

Sam Houston State University
Department of Political Science

Course Syllabus (577:01, CID 4119)
The Scope and Methods of Political Science
Fall 2009

Dr. Rina Majumdar
Office: CHSS Building, Rm 481
Phone: (936) 294 – 4757
E-mail: majumdar@shsu.edu

Office Hours:
Tuesday: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Thursday: 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm
or by appointment

Class meets: University Center, Room 307, Tuesday 6:00 pm – 8:50 pm

Please Note: *The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus, including dates for examinations, presentations, and the due date of materials, as needed. These changes will be announced in class and may appear in Blackboard announcements. It is the student's responsibility to become aware of the changes.*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a study of the discipline of modern political science and public administration. It would lead to an inquiry into the literature, scope and techniques of research with particular emphasis upon the mathematical and quantitative methods of empirical research.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course examines the scope, methods, and techniques of modern political science and public administration. Thus, it deals with (1) the nature and range of concerns of the discipline, (2) the basic principles and assumptions of inquiry (the approaches, concepts, and logic commonly used), and (3) specific techniques for gathering and analyzing data. Particular emphasis will be placed on empirical and quantitative methods and techniques - that is, those involving observation and rigorous systematic examination. Students will be introduced to statistical methods. The major techniques will be surveyed, and you will get some experience using them. Students will be introduced to the use of the computer in data analysis. It is assumed that there will be a wide variation in the background of the students in the course. Hence, there may be some variation in assignments to serve the needs of the individual class members. There is also emphasis on development of writing skills.

- **Gaining factual knowledge** (terminology, classifications, methods, trends) through the study of terms and manipulation and interpretation of data
- **Learning to apply course material** (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions) through weekly exercises that probe thinking skills,
- **Developing specific skills**, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course, through the development of computer and writing skills that show competency
- **Developing skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing** through weekly assignments and writing the research design,
- **Acquiring an interest** in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers through weekly assignments and writing the research design.

Required Text

1. O'Sullivan, Elizabeth, Gary R. Rassel and Maureen Berner. *Research Methods for Public Administrators, fifth edition*. New York: Longman. 2003 ISBN: 9780321431370.

2. Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of term papers, theses and dissertations, seventh edition, University of Chicago Press.

Other Requirements

One 1 or 2 inches binder to file slide notes to be posted in the course documents section of the Black Board software. A simple calculator will be required for statistical calculations in the latter half of the course.

Classroom Conduct

Students must come prepared to class and will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. **Cellular telephones and pagers must be turned off** before class begins. Students are prohibited from *eating in class, using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping, talking at inappropriate times, wearing inappropriate clothing, or engaging in any other form of distraction*. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom may result in a directive to leave class. Students who are especially disruptive also may be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy. If you have to leave class early, seek the permission of the instructor. Also, visitors must receive the instructor's permission to attend class. Visitors are allowed on a limited basis only; i.e. once or twice a semester. Visitors must maintain the decorum as the rest of the class or they will be asked to leave the class.

Attendance Policy

All students are required to attend all classes. In case, a student cannot attend a class due to a serious problem, you must keep the instructor informed. It is your responsibility to check with the instructor the topic and course materials, which were covered in class and to complete the assigned homework. Too many absences will lead to referral to the appropriate administrative office in the university.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The course will involve a combination of lecture and discussion, with the emphasis on the latter. Students are expected to have read and thought about the assigned material proper to class so as to be able to understand the material and participate in class discussion. Active participation in class is expected. Absences will adversely affect the class participation grade. It is the student's responsibility to arrange to make up any missed work. Late submission of assigned work will lower the grade for the assignment by *one letter grade for each late day*.

Exams

Your final grade will be determined thus:

Exam 1 (research design)	20 points
Exam 2 (statistics)	20 points
Final Take Home Exam	25 points
Research Design	25 points
Presentation of Research Design	10 points

Students have to submit a (a) a research design, and (b) written exercises (qualitative and quantitative). In addition, you will make an oral presentation of your research design at the end of the semester. The duration of the presentation is 15 minutes and students are expected to use power point slides and other materials (handouts, etc.) for their presentation.

Grading Plan

90-100 =A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 0-69 =F

Student grades will be posted on BlackBoard. Students should save all graded items until the final grade is posted on SAMINFO. If there is a problem with your final grade **it cannot be resolved** if you do not have original copies of the paper and examinations. The grade in my record will stand unless you can provide documentation that I have made an error; so, **save everything!**

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

There is one major writing assignment for this class. A **research design**, which the student might reasonably be able to execute in the future. Topics for the research design will be chosen in consultation with the instructor. A draft (electronic version) of the research design is due November 21, 2006 and the final version is due December 5, 2006.

Research Design

A **research design** is a plan for carrying out a research project. It lays out the problem to be examined and hypotheses to be tested, puts them in the context of the research that has already been done, and spells out carefully how the necessary information will be gathered and applied to test the hypotheses proposed. *Note that you will not actually do the research in this class.* Rather, you will be providing a plan of how to do the work at some later point (which may or may not come). You will have to do some library research to see what research has been done on the topic and what need to be done next. You will also have to figure out how to get the necessary data, what methods you will use in applying it, and the standards you will use to determine if you accept or reject your hypotheses. The piece by Guba provides a list of items that might be covered. Choose a topic you could actually do and would be of interest to you. Make it large enough to require some serious work and small enough to be done by you alone or with a few assistants you could hire on a limited research budget. This would be a good vehicle to begin examining a thesis topic. Replication or extension of earlier studies is very appropriate.

Time line: Starting thinking about a topic that is of interest to you right from the very beginning of the semester. Check the format for research design and start working on it. Consult the Chicago Manual Style for the construction and writing format of the paper. You can fine tune your hypotheses but you may not change the topic between the first draft and the final version. The research design should be about 20 pages, not counting the Works Cited or Appendices.

The written products should use proper grammar and correct style. Consult the Chicago Manual Style and follow its citation order and other instructions as required by this department for papers and theses. List the manual used in the bibliography. Endnotes, or scientific notation (works cited) style may be used for citations. A bibliography of sources cited should be included. The research designs should be about 20 pages typed (not including endnotes, appendices, or bibliography), double spaced, and use 12 points font, preferable Times New Roman. Longer papers are acceptable, shorter papers are not. Short papers will receive a substantial grade penalty.

Protection of Human Subjects:

The federal government has established guidelines regarding the participation of human subjects in research. In order to conduct research, involving humans (and animals) at SHSU, oversight is required by a university committee. Use SHSU Fast Link to Office of Research and Sponsored Projects and choose Compliance information. If you are planning to do a survey, please submit your survey questionnaire to the aforementioned office for review and permission to conduct the survey.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Students will make an oral presentation of their research design. You will summarize your research project and discuss the essential components of it. You are to speak to your classmates; *do not present the remarks to me*. The point is to help you improve your presentation skills. *You may consult notes but do not read from your paper*. Make sure that the presentation does not exceed 15 minutes. Power point slides should be used in your presentation along with other appropriate materials to enhance its quality. You will be graded both on the quality and contents of your presentation and on your ability to speak and answer questions raised by your classmates.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Cheating on the exams or the paper will result in administrative sanctions including being reported to the Dean of Students, failing the course, or academic expulsion.

This instructor takes academic dishonesty very seriously and will penalize students who engage in it. SHSU defines “cheating” as

- “1) copying from another student’s test paper, laboratory report, other report, or computer files, data listings, and/or programs.
- 2) Using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test.
- 3) collaborating, without authorization, with another student during an examination or in preparing academic work.
- 4) knowingly, and without authorization, using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, soliciting, copying, or possessing, in whole or in part, the contents of an unadministered test...
- 7) Purchasing, or otherwise acquiring and submitting as one’s own work any research paper or other writing assignment prepared by an individual or firm.

5.312 ”Plagiarism” means the appropriation of another’s work or idea and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work or idea into one’s own work offered for credit.”

[Http://www.shsu.edu/administrative/faculty/sectionb.html#dishonesty](http://www.shsu.edu/administrative/faculty/sectionb.html#dishonesty)

Americans with Disabilities

Requests for disability accommodations must be initiated by the student. A student seeking accommodations should go to the Counseling Center and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in a timely manner. This instructor requires documentation from the Counseling Center in order to provide accommodations.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

Religious Holidays

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. "Religious holy day" means a holy day

observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Visitors in Classroom

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

Instructor Evaluation

All students must fill out the instructor evaluation form at the end of the semester.

Course Schedule

See below. The instructor reserves the right to change to make changes/adjustments in the course schedule as deemed necessary and appropriate in the semester.

Tentative Course Schedule for Fall 2009

8/25	Introduction to Research Methods	Chapter 1
9/01	Organizing Research Designs for Description	Chapter 1 (cont'd) Chapter 2
9/08	Talk on Library Resources and Search Engines Designs for Explanation	Chapter 3
9/15	Talk on Writing and Style Guide Measuring Variables	Chapter 4
9/22	Sampling Contacting and Talking to Subjects	Chapter 5 Chapter 6
9/29	Data Collection Designing Surveys	Chapter 7
10/06	Ethics in Research Secondary Data Analysis Combining Indicators	Chapter 8 Chapter 9 Chapter 10
10/13	Univariate Analysis	Chapter 11
10/20	Examining Relationships	Chapter 12
10/27	***Exam 1***	
11/03	Examining Relationships	Chapter 13
11/10	Regression Analysis and Correlation	Chapter 14
11/17	*Submit Research Design Electronically using Black Board (BB)	
11/24	***Exam 2***	
12/01	Oral Presentation of Research Design Take Home Exam Posted on BB in the Assignments Section	
12/09	Electronic Submission of Take Home Final Exam using BB.	

*Please note that the instructor will check your Research Design for originality using the Turnitin software.

