

Political Science Research Methods - Four Credits
Political Science 2001
Fall 2016

Instructor: Adam Olson

Office: Imholte 20D

Office Hours: Tu: 2:00-4:00, W: 10:30-11:30, and by appointment

Class Hours: MWF - 9:15-10:30

Unlike other political science courses where you deal more with theories and understanding political phenomenon, this course attempts to provide the tools to do that by showing you how to conduct research in a social science setting. While this is a political science course, most of the lessons learned in this class should translate to other aspects of your scholarly career and hopefully evolve into useful tools when you leave Morris. Learning how to think systematically and how to evaluate evidence, while often times implicit to a liberal arts education, is the central concern to this class.

There are several concrete objectives to this course. First, this course introduces the scientific method in the social sciences. Second, it provides an overview of different approaches to conducting social science research. Third, it teaches students how to develop good research questions that are testable according to one of the aforementioned approaches. Fourth, it teaches students how to do a literature search and write up a literature review. Fifth, it introduces a social science perspective on using statistics to do research. Sixth, it introduces the R statistical programming language.

This course is designed to encourage you to take an active role in pursuing your education and I will do my best to provide the proper guidance to help you make the most of your time. Structurally, this means that each class session will be composed of both lecture and seminar style discussion. It is interactive and once we start dealing with the statistical parts of the course, I expect there to be a dialogue between you and me during class so we can ensure you are learning the relevant tools. Since it is an election year, I hope that we have an abundance of examples to draw on when grappling with some of the questions of this course. Attendance is not mandatory but those who miss class often may find it very difficult to do well. I expect there to be several opportunities for extra credit, given that this is an election year, so should one arise I will announce it in class.

Class will meet on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 9:15 am in Imholte Hall 10. Slides for each individual lecture will be posted online afterwards. As with most political science courses, your enjoyment and ability to participate will greatly benefit by following the news. By reading a variety of news sources with a range of view points you'll develop a reservoir of political knowledge and intuition that you can use to better understand the tools discussed in this course.

Final grades for the course will be determined according to the following three categories:

- 70%** Research Design Paper
 - 10%** Question Assignment
 - 20%** Literature Review
 - 10%** Introduction Assignment
 - 30%** Methodological Strategy / Final Version
- 20%** Workbook Exercises
- 10%** Statistical Exercises

The bulk of the grade for this course comes from an iterative research design paper. The point of this assignment is to do all the major parts of writing a research paper but stopping short before actually doing the tests. You'll identify an interesting question, and thesis, do a literature survey, write a literature review before identifying and describing an appropriate methodological strategy to actually answer the question. Each of these mini assignments builds on one another and will culminate in a 8-12 page research design. I will hand out more specialized instructions closer to the individual deadlines. Some of the more significant parts of the research design have draft deadlines built into the schedule. These are optional, but if you would like me to look at the given part before the final version is due, those would be the deadlines. The final due date of the Research Design Paper will be due by 6:00pm on December 13th. This is our scheduled final exam date.

The other graded parts of this class come from doing exercises out of the workbook. The workbook exercises come from the thin Mycoff book and their due dates will be noted when relevant, usually Fridays. You can rip the pages out of the book and hand them in to me that way or you can write them up and submit them that way too. They are intended to be low stakes assignments to ensure you understand what we're talking about in class. Remember that they only count for 20% of your grade, so don't spend way too long on them. They are mostly for you and I to ensure we're on the same page. The statistical exercises come from the later chapters of the Mycoff workbook, from chapters 11 onward. As you can see the statistical assignments only count for 10% of the grade. I understand that mathematical thinking can be scary when first introduced, so these are very low stakes assignments. I would like you to be introduced to modern statistical tools in a low stress way where you are more focused on learning the technique rather than ensuring you get the highest grade.

As you may notice, there are no exams in this course. Learning how to conduct quality research is not the sort of skillbase that needs to be totally memorized in order to do it well. As such, all of the assignments in this class are open book, open note, open whatever. The only caveat deals with your peers. While you are allowed to work with partners on the workbook activities, you are not allowed to turn in the same work. Be sure you are actually doing the assignment yourself.

All grades for this class follow the standard scale: >93%=A, >90%=A-, >88%=B+, >83%=B, >80%=B-, >78%=C+, >73%=C, >70%=C-, >68%=D+, >63%=D, >60%=D-, <60%=F

Books to Purchase:

Required

1. Janet Buttolph Johnson, H T Reynolds, and Jason D Mycoff (2015). *Political Science Research Methods*. 8th. Washington D.C.: SAGE Publications
2. Jason D Mycoff (2015). *Working with Political Science Research Methods: Problems and Exercises*. 4th. Washington D.C.: SAGE Publications

Reading assignments that come from sources other than the required books will be posted online.

University Statements

Senate student academic workload policy

For undergraduate courses, one credit is defined as equivalent to an average of three hours of learning effort per week (over a full semester) necessary for an average student to achieve an average grade in the course. For example, a student taking a four credit course that meets for four hours a week should expect to spend an additional eight hours a week on course work outside the classroom.

Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action

The University provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Statement on accommodations for students with disabilities

It is University policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. This publication/material is available in alternative formats to persons with disabilities upon request. Please contact the Disability Resource Center, 589-6163, Room 362 Briggs Library to discuss accommodation needs.

Statement on classroom conduct

Students are expected to interact with the instructor and other students with respect and courtesy. Students should attend every class session prepared to learn and work. Participation in class is expected, which includes both speaking up and listening. Give class your full attention while here. Complete all assignments including the reading – in a timely fashion. Do not bring cell phones or recording equipment to class without the instructor's consent. Students whose behavior is disruptive either to the instructor or to other students will be asked to leave. Students whose behavior suggests the need for

counseling or other assistance may be referred to counseling services. Students whose behavior violates the University Student Conduct Code will be subject to disciplinary action.

Statement on academic misconduct

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. In this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Statement regarding sexual harassment

University policy prohibits sexual harassment as defined by the University of Minnesota Regents' policy: <http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.pdf>.

Course Outline

Introduction & Welcome

Wednesday, August 24

Studying Politics Scientifically

Friday, August 26 – Introduction

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter One

Monday, August 29 - The Empirical Approach to Political Science I

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Two

Wednesday, August 31 – The Empirical Approach to Political Science II

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Two

Friday, September 2 – The Empirical Approach to Political Science III

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Two
- Mycoff, *Problems 2-1,2,3,6 due*

Building Blocks of Conducting Research

Monday, September 5 - NO CLASS, LABOR DAY

Wednesday, September 7 - Identifying Questions and Literatures I

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Three

Friday, September 9 - Identifying Questions and Literatures

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Three
- Mycoff, *Problems 3-1,6,9 due*

Monday, September 12 - Converting Questions to Testable Things I

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Four
- *List of potential research questions due*

Wednesday, September 14 - Converting Questions to Testable Things II

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Four

Friday, September 16 - Measurement I

- Mycoff - *Problems 4, all, due*
- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Five

Monday, September 19 - Measurement II

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Five

Wednesday, September 21 - Measurement III

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Five

Friday, September 23 - Making Inferences I

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Six
- Mycoff - *Problems 5, all due*

Monday, September 26 - Inferences II

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Six

Wednesday, September 28 - Inferences III

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Six

Friday, September 30 - Sampling I

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Seven
- Mycoff - *Problems 6-1,2,3,4,7,8 due*

Monday, October 3 - Sampling II

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Seven

Research Strategies

Wednesday, October 5 - First Hand Observation I

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Eight
- Draft Literature Review Due

Friday, October 7 - First Hand Observation II

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Eight
- Mycoff - *Problems 7-1,2,3,4,5 due*

Monday, October 10 - Document Analysis I

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Nine

Wednesday, October 12 Document Analysis II

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter Nine

Friday, October 14 - Survey Research and Interviewing I

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 10

Monday, October 17 - **No Class**

Wednesday, October 19 - Survey Research and Interviewing II

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 10

Friday, October 21 - Survey Research and Interviewing III

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 10
- Mycoff - *Problems 10-1,2,3,4,5,6 due*

Monday, October 24 - Basic Data Analysis and 'Data Frames' I

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 11
- James E Monogan III (2015). *Political Analysis Using R: Use R!*. Springer International Publishing, Chapter One

Wednesday, October 26 - Basic Data Analysis and 'Data Frames' II

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 11
- Monogan - Chapter Two

Friday, October 28 - Basic Data Analysis and 'Data Frames' III

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 11
- Monogan - Chapter Three
- *Final Literature Review Due Assignment Due*
- In class Mycoff - Problems 11

Monday, October 31 - Basic Data Analysis and 'Data Frames' IV

- Monogan - Chapter Four
- Mycoff - *Problems 11, due*

Wednesday, November 2 - Statistical Inference I

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 12

Friday, November 4 - Statistical Inference II

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 12
- Monogan - Chapter 5.1
- Mycoff - *Problems 12, all due*

Monday, November 7 - Relationships between Two Variables I

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 13

Wednesday, November 9 - Interlude for Real Life

- Talk about the election

Friday, November 11 - Relationships between Two Variables II

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 13
- Monogan - Rest of Chapter 5
- *Introduction Assignment Due*

Monday, November 14 - Relationships between Two Variables III

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 13
- Monogan - Chapter 6

Wednesday, November 16 - Relationships between Two Variables IV

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 13
- Monogan - Chapter 6

Friday, November 18 - Relationships between Two Variables V

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 13
- Monogan - Chapter 6

Monday, November 21 - Multiple Variable Analysis I

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 14
- Mycoff - *Problems 13, all due*

Wednesday, November 23 - **No Class**

Friday, November 25 - **No Class**

Monday, November 28 - Multiple Variable Analysis II

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 14

- Draft Research Strategy Due

Wednesday, November 30 - Multiple Variable Analysis III

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 14

Friday, December 2 - Multiple Variable Analysis IV

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 14
- Monogan - Chapter 7

Monday, December 5 - Multiple Variable Analysis V

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff - Chapter 14
- Monogan - Chapter 7
- Mycoff, *Problems 14, all due*

Wednesday, December 7 - Class Presentations I

Friday, December 9 - Class Presentations II

Tuesday, December 13 - Final Research Design Due, 6:00pm