

Sam Houston State University
Research and Writing; Fall 2009
T/TH 2:00 – 3:20 AB4 RM 205

Professor: Dr. Rhonda Callaway

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Office Hours: T/TH 12:30 – 1:30 and by appointment

Office: CHSS 490B; 936-294-4108

Course Objectives: The purpose of this course is two-fold: first, to provide an opportunity for students to learn the research process as it is conducted in the field of political science and second, to practice research and writing skills.

- In addressing the research aspect of the course, we will strive to accomplish the following objectives:
 - Understand theories and hypotheses, the construction of valid inferences, sampling, how to operationalize concepts into variables, and basic statistical knowledge.
- In completing the second objective, students will :
 - Learn to use electronic sources and properly cite sources, to write a literature review and other types of academic writing, and develop effective editing skills.

In general, the student will

- learn specific terminology and fundamental principles as they pertain to political science research
- learn how to locate and use resources for problem-solving
- develop and/or enhance analytical and critical thinking skills

Required Texts:

- Le Roy, Michael K., *Research Methods in Political Science*, 7th edition. Wadsworth/ Thomson Learning
- Poe, Steven C. and C. Neal Tate. 1994. "Repression of Human Rights to Personal Integrity in the 1980s: A Global Analysis." *American Political Science Review*. Vol 88, No. 4, 853-872. Available through JSTOR.
- Hall, Pamela D. 1999. "The Effect of Meditation on the Academic Performance of African American College Students." *Journal of Black Studies* 29(3): 408-415. Available through JSTOR.

Course Requirements:

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| • Midterm exam | 30% |
| • Workbook Exercises/Class/Homework Assignments | 20% |
| • Methods Paper | 20% |
| • Final Exam | 30% |

The midterm and final will consist of multiple choice questions and short answer questions. Anyone who misses a scheduled exam or assignment will receive a zero. Make up exams and other assignments will be given only if you have unavoidable circumstances (with documentation) and only if you **contact the instructor in advance**.

In class and homework writing assignments will be utilized throughout the semester. There is no make-up available for these assignments, thus attendance is key (see below). The workbook assignments will be turned in as three packets with the due dates listed on the syllabus. **Late workbook assignments will not be accepted.** Packets may be turned in early.

The methods paper instructions are attached. Please note that there are drafts of the different sections of the paper due throughout the course of the semester. The drafts are part of the overall grade in the course. **Papers that are turned in at the end of the semester without the drafts attached will only receive half credit.**

In order to do well in the course, it is required that you attend class regularly. Please note that I do not give repeat performances. **Please be on time to class** and plan to stay, as entering a class late or leaving early is always disruptive. Such a disruption is unfair to the rest of the class and will result in you being counted absent. **NOTE: You get three no-questions asked absences (and I suggest you save one for the end of the semester when invariably you will catch whatever cold/flu is going around). Your fourth absence will result in a deduction of 10 points off of your final average (equivalent to one letter grade). Your fifth absence will result in a second 10 point deduction. At six absences you will have another 10 points deducted from your final average. After seven absences, you will automatically receive an F for the course.** Excused absences may be given with a university excuse or with a dated doctor's note. In order for any absence to be excused, the professor must be advised prior to the missed class. Conversely, perfect attendance will be rewarded with **3 points added to your final average.**

NOTE: Perfect attendance means perfect...no absences for any reasons. Also note: being tardy is not perfect. If you are tardy, you will not receive any additional points. So...to receive full credit, you must be in class at 2:00! No exceptions.

Participation:

Participation in class discussions is strongly encouraged. As students, you will get the most out of this class if you engage in the discussions. Every student in this class has an opinion, and each of those opinions is valued in this class. I ask that you respect the diverse backgrounds and views of your fellow students, and employ common courtesies during class.

Reading:

In order to get the most out of this class you should read assigned materials before the classroom discussion on that topic. It is your job to keep up with the reading and come to class prepared to discuss the material. It may be helpful to take notes when reading the material and bring any questions to class. Throughout the semester, I may give quizzes and in-class writing assignments over the assigned reading. These assignments may be announced or unannounced, and will presume that you have read all of the assigned material up to that point. If at any point it becomes clear that you have not read for that day, I will ask you to leave the class and count you absent for that day.

Grading:

Course grades of 90 – 100 will be scored an A; a B is 80 to 89; 70 to 79 is a C; 60 to 69 is a D; below 60 is an F.

- If you think that an error has been made in calculating your grade, it is *your responsibility* to provide me with all of your work. To that end, it would be prudent to save anything that is handed back to you until you get your final grade report. Any students caught cheating on an exam will receive a minimum punishment of a failing grade for the class.
- Anyone having problems in this course is strongly encouraged to contact the instructor as early as possible. I will be happy to meet you and help you in anyway possible. I may be able to help you study more effectively or recommend other assistance. **Remember – I want you to do well in this course.**

Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.* **Please be aware that plagiarized work will result in an “F” in the course.** See the following web address for more information on academic dishonesty. http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/810213.html

Classroom Rules of Conduct: Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. **Students must turn off all cell phones while in the classroom, this includes text messaging. Use of such a device during class time will result in a severe penalty. The first time you will receive a warning in the form of an email. The second time will result in a loss of one letter grade on your final average per offense. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination.** Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days: Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work. The student must inform the professor in advance. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

Students with Disabilities Policy: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

Visitors in the Classroom: Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar’s Office.

Note: This syllabus should be seen as a rough guide of the coming semester. I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus throughout the semester. Readings should be completed prior to class.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1

- Aug 25 Introduction to the course; Pet Peeves, and Plagiarism
- Print and read syllabus from Blackboard
- Aug 27 What is political science? Overview of the discipline
- The Discipline of Political Science – Blackboard

WEEK 2

- Sept 1 Writing Competently
- Read: Six Evil Geniuses of Essay Writing
 - http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/kingch/Six_Evil_Geniuses.htm
- Sept 3 Political Inquiry, Critical Thinking, and Research Ethics
- Using the Scientific Method in Political Science by Carlson and Hyde - Blackboard

WEEK 3

- Sept 8 Writings in Political Science: The Article Review
- Read: Writing a Political Science Essay
 - http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/kingch/Writing_PolSci_Essay.htm
 - Hall Article – Read and bring to class
- Sept 10 Library Visit: Room 157
- Library Assignment

WEEK 4

- Sept 15 The Political Science Research Process/Microcase Demonstration
- Ch 1 and Ch Workbook Exercises (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11)
- Sept 17 Formulating Research Ideas: The Research Question and the Lit Review
- Conducting a Literature Review – Blackboard
 - Review Appendix A – topics for semester paper

WEEK 5

- Sept 22 Concepts and Theories
- Theory Building by Manheim et, al. - Blackboard
 - **Workbook Packet One Due (Ch 1)**
- Sept 24 Research Design Overview
- Basic Research Designs by Stark and Roberts - Blackboard

WEEK 6

- Sept 29 Survey Research
- Survey Research by Carlson and Hyde - Blackboard

- Oct 1 Aggregate Data/Comparative Research
- Sources and Application of Aggregate data – Manheim et al - Blackboard

WEEK 7

- Oct 6 Experiments and Content Analysis
- Content Analysis by Manheim et al – Blackboard
 - First half-wrap up

Oct 8 MIDTERM

WEEK 8

- Oct 13 Measurement: Basic Ideas and Concepts
- Ch 2 and Workbook Exercises Ch 2 (1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 11, 12, 13)
- Oct 15 Measurement II: Types of Data
- Ch 3 and Workbook Exercises Ch 3 (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10)
 - **Draft of Intro and Theory due**

WEEK 9

- Oct 20 Turning Concepts into Variables - Operationalization
- Ch 4 and Workbook Exercises (1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)
 - Poe and Tate Article – Read section on variables and bring to class
- Oct 22 Causation and Hypothesis Testing
- Ch 5 (1, 3, 6, 7)

WEEK 10

- Oct 27 Sampling
- Ch 6 and Workbook Exercises (1, 2, 3, 4, 6)
 - **Workbook Packet 2 Due (Ch 2, 3, 4, 5)**
- Oct 29 Univariate Analysis: Descriptive Statistics
- Ch 8 and Workbook Exercises (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10)
 - **Draft of Hypotheses and Operationalization due**

WEEK 11

- Nov 3 Bivariate Analysis: Reading a Cross-Tabulation
- Ch 9 and Workbook (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)
- Nov 5 Bivariate Analysis: Tests of Statistical Significance
- Ch 10 Workbook Exercises (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

WEEK 12

Nov 10 Bivariate Analysis: Testing for Spuriousness

- Ch 12 and Workbook Exercises (all)

Nov 12 Bivariate and Multivariate Analysis: Correlations and Regressions

- Ch 13 Read
- **Draft of Descriptive Statistics Due**

WEEK 13

Nov 17 Bivariate and Multivariate Analysis: Correlations and Regressions

- Ch 13 and Workbook Exercises (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9)

Nov 19 Review Steps for Final Paper

WEEK 14

Nov 24 Assessing research and Overall Process

- Read all/remainder of Poe and Tate and bring article to class
- **Workbook Packet 3 Due (8, 9, 10, 12, 13)**

Nov 26 Thanksgiving – No Class

WEEK 15

Dec 1 - 3 No Class: Meet with professor to discuss final paper

Complete Draft Due

WEEK 16

Dec 8 No Class: Meet with professor to discuss final paper

Complete Draft Due

Dec 10 Course wrap-up

- **Methods Paper is due in my office.**

FINAL EXAM

Thursday, December 17, 2009 at 2:00pm

Research and Writing
Final Methods Paper Assignment

The final project is a paper where you state a research question, develop, and then empirically test the question. It will include the following elements. In addition, each section should be labeled with subheadings. (example: Introduction; Theory, etc).

- Title Page
 - Must include a title, your name, the date, the course information, and my name

- Abstract
 - One page, single-spaced abstract (200-250 words)
 - This should consist of a short statement of the problem or question and a brief summary of how it will be approached.

- **Introduction (Must be two paragraphs)**
 - Paragraph 1:
 - Identify the research problem and tell why it is important to study.
 - Explain how and why the question arises – in regards to politics.
 - Paragraph 2:
 - A “roadmap” paragraph which provides a brief outline of the rest of the paper.

- **Theory (Must be at least two and no more than 4 paragraphs)**
 - Ask yourself...why should we expect a relationship?
 - Your theory section must include a clear statement of your hypothes(es) as well as the null hypothesis.

- **Operationalization (Must be two paragraphs)**
 - Paragraph 1
 - You must clearly explain how your concepts are going to be measured. Be sure to address the issues of reliability and validity.
 - Paragraph 2
 - You will be using the Microcase data sets, so you should describe the measures you have chosen to reflect the concepts. What is the measure, what are the sources of the data, what is the level of measurement?

- **Univariate Analysis (Must be two paragraphs)**
 - Paragraph 1
 - You must provide a description and summary/descriptive analysis of the **dependent** variable. This includes measures of central tendency and variability. You must interpret what these elements are and not simply list them.

 - Paragraph 2
 - You must provide a description and summary/descriptive analysis of the **primary independent** variable. This includes measures of central tendency

and variability. You must interpret what these elements are and not simply list them.

- Note: This and the following sections provide the actual statistical analysis. You must include charts, graphs, tables in the appendix section. **DO NOT IMBED WITHIN THE TEXT.** Simply insert a comment in the center of the page: [Insert Table 1 Here].

- **Bivariate Analysis (must be two paragraphs)**

- Paragraph 1
 - You must justify the method you use (scatterplot, Pearson's R, Cramer's V)
 - What are the results of the analysis?
- Paragraph 2
 - Test for spuriousness with either a control variable for a cross-tab or outlier for a scatter-plot.

- **Multivariate Analysis (must be two paragraphs)**

- Paragraph 1
 - Justify the method and explain the independent variables.
- Paragraph 2
 - Discuss the net and joint effects.

- **Conclusion (cannot be longer than 2 paragraphs)**

- Provide a recap of the project, the analysis, and the conclusion.
- Ultimately, did you find support for your theory and hypothesis?

- **References and Appendices**

- All tables should be after the references

Parameters

- Must be 12 point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced
- Pages must be numbered on the bottom right, not including the title page and the abstract.
- Must use citation format outlined in the syllabus - **no exceptions.**
- The paper must include all the elements outlined. Each section cannot exceed the number of paragraphs indicated.
- Printouts from microcase must accompany the paper as part of the appendix.
- Your paper will be graded on the basis of the arguments not the results of the analysis...thus, don't worry if you do not get statistically significant results.