

Seminar in Research Methods

POLITICAL SCIENCE PSC 701
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Fall 2007

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Class Description: This course is an introduction to research methods and statistics in the social sciences. It assumes little or no background in methodology or math. The course is designed to provide an appreciation of social science research and the use of various methods to arrive at objective (or not so objective) conclusions and to allow the student to consume social science literature in the various journals in various academic fields. At the end of the course, students will be expected to have a basic grasp of general methods, models, and statistical tools.

Course requirements: Attendance is important because there will be a lot of material given in a short period of time. Students will create a research design to address a social/political phenomenon of their choice. The purpose of this assignment is to engage students in fundamental research methods and practices. This project is not to exceed 10 pages and is due on the last class meeting. In addition, there will be 11 homework assignments that require the calculation of various statistics (with computer software and by hand), as well as, a midterm and final exam.

Grades: Homework will be graded. I will not accept late homework assignments.

Midterm Exam (October 8 th):	20%
10 Homework Assignments:	30%
Final Exam (December 12 th):	20%
Research Design (December 3):	20%
Attendance/Class Participation:	10%

The assignment of letter grades is as follows:

92 <= A	80-81 = B-	67-69 = D+
90-91 = A-	77-79 = C+	62-66 = D
87-89 = B+	72-76 = C	60-61 = D-
82-86 = B	70-71 = C-	> 59 = F

Required Texts:

Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research, Fifth Edition. By Russell K. Schutt. Publisher: Sage. 2006

Elementary Statistics in Social Research: The Essentials, 2nd Edition. By Jack Levin and James Alan Fox. Publisher: Allyn & Bacon. 2006.

SPSS 14.0 Guide to Data Analysis by Marija J. Norusis, SPSS. 2006

Additional Readings ([WebCT](#)):

Avilés, William. 2005. "The Democratic-Peace Thesis and U.S. Relations with Colombia and Venezuela." *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 33-59

Oliver, J. Eric and Tali Mendelberg. 2000. "Reconsidering the Environmental Determinants of White Racial Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (July): 574-589.

Wolcott, Harry F. 1983. "Adequate Schools and Inadequate Education: The Life History of a Sneaky Kid." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 14 (Spring): 3-32. **[READ FIRST]**

Wolcott, Harry F. 1990. "On Seeking-and-Rejecting-Validity in Qualitative Research." In *Qualitative Inquiry in education: The Continuing Debate* edited by Elliot W. Eisner and Alan Peshkin. New York: Teachers College Press.

Midterm and Final Exams: There will be an in-class midterm and final exam. The exams will be composed of various questions regarding research methods and various statistical problems. Basic scientific calculators will be allowed, but your work must be shown on the exam.

Research Design (10 pages):

You will be required to develop a research design for a specific research question of your choice. In this design you will be required to 1) review the relevant literature of your topic, 2) elaborate on your research topic and develop various hypotheses; 3) identify potential datasets or methods of data collection to use to test your hypotheses; 4) discuss the method of analysis and statistical tools you would use to analyze the data; 5) explain how your research builds on previous research.

Disability Policy: The UNLV Disability Resource Center (DRC) houses the resources for students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137. Their numbers are: (702-895-0866/Voice; 702-895-0652/TDD. For additional information please visit <http://www.unlv.edu/studentlife/drc>.

Schedule

Week 1:	Topic	Readings
August 27	Syllabus and Introduction	
Week 2		
September 3	LABOR DAY: NO CLASS	
Week 3:		
September 10	Scientific Inquiry and Social Analysis	Schutt Chapter 1-2
	Introduction to SPSS and Data Analysis	Levin & Fox Chapter 1-2; Norusis Chapter 1-4
Week 4:		
September 17	<u>Social Science Research</u>	Schutt Chapter 3
	Measures of Central Tendency & Variability	Levin & Fox Chapter 3-4; Norusis Chapter 5-7
Week 5:		
September 24	Conceptualization and Operationalization	Schutt Chapter 4; <i>Oliver and Mendelberg</i>
	Case Selection and Sampling	Schutt Chapter 5; Norusis Chapter 8
Week 6:		
October 1	Probability and the Normal Curve	Levin & Fox Chapter 5-6
	Populations and Samples	Norusis Chapter 10-11
Week 7:		
October 8	MIDTERM	
Week 8:		
October 15	Research Design	Schutt Chapter 6 & 7
	Difference of Means Tests	Levin & Fox Chapter 7; Norusis Chapter 12-14
Week 9:		
October 22	Survey Research	Schutt Chapter 8
	Analysis of Variance	Levin & Fox Chapter 8; Norusis Chapter 15-16
Week 10:		
October 29	Qualitative Research	Schutt Chapter 9 & 10; <i>Wolcott (1983) & Wolcott (1990)</i>
Week 11:		
November 5	Evaluation Research	Schutt Chapter 11; Fernandez & Neiman; Fernandez
	Nonparametric Measures of Association	Levin & Fox Chapter 12; Norusis Chapter 19
Week 12:		
November 12	VETERAN'S DAY: NO CLASS	
Week 13:		
November 19	Historical and Comparative Research	Schutt Chapter 12-13: <i>Aviles</i>
	Correlation	Levin & Fox Chapter 10; Norusis Chapter 9
Week 14:		
November 26	Regression	Levin & Fox Chapter 11; Norusis Chapter 20-23
Week 15:		
December 3	Catch up/Review	Research Design Due
Finals Week		
December 12	Final Exam at 6pm	

Homework Assignments

Assignments will be due at the start of class (bring two copies – one for your reference and one to hand in)

Due Date	Topic	Assignment
Week 3:		
September 10	Social Science Research	Homework #1: Come up with a specific research question for your research design and 5 citations
Week 4		
September 17	SPSS	Homework #2: Norusis p.71-4 #1, 3, 8, 9, 16, 17
Week 5:		
September 24	Measures of Central Tendency & Variability	Homework #3: Levin & Fox Chapter 3-4*; & p. 97-9 #4, 11; p. 112-13 #3, 12; p. 136 #2
Week 7:		
October 8	The Normal Curve; Samples and Populations	Homework #4 Levin & Fox Chapter 5-6*; Norusis p.214 #1, 2 and p.233 #4, 5
Week 9		
October 22	Difference of Means Tests	Homework # 5:Levin & Fox Chapter 7*; Norusis p.251 #1; p.269 #1; p.301 #8
Week 10		
November 5	Analysis of Variance	Homework #6: Levin & Fox Chapter 8*; Norusis p. 329-30 #10; p.359 #1
Week 11		
	PROGRESS REPORT	Homework #7: progress report – Revised Research Question; Elaborate on the Theoretical Framework(s),Controversy/nich filled; Data Sources; Provide Bibliography (min. 12 citations)
Week 13		
November 19	Nonparametric Measures of Association	Homework #8: Levin & Fox Chapter 12*; Norusis p. 437 #1, 2
Week 14		
November 26	Correlation	Homework #9: Levin & Fox Chapter 10*; Norusis p.198 #9; p.472 #8, 9
Week 15		
December 3	Regression	Homework #10: Levin & Fox Chapter 11*; Norusis p.493-4 #1, 2; p. 517- 18 #1, 2

* Homework for Levin and Fox’s Elementary Statistics will be provided in a handout

Computer Resources:

Provided below is a list of facilities that SPSS is installed in:

Building	Room	Facility Type
BEH	114	Computer
BEH	235	Computer
BEH	239	Computer
BHS	218	Computer
CBC	B131	Computer
CBC	B135	Departmental Computer
CBC	C129	Teaching
CBC	C309	Teaching
CBC	C311	Teaching
CBC	C321	Teaching
CDC	610	Hybrid
CEB	309A	Computer
FDH	235	Hybrid
FDH	245	Computer
LLB	3251	Departmental Computer
LLB	3266	Departmental Computer
WRI	C211	Computer

SPSS (the Graduate Package) can be purchased via www.campusstore.com for \$199.98

Bibliographic Resources

www.jstor.org

<http://portal.isiknowledge.com/portal.cgi>

<http://www.library.unlv.edu/search/eralpha.php>

<http://scholar.google.com/>

Data sources:

ICPSR <http://www.icpsr.org/>

Pew Research Center <http://people-press.org/dataarchive/>

World Health Organization (WHO) <http://www.who.int/research/en/>