

PSC 302
Research Methods in Political Science
Fall 2008

Instructor: Dr. David F. Damore
Office Hours: Tu 1 – 2:30 and Th 4 to 5:30

email: Course internal email
Office: WRI B213

Scope and Purpose:

This course examines the research design process and the application of quantitative methods to the study of political phenomena. The course is divided into three parts. Part one serves as an introduction by familiarizing students with the sub-fields within the discipline of Political Science, the prospects of and limitations to a scientific study of politics, and the process by which social scientific theories are developed. Part two examines the research design process in detail (e.g., hypothesis formulation, measurement, data collection, and inference) and the ethics of social research. An introduction to quantitative methods (e.g., statistics) used in social science research is the focus of part three.

Course Content:

The course content consists of three distinct, but interrelated components:

1. Streaming video lectures and the accompanying lecture notes, both of which are accessible via the learning modules located on the course home page.
2. The Monroe and Levin and Fox texts and course readings. Course readings are accessible via the learning modules located on the course home page. Textbooks can be purchased at the UNLV Bookstore.
3. Web based interactions among students and instructor (details below).

The Calendar and Announcements links on the course menu provide information about discussion topics and assignments, as well as updates and other course information.

Course Material for Purchase:

Levin, Jack and James Alan Fox. 2007. *Elementary Statistics in Social Research, The Essentials*, 2nd ed. Boston: Pearson.

Monroe, Alan D. 2000. *Essentials of Political Research*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Requirements:

1. Exams (60%) – Three exams that occur after each section of the course (exams are not cumulative). Exams are accessed via the Assessments link on the course menu. High

exam score counts for 25% of course grade; middle exam score counts for 20% of course grade; and low exam score counts for 15% of course grade. **Exams may not be made up or taken other than during the time period for which they are available.**

2. Quizzes (20%) – Six quizzes during that are open note and open book, timed, and are accessed via the Assessments link on the course menu. Quizzes may be accessed only once during the time period that they are available and consist of multiple choice and true false questions. **There are no make ups or extensions for quizzes.** Students' lowest quiz score is dropped.

3. Homework (10%) – A set of homework assignments during the third part of the course. Homework assignments can be accessed repeatedly during the time period in which they are available.

4. Participation (10%) - Participation is based upon students' interaction with one another and the instructor. More specifically, there are two mediums through which course participation points can be earned:

a. Discussion threads. One or two discussion topics will be posted per week that students may respond to. Because of the large number of students taking the course this term, students will be placed into Discussion Teams (details forthcoming). All discussion postings will be contained in the main course thread and can be accessed via the Discussion option on the course menu. **You will only receive credit for postings made within your team's thread during the time period in which the topic is available. Students are encouraged to respond to comments made by other students so as to facilitate dialogue.** Old topics will be removed after a new topic has been posted. Discussion postings will be assessed in terms of quality, as well as the use of proper grammar and spelling.

b. Email interactions between the instructor and students. Email can be accessed via the Mail option on the course menu.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

1. Develop thorough understanding of the social scientific research process.
2. Instill skills necessary to evaluate social scientific research.
3. Sharpen critical thinking and information gathering skills.
4. Improve critical writing skills.

Policies and Miscellaneous:

1. All announcements and updates about the course are posted via the Announcements option and assignments due dates post on the course calendar.

2. Any concerns or questions about WebCampus or Distance Education should be directed to those offices, not the instructor.
3. The honor code is strictly enforced. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred for investigation. For additional information, please see the UNLV Student Academic Misconduct Policy available at <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/judicial/misconductPolicy.html/>.
4. UNLV requires all members of the university community to be familiar with the honor code and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. UNLV will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. To familiarize you with copyright and fair use policies, visit the UNLV copyright web page at <http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright/>.
5. Make-ups are granted for documented illnesses or deaths in the immediate family (documented as well). If the assignments for this course conflict with other obligations, either adjust your schedule or study habits accordingly. If you need to miss an assignment because of observance of a religious holiday or because you represent UNLV at any official extracurricular activity you must notify the instructor no later than week two of the semester.
6. While the amount of reading for this class is less than what is typically assigned in upper division courses, it is far more technical and dense than you may be accustomed to. As a consequence, it may take multiple readings to comprehend concepts presented in the readings. Also, it may take multiple viewings of the streaming video lectures to comprehend all of the material.
7. The successful completion of course assignments require more than simple regurgitation of material presented in lecture and readings. Rather, students are expected to synthesize course material in a coherent and succinct manner that demonstrates both the depth and breadth of their understanding (e.g., you will need to think and apply yourself to do well in this course).
8. If you have a documented disability that requires assistance, you need to contact Disability Resource Service (DRS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. The DRS is located in the Student Services Complex, Room 137 and can be reached at 895-0866 or <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>.
9. Cut-offs for final grades:

A = 100–93.0	B = 86.9–83.0	C = 76.9–73.0	D = 66.9-63.0
A- = 92.9–90.0	B- = 82.9–80.0	C- = 72.9–70.0	D- = 62.9-60.0
B+ = 89.9–87.0	C+ = 79.9–77.0	D+ = 69.9– 67.0	F = 59.9-0

Course Organization and Assignments

Part I: Scientific Inquiry and Theory Building

Week 1: August 25 – August 31

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

1. Scientific Inquiry
Monroe: pages 1-3
Reader: “Book Reviews of Subjective Research”

Week 2: September 2 – September 7

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

2. Overview of Political Science
Monroe: pages 10-16
3. Formulating the Research Question
Monroe: pages 3-9

Assessments

Quiz 1

Week 3: September 8-14

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

4. Conducting the Literature Review
Reader: “Reading Journal Articles”
“Doing a Literature Review,” and
“Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature”
5. Inductive and Deductive Reasoning
Monroe: chapter 2

Week 4: September 15-21

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

6. Assumptions, Concepts, and Paradigms
Reader: “War and the Fate of Regimes”
7. Causality and Parsimony
Reader: “Occam’s Razor and Parsimony” and “Criminal Element”

Assessments

Quiz 2

Week 5: September 22-28

***** Exam 1 September 22-23*****

Part II: Operationalization and Research Design

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

8. Operationalization

Reader: “The Multi-Layered Impact of Public Opinion”

Week 6: September 30 – October 5

Streaming Video Lecture

Reading

9. Measurement

Monroe: chapter 4, pages 83-90
Reader: “The Poverty Measure”
Reader: “Bloomberg Seeks New Way to Decide Who Is Poor”

Assessments

Quiz 3

Week 7: October 6–12

Streaming Video Lecture

Reading

10. Research Design

Monroe: pages 32-46

11. Sampling and Data Sources

Monroe: chapter 5

Week 8: October 13-19

Streaming Video Lecture

Reading

12. Modes of Scientific Inquiry

Reader: "Wars and American Politics," "War and the Fate of Regimes," and "A Spiral of Cynicism for Some: The Contingent Effects of Campaign News Frames on Participation and Confidence in Government"

13. Internal and External Validity

Assessments

Quiz 4

Week 9: October 20-26

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

14. The Ethics of Social Research

"The Politics of Government Funded Research," "Fingerprint Science on Trial," "Official Played Down Emissions' Link to Global Warming," "Former White Official Takes Exxon Job," and "Doonesbury"

***** Exam 2 October 23-24 *****

Part III: Introduction to Quantitative Methods

Week 10: October 27-November 2

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

15. Introduction to Statistics

Levin and Fox: chapter 2
Monroe: chapters 6, 7

16. Descriptive Statistics

Levin and Fox: chapters 3, 4

**Week 11: November 3-9
(November 3 is the Drop Deadline)**

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

17. Probability and the Normal Curve Levin and Fox: chapter 5
18. Statistical Significance Levin and Fox: chapter 6

Assessments

Homework 1

Week 12 November 10-16

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

19. Difference of Means and ANOVA Levin and Fox: chapters 7, 8
Reader: “Acclimation Effects for
Supreme Court Justices: A Cross-
Validation, 1888-1940”

Assessments

Quiz 5

Week 13: November 17-23

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

20. Correlation and Measures of Association Levin and Fox: chapters 9, 19, 12
Monroe: chapters 8, 9
Reader: “Packin’ in the Hood?:
Examining Assumptions of
Concealed-Handgun Research,”
“Ideological Values and the Votes
of United States Supreme Court
Justices”

Assessments

Homework 2

Week 14 and 15: November 24-December 5

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

21. Bivariate Regression Levin and Fox: chapters 11, 13
Monroe: chapter 10

Assessments

Homework 3 and Quiz 6

Exam Week: December 8-11

***** Exam 3 December 8-9 *****

This syllabus provides a general plan for the course, deviations may be necessary.