

# **POLS 2010: Scope and Methods in Political Science**

## **Fall 2020**

Tuesday & Thursday 7:40-8:50  
Joseph Merrick Jones Memorial 102

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### **1 Course Description**

This course is an introduction to the field of political science and the process of political science research. Its overarching goal is to familiarize you with the scientific study of politics. We will apply a scientific approach to questions about political phenomena, instead of the more familiar approaches taken by politicians, interest groups, and popular media. We will learn how to ask empirical questions about politics, how to answer these questions scientifically using the appropriate types of evidence, and how to clearly convey our arguments to others. The course topics will include the logic of the scientific method, the measurement of political concepts, research design and methods of data collection, statistical techniques for analyzing data, and various quantitative and qualitative practices in the field of political science. At the end of the course, you should be comfortable reading and critiquing arguments about real world political problems. Learning to think scientifically in this manner is a skill that you will find useful in other political science courses and in your career as well. No background in statistics or mathematics beyond high school algebra is assumed. There are no prerequisites other than a desire to think about political problems in a systematic and critical fashion.

### **2 Learning Outcomes**

After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and explain different subfields in political science, dominant research designs used in the field, and diverse methods of inquiry.
- Compare the merits and drawbacks of different evaluative approaches to political science, and make informed choices about how to best pursue scholarly research in topics of interest to them.

- Synthesize literature review, hypothesis, argument, and research methods in a semester-long research design project.
- Apply critical perspectives to methods used in various political science papers discussed in class.

### 3 Required Materials

Johnson, Janet B., Reynolds, H.T., and Mycoff, Jason. 2015. *Political Science Research Methods*, (8th edition). Los Angeles, CA: CQ Press. (JRM in syllabus)

Other required articles and texts: These can be found in full-text databases, on canvas, or will be emailed by the instructor in advance. From the library website, go to “databases” and then select EBSCO, JSTOR, or Google Scholar and do a search by the author’s name, article title, or journal and year. All articles outside the course book are marked with a \* in the syllabus.

### 4 Course Requirements

- Research design paper: **25%**
- Midterm exam: **20%**
- Final exam: **25%**
- Homework: **20%**
- Participation (includes attendance): **10%**

### 5 Details of Course Requirements

#### Research design paper (25%)

Students will complete a research proposal, consisting of a literature review, data plan, and appropriate methodologies. While I do not expect students to carry out independent data analysis for this course, the paper assignment should be thought of as everything but the data analysis.

In the **first** assignment, students will submit a list of topics and/or research questions of their choosing. This will be due September 1. Once I have approved your question, students will start developing a literature review on the chosen topic, which will be due on October 8th. This is the **second** assignment. Although there is no limit on the number of citations, each literature review must include no fewer than ten scholarly works. A “scholarly work” includes anything that is published in a scholarly book or peer-reviewed journal.

Using the topic you chose for the literature review, you will define a research question and the subsequent testable hypotheses and identify in detail the procedure for collecting and analyzing the data (qualitative or quantitative). You must also revise the literature review based on the comments you receive from me. The final draft of the project is due on November 24th. This paper will revise the literature review and add a data plan and description of methodologies.

The final product should look something like this:

1. **Abstract:** brief summary (~150 words) of the paper
2. **Introduction:** research question or questions
3. **Literature review:** revised literature review that sets up the main theory or theories and hypotheses
4. **Data collection:** what type of data? How would you collect it? What questions would you ask? What problems might you encounter? Are you sure all you need is available?
5. **Methodology:** which techniques will you use and why?
6. **Conclusion**

### Midterm (20%) and Final (25%) exams

The midterm is in class (or online, depending on the circumstances) on Tuesday, September 29th. The final is scheduled for Tuesday, December 1st at 1:00PM. The final will be comprehensive and online. There will be more info about both the midterm and the final later in the semester.

### Homework (20%)

There are several *written* assignments due throughout the semester. These will be designed to help you organize your thoughts and come up with a research question and testable hypotheses. These will be due in class. We will also be working with data and doing *problem sets*. You will always have at least one week to complete a homework assignment. Problem sets will have to be emailed to me any time *before* class starts.

All assignments are graded as satisfactory/unsatisfactory.

Assignment	Description	Due date
1	Research questions	September 1
2	Literature review	October 8
3	R problem set 1	October 15
4	R problem set 2	October 22
5	R problem set 3	November 3

## Participation and Attendance (10% )

This class will be mainly taught in lecture format, but its success will also depend on students' active participation and engagement. As such, students are expected to attend class, prepare the reading, and participate in class discussion.

Regular attendance is required. Class attendance will count for 5% of your total grade. If absences, tardiness, or under-preparation becomes a problem, your grade will suffer.

## 6 Policies

**Attendance** Attendance and participation are mandatory. They are also necessary conditions for success in this class. If you are ill or cannot attend class, please email me in advance to let me know you cannot make it. Unexcused absences will be reflected in the participation component of the grade.

**Safety in times of Covid** Faculty and students must comply with University policies on COVID-19 testing and isolation, which are located here (<https://tulane.edu/covid-19/health-strategies>). Faculty and students must wear face coverings in all common areas, including classrooms, and follow social distancing rules. Failure to comply is a violation of the Code of Student Conduct and students will be subject to University discipline, which can include suspension or permanent dismissal.

**Make-up Exams** There will be no make-up exams unless you have a documented medical emergency. Make travel plans accordingly.

**Late Policy** Late assignments will not be accepted. For each day the assignment is late, one-third of a letter grade is deducted from the final grade on the assignment up to five days late. After that point, the papers will not be accepted. I strongly encourage you to discuss any problems with me before the papers are due.

**Disputing grades** I will be happy to go over any exam or assignment with you to help you improve for the following assignment or the final. Indeed, I encourage you to go to office hours to do so, especially if you think that you did study hard but did not get the expected results. Request for re-grading, though, must be done in writing. Any student requesting re-grading should describe (based on the class' materials) what they feel constitute the correct answer and how their work meets the standard described.

**Grading** This course will be grade according to the following scale:

A	≥ 93	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A-	90-92	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62

F = 59 or below

**Academic Honesty** Students are required to act in accordance with the Code of Academic Conduct. Any suspected violations will be brought before the Newcomb-Tulane College Honor Board. Please familiarize yourself with the Code of Academic Conduct: <http://tulane.edu/college/code.cfm>

### **Respect for all People**

*Tulane recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. As 'One Wave,' Tulane is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination outlined in our University Equal Opportunity/Anti-Discrimination Policies, which includes all forms of sexual and gender-based discrimination and harassment, including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or is experiencing these types of behaviors, know that you are not alone. Resources and support are available. Any and all of your communications on these matters will be treated as either "Confidential" or "Private" as explained in the updated chart below.*

## 7 Class schedule

### 1. Aug 20 – Introduction to the course

- Politics and political science. Syllabus, textbook and software, rules of the game, requirements, etc.

### 2. Aug 25 – Studying politics scientifically

- JRM, Chapter 2
- Shepsle, Kenneth and Mark Bonchek (1996), “It Isn’t Rocket Science, but...”, in: *Analyzing Politics*, 2nd. ed. W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 3-6.\*

### 3. Aug 27 – Research questions in Political Science

- JRM, Chapter 3, pp. 74-82
- Baglione, Lisa A. (2012), *Writing a research paper in political science: a practical guide to inquiry, structure, and methods*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Chapter 2.\*

### 4. Sep 1 – Developing theories in Political Science

- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory C. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald (2008), *The Craft of Research*, 4th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, Chapter 7.\*
- JRM, Chapter 4
- **Assignment # 1 (research questions) is due**

### 5. Sep 3 – Writing a literature review

- Baglione, Lisa A. (2012), *Writing a research paper in political science: a practical guide to inquiry, structure, and methods*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 75-79.\*
- JRM, Chapter 3, pp. 82-102.

### 6. Sep 8 – Concepts and Measurement I

- JRM, Chapter 5, pp. 128-146.

## 7. Sep 10 – Concepts and Measurement II

- Gerardo L. Munck and Jay Verkuilen (2002), “Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: Evaluating alternative indices”, *Comparative Political Studies*, 35(1), pp. 5-34.\*

## 8. Sep 15 – Causal inference

- JRM, Chapter 6, pp. 166-171
- Titiunik, Rocío Can Big Data Solve the Fundamental Problem of Causal Inference?\*

## 9. Sep 17 – Forms of Data, Observational research design

- JRM, Chapter 6, pp. 195-209
- Hassell, H., Holbein, J., & Baldwin, M. (2020), “Mobilize for Our Lives? School Shootings and Democratic Accountability in U.S. Elections”, *American Political Science Review*, p. 1-11.\*

## 10. Sep 22 – Forms of Data, Experimental research design

- JRM, Chapter 6, pp. 171-194
- Chen, D., & MacDonald, A. (2020), “Bread and Circuses: Sports and Public Opinion in China”, *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 7(1), pp. 41-55.\*

## 11. Sep 24 – Midterm Review

## 12. Sep 29 – MIDTERM EXAM

## 13. Oct 1 – Data, sampling, and statistical inference

- JRM, Chapter 7
- Holden, Constance (2009), “The 2010 census: America’s uncounted million”, *Science*, 324: 1008-1009.\*

## 14. Oct 6 – Introduction – workshop

- Basics, R as a calculator, observations, vectors, matrices, data frames.
- Bring your laptop with R and RStudio installed

15. Oct 8 – Manipulating data – R workshop

- Bring your laptop
- **Assignment # 2 (literature review) is due**

16. Oct 13 - Data description, statistical inference - R workshop

- Data wrangling
- Bring your laptop

17. Oct 15 - Data visualization - R workshop

- Bring your laptop
- **Assignment # 3 (R problem set #1) is due**

18. Oct 20 – Bivariate analysis

- JRM, Chapter 13, pp. 412-478

19. Oct 22 – Regression

- JRM, Chapter 13, pp. 478-515
- **Assignment # 4 (R problem set #2) is due**

20. Oct 27 – Correlation and Regression - R workshop

- Bring your laptop

21. Oct 29 – Single-case study, process-tracing

- Gerring, John. 2006. "What is a case study?" In Case Study Research. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2: 17-36.\*
- Brady, Henry. 2010. "Data-Set Observations versus Causal- Process Observations: The 2000 U.S. Presidential Election." In Henry Brady and David Collier (eds): Rethinking Social Inquiry. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Chapter 12: 237-244.\*

## 22. Nov 3 – Case selection and the comparative method

- Lijphart, Arendt (1971), “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method”, *American Political Science Review*, 65 (3), pp. 682–93.\*
- **Assignment # 5 (R problem set #3) is due**

## 23. Nov 5 – Interviews, fieldwork, ethnography

- JRM, Chapters 8, pp. 244-262; Chapter 10, pp. 338-344.
- Alice Goffman (2009), “On the run: Wanted men in a Philadelphia ghetto”, *American Sociological Review*, 74(3), pp. 339-357.\*

## 24. Nov 10 – Mixed methods

- Tarrow, Sidney (2010) “Bridging the Quantitative-Qualitative Divide”, in Brady, Henry and David Collier, *Rethinking Social Inquiry. Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers (2nd ed), pp.207-219.\*

## 25. Nov 12 – Ethics

- Carapico, S. (2006), “No Easy Answers: The Ethics of Field Research in the Arab World”, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 39(3), 429-431.\*
- Johnson, Jeremy (2015), “**Campaign experiment found to be in violation of Montana law**”, *Washington Post*\*

## 26. Nov 17 – A tour of the discipline: Comparative politics and American politics

- Ross, Michael L. (2001), “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?” *World Politics* 53(3): 325-361.\*
- Soss, Joe and Weaver, Vesla (2017), “Police Are Our Government: Politics, Political Science, and the Policing of Race–Class Subjugated Communities”, *Annual Review of Political Science* Vol. 20:565-591.\*

## 27. Nov 19 – A tour of the discipline: International relations and Political theory

- Stephen M. Walt (1998), “International Relations: One World, Many Theories”, *Foreign Policy*, 110:29-46.\*
- Thucydides (1996), *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, ed. Robert B. Strassler, New York: Free Press, pp. 350-357.\*

28. Nov 24 – Wrapping up

- **Final paper is due**

**FINAL EXAM:** Tuesday, December 1 at 1:00 pm