Political Science Research Methods

University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Department of Political Science
Spring 2012

Instructor Information
Professor Courtenay Conrad
Email: courtenayconrad@uncc.edu
Location: Fretwell 455A
Office Hours: T/Th 2:00-3:00 PM

Teaching Assistant Information
Nandan Jha
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Course Information
Course: POLS 2220-03
Time: T/Th 9:30-10:45 AM
Location: Fretwell 406
Website: Moodle

Lab Information
Course: POLS2220L
Time: T 8:15-9:15 AM
Location: Fretwell 421

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1   Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the fundamentals of social science research design and quantitative analysis. Most other political science courses examine the *findings* of social science research. This class examines the *methods* of social science research used to generate those findings. In short, it is about how to use the scientific method to study politics. A strong background in statistics or math is *not* required to succeed in this course.

The first part of the course focuses on research design issues: Basically, how do you conduct successful social science research? You will learn how to ask questions about political phenomena and formulate and test hypotheses to evaluate answers to those questions. The second half of the course centers on data analysis. We will discuss elementary statistical and probability concepts, as well as basic statistical data analysis. There are two components to the course: (1) a lecture component meeting Tuesdays and Thursdays and (2) a lab section component meeting Tuesdays.

2   Reading Material

There are two required textbooks for this course:

- Pollock, Philip. 2011. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, 4th edition. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN #978-1-60871-686-9.

- Pollock, Philip. 2011. *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*, 4th edition. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN #978-1-60871-687-6.

Both books are available in the University bookstore, Grey's Bookstore, or via an online bookseller. Be sure to purchase the correct edition of each book. You can ensure that you have the correct edition by comparing the ISBN numbers listed above against those printed above the bar code on the back of your textbooks. In addition to readings from the textbooks, we will also discuss a variety of other readings from academic journals. Each of these readings will be available on Moodle. It is up to you to download and print the readings individually prior to each class. You are expected to do the assigned readings before the class period indicated on the syllabus.

3 Prerequisites

This course is required for all political science majors at UNC Charlotte. The prerequisite for the course is the successful completion of an introductory political science class (i.e., POLS 1110, 1130, 1131, 1150, or 1151). Successful completion of this course is a prerequisite for the political science senior seminar, POLS 4600.

4 Evaluation

Your final grade is a weighted average of the following components to total 500 points, described in detail below:

- Lab Sessions (100 points)

- Exams (200 points – 2 exams at 100 points each)

- Quizzes (100 points – 5 quizzes at 20 points each)

- Research Paper (100 points)

4.1 Grading Scale

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	59 and below

4.2 Lab Sessions

Aside from lecture, you will meet once a week for one hour in the computer lab. The sessions will be run by the TA, who is your main point of contact should you have questions regarding lab. Please refer to the lab syllabus for details on how the lab grade will be calculated. Your final lab session grade will count for 100 points of your final course grade.

4.3 Exams

You will take one midterm exam and one final exam in this course. The midterm exam will cover material from lectures and readings assigned during the first half of the course. It will contain predominately multiple choice and true/false questions and will count for 100 points of your final course grade. The cumulative final exam will cover material from lectures and readings. It will be a combination of multiple choice and true/false questions, calculations/interpretations of statistics, and a take home component. The final exam will count for 100 points of your final course grade.

4.4 Quizzes

You will take six quizzes in this course. Quizzes may or may not be announced prior to the day they are given. As a result, it is important to attend class regularly to ensure that you are present for quizzes. The quizzes are not intended to trick you; they are intended to ensure that you are doing the class readings in a timely manner. I will drop your lowest quiz grade at the end of the semester. Quizzes count for 100 points of your final course grade.

4.5 Research Paper

You will complete a 15-20 page co-authored research paper in this course. Data for the analysis will be provided for you. Part of your grade will be based on your co-author's assessment of your contribution to the paper. You will turn in portions of the paper over the course of the semester, including the question, bibliography, literature review, and basic research design. Each of these assignments will be worth 10 of the 100 research paper points. Additional information on the paper will be handed out in an addendum to this syllabus.

5 Administrative Policies

5.1 Course Website and Email

The course website can be accessed through Moodle. Please check this site regularly for readings, assignments, and other updates. Announcements may be sent out via email or

posted directly on Moodle. You are responsible for all information disseminated via Moodle and/or email. I will respond to email during normal business hours within four hours of receipt. Please do not send me an email on Sunday evening or an hour before an exam and expect an immediate response.

5.2   Attendance

I do not take attendance in lecture. However, I cannot stress enough how important it is to attend class. Many students find this class challenging, and many of the readings we will be doing for this course are demanding and will require clarification. Furthermore, I will often discuss information in class that is *not included in the readings.* You will be responsible for that information on tests and quizzes, and I will not repeat that information to you one-on-one during my office hours. As a result, it is to your benefit to attend class regularly.

5.3   Absences from Exams and Late Work

Makeup exams and in-class activities will be allowed when students are participating in formally sanctioned University events if proper documentation is provided at least two days prior to the exam. Makeup exams and in-class activities will be allowed in the case of an extraordinary circumstance if accompanied by sufficient documentation within two days after the exam or activity. I reserve the right to determine what constitutes an extraordinary circumstance. Makeup quizzes will not be permitted under any circumstances, but please remember that I do drop your lowest quiz grade.

5.4   Assignment Review

If you are concerned about your grade on an assignment, I am happy to review it. However, I require that you 1) wait 24 hours after the assignment has been returned to you to request review, and 2) outline your concerns about the assignment grade via email, explaining to me why your grade should be changed. Please be aware that I will regrade the entire assignment (not just one portion of it) if you request review, and I reserve the right to raise *or lower* your grade as a result.

5.5   Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the UNC Charlotte Code of Student Academic Integrity. In short, this means that cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students violating the Academic Honesty Policy in this course will receive a minimum penalty of a grade of zero for the assignment or test in question and may receive an "F" in the course and referral to Judicial Services at my discretion.

5.6 Students with Disabilities

UNC Charlotte is committed to ensuring equal academic opportunities and inclusion for students with disabilities based on the principles of independent living, accessible universal design and diversity. Students with disabilities who anticipate needing an academic accommodation in this course should provide me with the proper documentation from the Disability Services Center within the first week of class.

5.7 Courtesy in the Classroom

Attention to classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distraction. As such, cell phones should be turned off or silenced during class and put away. *Do not talk on your cell phone or text message during class.* You are permitted to use laptops during class, but I reserve the right to ask you to put your laptop away if you are using it for purposes unaffiliated with my course. Please be on time to class and remain in class until you are dismissed. If you must arrive late or leave early, please take the seat nearest an exit, and enter or leave as quietly as possible. Please show respect for others by refraining from talking during lectures, as well as when other students are speaking. Similarly, please respect the opinions of your fellow students, even if you are in disagreement with them. Repeated disruption of class may lead to your being asked to leave the classroom and/or a reduction of your final grade.

6 Course Schedule

This schedule is a guide for the course and is subject to change. Please read the appropriate readings *before* the course period for which they are listed below.

Week 1
Tuesday, January 10, 2012: COURSE OVERVIEW
Reading 1: No Reading

Thursday, January 12, 2012: THE SCIENCE OF POLITICS
Reading 1: Pollock (Introduction, pp. 1-5)
Reading 2: Smith, Rogers M. 2002. "Should We Make Political Science More of a Science or More about Politics?" *PS: Political Science and Politics*: 199-201.

Week 2
Tuesday, January 17, 2012: OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS
Reading 1: Kellstedt & Whitten (Chapter 1)
Reading 2: Walsh & Piazza. 2010.

Thursday, January 19, 2012: RESEARCH QUESTIONS, THEORIES, AND HYPOTHESES
Reading 1: Kellstedt & Whitten (Chapter 2)
Reading 2: Pollock (pp. 48-58)

Week 3
Tuesday, January 24, 2012: RESEARCH QUESTIONS, THEORIES, AND HYPOTHESES
Reading 1: Brady, Verba, & Schlozman. 1995. "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 89(2): 271-294.
Reading 2: Cunningham. 2006. "Veto Players and Civil War Duration." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(4): 875-892.

Thursday, January 26, 2012: PEIO CONFERENCE – NO CLASS
Reading 1: No New Reading.

Week 4
Tuesday, January 31, 2012: THE NATURE OF CAUSAL RELATIONSHIPS
Reading 1: Kellstedt & Whitten (Chapter 3)
Reading 2: Pollock (pp. 86-96)
Due: **Research Paper Question and Bibliography**

Thursday, February 2, 2012: THE NATURE OF CAUSAL RELATIONSHIPS
Reading 1: Souva & Rohde. 2007. "Elite Opinion Differences and Partisanship in Congressional Foreign Policy, 1975-1996." *Political Research Quarterly* 60(1): 113-123.
Reading 2: Ross, Michael L. "Oil, Islam, and Women." *American Political Science Review* 102(1): 107-123.

Week 5
Tuesday, February 7, 2012: CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT
Reading 1: Pollock (Chapter 1)
Reading 2: Ill-Treatment and Torture (ITT) Codebook

Thursday, February 9, 2012: CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT
Reading 1: Economist Intelligence Unit (2007)
Reading 2: Przeworski & Limongi. 1997. "Modernization: Theories and Facts." *World Politics* 49: 155-183 (Introduction, Section 1, Appendix 1)
Reading 3: Polity IV Manual (pp. 1-3, 14-17)

Week 6
Tuesday, February 14, 2012: CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT
Reading 1: Fisman & Miguel. 2007. "Corruption, Norms, and Legal Enforcement: Evidence from Diplomatic Parking Tickets." *Journal of Political Economy* 115(6): 1020-1048
Reading 2: Putnam. 1995. "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social

Capital in America. *PS: Political Science and Politics.*

Thursday, February 16, 2012: RESEARCH DESIGN
Reading 1: Pollock (Chapter 4)
Reading 2: Fowler, James H. 2008. "The Colbert Bump in Campaign Donations: More Truthful Than Truthy." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 41(3): 533-539.
Due: **Research Paper Literature Review**

Week 7
Tuesday, February 21, 2012: DESCRIBING VARIABLES AND MAKING COMPARISONS
Reading 1: Pollock (Chapter 2)
Reading 2: TBA

Thursday, February 23, 2012: **Midterm Exam**
Note: Please bring a #2 pencil to the exam.

Week 8
Tuesday, February 28, 2012: EXPERIMENTS
Reading 1: Posner. 2004. "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi." *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 529-545.
Reading 2: Gerber & Green. 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 94(3): 653-663.

Thursday, March 1, 2012: CLASS DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH PAPERS
Reading: No new readings.

Week 9
Tuesday, March 6, 2012: SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)

Thursday, March 8, 2012: SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)

Week 10
Tuesday, March 13, 2012: CONTROLLED COMPARISONS
Reading 1: Pollock (Chapter 5)
Reading 2: TBA

Thursday, March 15, 2012: CONTROLLED COMPARISONS
Reading 1: TBA
Reading 2: TBA

Week 11
Tuesday, March 20, 2012: Survey Research and Sampling
Reading 1: Gallup. 2008. "American Muslim Report" (pp. 10-14; 14-18)
Reading 2: Manheim, Jarol B., Richard C. Rich & Lars Wilnat. 2002. *Empirical Political Analysis*, 5th ed., ch 7.

Thursday, March 22, 2012: Sampling and Inference
Reading 1: Pollock (Chapter 6)
Reading 2: King, Keohane, & Verba. 1994. "Descriptive Inference" and "Causality and Causal Inference," in *Designing Social Inquiry*, Princeton University Press, pp. 34-36 and 75-76, 82-85.
Due: **Research Paper Hypotheses**

Week 12
Tuesday, March 27, 2012: Sampling and Inference
Reading 1: Pollock (Chapter 6)
Reading 2: Zorn, Christopher, and Jeff Gill. 2007. "The Etiology of Public Support for the Designated Hitter Rule." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 2(2): 189-203.

Thursday, March 29, 2012: Tests of Significance & Measures of Association
Reading 1: Pollock (Chapter 7)
Reading 2: Barrett & Barrington (2005)

Week 13
Tuesday, April 3, 2012: Tests of Significance & Measures of Association
Reading 1: Pollock (Chapter 7)
Reading 2: Barrett & Barrington (2005)
Due: **Research Paper Research Design**

Thursday, April 5, 2012: Scatterplots, Correlation, & Bivariate Regression
Reading 1: Scatterplots Handout
Reading 2: Pollock (pp. 182-199)

Week 14
Tuesday, April 10, 2012: Scatterplots, Correlation, & Regression
Reading 1: Pollock (Chapter 8)
Reading 2: TBA

Thursday, April 12, 2012: MPSA Conference – No Class
Reading 1: No New Reading.

Week 15

Tuesday, April 17, 2012: SCATTERPLOTS, CORRELATION, & REGRESSION
Reading 1: Bivariate SPSS Handout
Reading 2: TBA

Thursday, April 19, 2012: MULTIPLE REGRESSION
Reading 1: Berry & Sanders. 2000. *Understanding Multivariate Research.* Westview Press (p. 1-28).
Reading 2: SPSS workbook (Chapter 8)

Week 16
Tuesday, April 24, 2012: MULTIPLE REGRESSION
Reading 1: Poe & Tate. 1994. "Human Rights and Repression to Personal Integrity in the 1980s: A Global Analysis," *American Political Science Review*, 88: 853-872.

Thursday, April 26, 2012: CATCH-UP DAY & FINAL EXAM REVIEW
Note: Please come prepared with questions!
Due: **Final Research Paper**

FINAL EXAM
TBA

7 Syllabus Changes

The policies, assignments and readings contained in this syllabus are subject to change with advance notice.