

PSC 701
Research Methods in Political Science
Fall 2008

Instructor: Dr. David Damore
Time: Th 5:30 – 8:20
Room: WRI B224

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Scope and Purpose:

This course provides students with the skills necessary to evaluate and conduct systematic research in political science. 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 Material:

King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Levin, Jack, and James Alan Fox. 2004. *Elementary Statistics in Social Research, The Essentials*. Boston: Pearson Education.

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

Course reader (available via course WebCampus site).

A calculator will be useful for part three.

Texts are available at the bookstore (students also may buy online for lower prices)

Requirements:

1. Exams (30%) – Three exams, each occurring after each section of the course (exams are not cumulative). Exams are take home in format. Each exam counts for 10% of course grade.
2. Research Paper (40%) – Over the course of the semester students are required to develop a paper offering an original research design assessing a question of significance to the study of politics. Detailed information is forthcoming.

3. Homework (15%) – A series of homework assignments throughout the term, each of which is due by 2:00 p.m. the day of class. Late work is not accepted, e-mail submissions are. Homework assignments for part three of the class only may be resubmitted for up to half of the originally deducted amount (resubmission must be made prior to the next class meeting).

4. Participation (15%) – Determined by students’ attendance, preparation, and willingness to enter into discussions as they arise.

Policies and Miscellaneous:

1. 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/>.

2. 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/>.

3. 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.

4. While the amount of reading for this class is less than what is typically assigned in graduate 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. It is expected that reading assignments will be completed prior to the lectures for which they are assigned.

5. 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/>.

6. Cut-offs for final grades are as follows:

A = 100–94.0	B = 86.9–84.0	C = 76.9–74.0	D = 66.9-64.0
A- = 93.9–90.0	B- = 83.9–80.0	C- = 73.9–70.0	D- = 63.9-60.0
B+ = 89.9–87.0	C+ = 79.9–77.0	D+ = 69.9– 67.0	F = 59.9-0

Course Calendar and Reading Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading
August 28		Course Overview
Part I: Scientific Inquiry and Theory Building		
September 4	Scientific Inquiry	King, Keohane, and Verba: Preface and pages 3–11 Monroe: pages 1-3 Reader: “Book Reviews of Subjective Research”
	Overview of Political Science	King, Keohane, and Verba: pages 12–32 Monroe: pages 10-16
September 11	Formulating the Research Question	King, Keohane, and Verba: chapter two Monroe: pages 3-9
	Conducting the Literature Review	King, Keohane, and Verba: chapter three Reader: “Reading Journal Articles” “Doing a Literature Review,” and “Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature”
September 18	Inductive and Deductive Reasoning	King, Keohane, and Verba: pages 185-195 Monroe: chapter 2
	Assumptions, Concepts, and Paradigms	Reader: “War and the Fate of Regimes”
September 25	Causality and Parsimony	Reader: “Occam’s Razor and Parsimony” and “Criminal Element”

Exam 1 Distributed

Part II: Operationalization and Research Design

October 2	Operationalization	Reader: “The Multi-Layered Impact of Public Opinion”
	Measurement	Monroe: chapter 4, pages 83-90 Reader: “The Poverty Measure” and

		“Bloomberg Seeks New Way to Decide Who Is Poor”
October 9	Research Design	King, Keohane, and Verba: chapter four Monroe: pages 32-46
	Sampling and Data Sources	Monroe: chapter 5
October 16	Modes of Scientific Inquiry	King, Keohane, and Verba: chapter six 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”
October 23	Internal and External Validity	King, Keohane, and Verba: pages 150– 184, 196–207
	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 Distributed

Part III: Introduction to Quantitative Methods

October 30	Introduction to Statistics	Levin and Fox: chapter 2 Monroe: chapters 6, 7
	Descriptive Statistics	Levin and Fox: chapters 3, 4
November 6	Probability and the Normal Curve	Levin and Fox: chapter 5
	Statistical Significance	Levin and Fox: chapter 6
November 13	Difference of Means and ANOVA	Levin and Fox: chapters 7, 8 Reader: “Acclimation Effects for Supreme Court Justices: A Cross- Validation, 1888-1940”

November 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"
	Bivariate Regression	Levin and Fox: chapters 11, 13 Monroe: chapter 10

November 27

No Class Thanksgiving Holiday

December 4

Research Paper Presentations

Exam 3 Distributed

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