

PSC 302
Research Methods in Political Science
Fall 2009

Instructor: Dr. David Damore
Location: CBC C129
Time: MW 2:30 – 3:45

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Office Hours: M 4:00 – 5:30; W 10:30 – 12:00

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.

Readings:

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.

Course reader and lecture notes (accessible via course WebCampus site).

Calcuator

Requirements:

1. Exams (60%) – Three exams that occur after each section of the course (exams are not cumulative). The first two exams are a mix of multiple choice and essay questions. The multiple choice components are administered through WebCampus. The third exam occurs in finals week and consists of short answer, statistical interpretation, and statistical calculations. 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.
2. Quizzes (4 x 5% each = 20%) – Four quizzes consisting of multiple choice questions that are open note and open book and administered through WebCampus during the first two sections of the course.

3. Homework (10%) – A set of homework assignments during the third part of the course that are available through the course WebCampus site.
4. Classroom Contribution (10%) – Determined by students' attendance, attentiveness, and contribution to class discussion.

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. Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism: Using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the "Student Academic Misconduct Policy" located at: <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/judicial/misconductPolicy.html>. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred for investigation.
2. UNLV requires all members of the university community 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 (<http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright>).
3. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) coordinates all academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. The DRC is the official office to review and house disability documentation for students, and to provide them with an official Academic Accommodation Plan to present to the faculty if an accommodation is warranted. Faculty should not provide students accommodations without being in receipt of this plan. UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, offering reasonable accommodations to qualified students with documented 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, and the contact numbers are: Voice (702) 895-0866, TDD (702) 895-0652, fax (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>.

4. Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor no later than the last day at late registration of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. This policy shall not apply in the event that administering the test or examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the university which could not be avoided. Beyond observance of religious holidays, make-ups are granted for documented illnesses or deaths in the immediate family (documented as well) only.

5. The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex. Students may learn more about tutoring services by calling (702) 895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at: <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>

6. Lecture begins at 1:00 and ends at 2:15. If you choose to attend lecture, plan to do so for its duration. Do not disrupt class by showing-up late, leaving early, or talking. Repeated interruptions, including ringing cell phones and pagers and text messaging, will adversely affect your final grade. It is your choice to take this course; if the subject matter is not of interest to you or you are unable to meet its expectations, do not enroll.

7. It is expected that assigned reading will be completed prior to lecture.

8. 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).

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 Calendar and Reading Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading
August 24	Course Overview	
Part I: Scientific Inquiry and Theory Building		
August 26	Scientific Inquiry	Monroe: pages 1-3 Reader: “Book Reviews of Subjective Research” and “In Battle Hunches Prove to Be Valuable”
August 31	Overview of Political Science	Monroe: pages 10-16
September 2	Formulating the Research Question	Monroe: pages 3-9 Quiz 1
September 7		Labor Day Recess
September 9	Conducting the Literature Review	Reader: “Reading Journal Articles” “Doing a Literature Review,” and “Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature”
September 14	Inductive and Deductive Reasoning	Monroe: chapter 2
September 16	Assumptions, Concepts, and Paradigms	Reader: “War and the Fate of Regimes” Quiz 2
September 21	Causality and Parsimony	Reader: “Occam’s Razor and Parsimony,” “Eat Quickly for the Economy’s Sake,” and “Criminal Element”
September 23		Exam 1
Part II: Operationalization and Research Design		
September 28	Operationalization	Reader: “The Multi-Layered Impact of Public Opinion”

September 30, Measurement
October 5 Monroe: chapter 4, pages 83-90
Reader: “The Poverty Measure,”
“Bloomberg Seeks New Way to Decide
Who Is Poor,” and “A Do Over for the
Economy, for Better and Worse”

October 7, 12 Research Design Monroe: pages 32-46

October 7 **Quiz 3**

Part III: Internal Dynamics and Decision Making

October 14 Sampling and Data Sources Monroe: chapter 5

October 19 Modes of Scientific Inquiry Reader: “Wars and American Politics,”
“War and the Fate of Regimes,” (again)
and “A Spiral of Cynicism for Some: The
Contingent Effects of Campaign News
Frames on Participation and Confidence in
Government”

October 21 Internal and External Validity Davidson, Oleszek, and Lee: ch 7

Quiz 4

October 26 The Ethics of Social Research “The Politics of Government Funded
Research,” “Fingerprint Science on Trial,”
“Official Played Down Emissions’ Link to
Global Warming,” and “Former White
Official Takes Exxon Job”

October 28 **Exam 1**

Part III: Introduction to Quantitative Methods

November 2 Introduction to Statistics Levin and Fox: chapter 2
Monroe: chapters 6, 7

Drop Deadline

November 4 Descriptive Statistics Levin and Fox: chapters 3, 4

November 9 Probability and the Normal Curve Levin and Fox: chapter 5

November 11		Veterans Day Recess
November 16	Statistical Significance	Levin and Fox: chapter 6
		Homework 1 Assigned
November 18, 23	Difference of Means and ANOVA	Levin and Fox: chapters 7, 8 Reader: “Acclimation Effects for Supreme Court Justices: A Cross-Validation, 1888-1940”
November 23		Homework 2 Assigned
November 25	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”
		Quiz 4
November 30	Bivariate Regression	Levin and Fox: chapters 11, 13 Monroe: chapter 10
		Homework 2 Assigned
December 2		Review
December 7		Exam 2, 1:00 – 3:00

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