth St., Room 207

Office hours:  Tuesdays 2-3 and Wednesdays 3-5, or by appointment

Why do we do research in politics? But more importantly for this course, HOW do we do research in politics? This course introduces you to the techniques and strategies that researchers use to study and understand the political world. You will be shown a range of quantitative and qualitative methods that can investigate political issues—such as analyses of campaigns and elections, political economy, civil unrest, as well as public opinion about war and terrorism, the death penalty, and other such policy controversies. Methods in political science help you understand how a polity thinks about ways they should be governed, as well as helps you empirically understand how politics work.

In one part of the course, you will be (literally) involved in doing one of my own research projects; while in another part of the course, students will be doing their own research projects! In these ways you will learn to develop research designs and to collect, analyze, and present data. The course therefore emphasizes hands-on training that will provide useful skills for both academic and professional settings.

Readings and assignments emphasize the study of politics both in the United States and in non-Western contexts; students should expect to read about 70-100 pages per week at the beginning of the semester. There are fewer assigned readings toward the end of the semester, with the assumption that you are each building your own literature reviews in the latter half of the semester. In other words, when I assign only 20 pages, you should be reading at least 50 for your literature review.

By the end of this course, students will be prepared to pursue an independent research project, either based on work they produce in this class, or based on a new topic of their choosing. You will have learned the right steps to do research in politics on anything you’re interested in!
**Learning outcomes:** Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

a. Identify and explain current academic research projects in politics
b. Enhance critical and social scientific thinking skills in order to distinguish between scholarly and non-scholarly approaches
c. Develop research questions that are answerable with a variety of methods.
d. Demonstrate some of the methods used by scholars of politics – this includes how data is/can be collected & analyzed and the strengths and weaknesses of different methods.
e. Develop skills in designing a research project

**Assignments Summary:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (almost every class period)</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam (one in-class)</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group project (conducting a survey/interviews—and their analyses)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Design [5% for proposal; 15% for final]</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>CITI Quiz</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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**Group Project:**

Students will be doing research in politics—literally! The class will be divided into one group who will do qualitative interviews and a larger group that will conduct a survey. But the interview schedule and the survey are already designed—YOUR task is to deploy the survey or recruit and conduct an interview. Up to 10 people in the class will do interviews, while 20-25 will be deploying a survey on Saturday, February 16th at the Southeastern Wildlife Expo. Thus students with a legitimate conflict on that date have the first option to select whether they would rather conduct an interview. Please email me right away if you have a conflict with the Saturday survey event. Then students will work in smaller groups to analyze this data that they collected, being able to compare the tradeoffs between approaches and data sets. More details will be uploaded to OAKS.

**CITI Quiz:**

A requirement to pass the course—because it qualifies you to conduct research.

In this quiz, students are made familiar with the ethics of working with local peoples and doing human subjects research. This is relatively painless. Really. To take this short course, the Required Training for Research Involving Human Participants, go to this web address: [http://www.orga.cofc.edu/pub/compliance_IRB_RESEARCHER_TRAINING.shtml](http://www.orga.cofc.edu/pub/compliance_IRB_RESEARCHER_TRAINING.shtml)

At the bottom of that page you will see the option to go directly to the training site: Follow this link to access CITI registration and training modules:
http://www.citiprogram.org/

This is actually an online test. When I did it, it took me 1 hour; it will take you a little longer than that because you are less familiar with the material. Create a username and password, then you will take the “Basic/Refresher” course for social science. Identify yourself as a student, and that you are doing Exempt research. There will be text to read, and then when you are asked to take the quiz, open it in a new page, so you can refer back to the text as you answer the questions. (Yes, this is open book.)

When you pass the test, print out the results page, and hand it in to me on the date it is due.

If you have questions while you take this test (if during the day), feel free to call my office. The IRB office is also available to help:
Eileen Callahan
Research Compliance Coordinator
Office of Research & Grants Administration
College of Charleston
843-953-7421
callahane@cofc.edu

General guidelines for grades:
A – achievement is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirement
B – achievement is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
C – achievement meets the course requirements in every respect.
D – achievement is worthy of credit but it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
S/P – achievement is satisfactory which is equivalent to a C- or better.
F – achievement is inadequate and no credit will be given for the course.
I (Incomplete) – assigned due to extraordinary circumstances, e.g., hospitalization, which prevent the completion of work on time. Requires an agreement between student and instructor.

This course will use +/- grades, allocated as follows:
A  =92% or above    C  =77-72%
A- =91-90%          C- =71-70%
B+ =89-88%          D+ =69-68%
B  =87-82%          D  =67-62%
B- =81-80%          D- =61-60%
C+ =79-78%          F  =below 59%

Other Class Policies:
Computers/IPAD/ETC: use of such devices are encouraged, particularly if it saves you from printing all the readings. HOWEVER, if I find you surfing or chatting or other such unauthorized
use of any internet-capable or text-capable device, you will lose privileges to use your devices in class. Class time is not passive learning, but you are expected to be active and engaged and working on the issues at hand. Texting or facebook-ing distracts you and others from the tasks you are expected to complete, and research has shown that such activities detract from your learning/retention of content. I will play bad cop if I have to, to maintain respect for the classroom space.

It is assumed that all students will act with academic integrity and will not engage in behavior such as plagiarism, academic dishonesty, misrepresentation, or cheating. Please refer to the college’s policy on academic honesty. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will result in an XF in the class. The entire purpose of this class is to acquire useful skills; to cheat is to lose the opportunity to improve these skills. Please refer to the campus honor code for questions about academic dishonesty.

**Plagiarism** refers to the presentation of someone else’s ideas, work, or words as your own, without attribution. If you use someone else's exact words, then you must use quotation marks in addition to a citation; simply naming the source is not enough. If you completely paraphrase someone else’s ideas in your own words, then you still have to cite the source, but you do not have to use quotations. **When in doubt, cite the source.** If you have questions about whether you have provided adequate citation, consult with me before the assignment is due.

**Support Services:**

Please take advantage of the College’s Center for Student Learning; they have walk-in labs for writing and speaking—two skills you will need to improve (and be graded on!) during this semester. The Center for Student Learning is located in the Addlestone Library (953-5635).

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply 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.
**Class Outline**

Readings must be completed by the class they are listed to be discussed. Even though some of the readings are online, you are responsible for having a digital or hard copy DURING CLASS.

**Weeks 1 and 2: What is Research? Social and Political Science?**
What is the “philosophy” of science? What are the basic assumptions of any science?
What is “empirical” research?
How will knowing how to do research will help me get a job?
What is the scientific method and what are the characteristics of scientific research?
What is the study of “politics” amongst the social sciences?
What are the assumptions and limitations of the scientific study of politics?

**Thursday, January 11th**
Introductions and explanation of syllabus

**Tuesday, January 15th**

*Readings we will discuss, that will be on the quiz:*

Be sure to be able to access this article in class; either virtually or printed copies.

Matthew Woessner and April KellyWoessner. 2009. *I Think My Professor is a Democrat: Considering Whether Students Recognize and React to Faculty Politics*. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42: 343-352.

**Quiz #1**

**Thursday, January 17th**

*Readings that will be on the quiz:*

IPSG (Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group of the AAG) Statement on Research Ethics


**Quiz #2**
**Week 3: Research Design, part I**

**Tuesday January 22nd and Thursday January 24th**

DUE (on tues): CITI Training (worth 5% of your grade)

DUE (on thurs):

- Bring in 5 news articles and two academic syllabi about a political topic/problem that interests you

Where do good research questions come from?: the “literature”

What is a literature review, and how do I do one?

Are normative questions and empirical questions mutually exclusive?

What research question(s) interest me? How about you?

**Readings due by Tuesday:**


**Quiz #3**

**Readings due by Thursday:**


**Quiz #4**

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**Week 4: Research Design, part II**

**Quantitative or Qualitative?—Which to Choose Depends on Your Question!**

**T Jan 29th and Th Jan 31st**

DUE on Thursday: a draft statement of “the problem” (don’t research a “topic” but a “problem”!)
**Readings due by Tuesday:**


**Quiz #5**

Thursday: group work-shopping of your statement of “the problem,” due at end of class. You will also begin brain-storming research questions and hypotheses based on your problem.

**Quiz #6**

**Week 5: Survey Design and Interviewing, part I**

T Feb 5th and Th Feb 7th

DUE on Friday in OAKS: your project proposal (load before midnight!); Be sure to also schedule a meeting with me via email (watsonam@cofc.edu).

Why do we sample? What benefit do we receive by sampling?
What is the benefit of a random sample? When would we conduct a non-random sample?
In what situation is an interview or observational research design best?
What are the strengths and limitations of a survey, interview, and/or observational research design?

**Tuesday:**

Johnson and Reynolds. 2012. “Sampling,” in *Political Science Research Methods*, 222-256;

Johnson and Reynolds “Survey Research and Interviewing,” in *Political Science Research Methods*, but only pages 306-320 [you will read the rest of the chapter next week].

**Quiz #7**

**Thursday:**
Preparing for the SEWE survey or interview project. We will go over both; discuss the logic of each research design as well as their tradeoffs; give instructions about how to deploy these methods, as well as the rest of the group project.
**Week 6: Survey Design and Interview Schedules part II**  
*(and the art of talking to people)*  
*T Feb 12th and Th Feb 14th*

How do we make “good” survey or interview questions?  
How do we recruit people and build rapport or trusting relationships?  
What are the differences between qualitative and quantitative data sets?

*Tuesday:*

Kitchen and Tate. 2000. “Chapter 4: Preparing, Exploring, and Describing Quantitative Data” [first half]  

TBA article: example on the use of interviewing in political science

**Quiz #8**

*Thursday:*
Group work preparing for the survey/interviews; we will schedule your shifts as well...  
**Quiz #9** on good and bad interview/survey questions

*Saturday, February 16th*: major deploying of the survey at the Southeastern Wildlife Expo

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**Week 7: Quantitative Analysis, part I**  
*T Feb 19th and Th Feb 21st*

*Tuesday:*
Kitchen and Tate. 2000. “Chapter 4: Preparing, Exploring, and Describing Quantitative Data” [second half]  

**Quiz #10**

[Group homework: data entry on the survey, due Tuesday Feb 26th]

*Thursday:*
Readings TBA; Nate Silver et al...
Quiz #11

**Week 8: Quantitative Analysis, part II**
T Feb 26th and Th Feb 28th

*Tuesday:*
Group work on your descriptive stats—meet in classroom or elsewhere

*Thursday:*
Guest lecture, Jordan Ragusa, on advanced statistical analysis
[Group homework—you will get shown how to do it today!]

**Week 9:**
NO CLASS—Spring Break

**Week 10: Qualitative Analysis, part I**
T Mar 12th and Th Mar 14th

*Tuesday:*
Kitchen and Tate, 2000. “Chapter 8: Analyzing and Interpreting Qualitative Data”


**Quiz #12**

*Thursday:*
Groups finish coding the data in class, or complete as homework due Friday

**Week 11: Qualitative Analysis, part II**
T Mar 13th and Th Mar 15th
DUE Thurs: “mental model” of your literature (bring in your news articles again, too)

*Tuesday:*


**Quiz #13**

**Thursday:**
Groups will peer-review your “mental model” of the literature to further work-shop your research questions (final research questions due at end of class—this is your quiz!); groups will also plan a matrix of information they require from our guest speakers over the next 1.5 weeks. These will function as your study guide for your upcoming exam.

**Quiz #14**

**Week 12: Doing YOUR Research In Politics, part I**
T Mar 26th and Th Mar 28th

**Tuesday:**
Guests: Kendra Stewart and Claire Curtis talk about their different research projects!

Curtis, Claire. ““Theorizing Fear: Octavia Butler and the realist utopia” Utopian Studies
Other reading TBA

**Quiz #15**

**Thursday:**
Guests: Chris Day and Gibbs Knotts talk about their research!


**Quiz #16**

**EXTRA CREDIT:** Attend the Geography Lecture by Derek Alderman, Physician’s Auditorium, 4pm on **Tuesday, March 26th** [attendance will allow you to accrue one point when you sign in; if you write a 1-page summary articulating his methods, compared to others, you get up to 3 points total!]

**Week 13: Doing YOUR Research In Politics, part II**
T Ap 2nd and Th Ap 4th
DUE Friday: Your group analyses of your survey/interview data

**Tuesday:**
Guest: Kevin Keenan on Using GIS to study politics and spatializing qualitative data


Quiz #17

Thursday:
Work on your group/term projects!!! The group analyses of survey/interview data DUE Friday

Week 14: Doing YOUR Research in Politics, part III
T Ap 9th and Th Ap 11th

Tuesday: Exam

Thursday: No Class: Work on your presentations!!!

Week 15: Doing YOUR Research in Politics, part IV
T Ap 16th and Th Ap 18th

Presentations on Research Design: Just three minutes, with 2 minutes of Q&A

Week 16:
T Ap 23rd

Presentations on Research Design: Just three minutes, with 2 minutes of Q&A

If presenters go over time commitments, the class is obligated to attend the “overflow” during our final exam period.

Final Research Design [Problem statement, literature review, methods section]
Due Friday, May 3rd in the OAKS dropbox by 11:59 pm.

Have a Great Summer!