

# Seminar in Research Design and Methodology

## POLITICAL SCIENCE PSC 701

### University of Nevada, Las Vegas

### FALL 2009

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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 Objectives:

1. Understand the purpose and process of the scientific method.
2. Obtain a familiarity with a variety of research designs and methodologies.
3. Obtain a familiarity with statistical analysis of data
4. Prepare a research design for a future project (perhaps a MA thesis)

**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 10 homework assignments that require the calculation of various statistics (with computer software and by hand), as well as, a midterm and final exam.

#### Grades:

Midterm Exam (October 5 <sup>th</sup> ):	20%
10 Homework Assignments:	30%
Final Exam (TBA):	20%
Research Design (November 30):	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*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. By Russell K. Schutt. Publisher: Sage. 2009

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

*SPSS 17.0 Guide to Data Analysis* by Marija J. Norusis, SPSS. 2008

**A copy of each book has been placed on 2 hour reserve at the Lied Library**

Additional Readings (Available on [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

Fernandez, Kenneth and Max Neiman. 1998. "California's Inmate Classification System: Predicting Inmate Misconduct," *Prison Journal* 78 (December): 406-422.

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. **[READ SECOND]**

**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

<b>Week 1:</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
August 24	Syllabus and Introduction	Schutt Chapter 1
<b>Week 2</b>		
August 31	Scientific Inquiry and Social Analysis	Schutt Chapter 2
	Introduction to SPSS and Data Analysis	Levin & Fox Chapter 1-2; Norusis Chapter 1-4
<b>Week 3:</b>		
September 7	<b>LABOR DAY: NO CLASS</b>	
<b>Week 4:</b>		
September 14	Research Ethics and Philosophies	Schutt Chapter 3
	Measures of Central Tendency & Variability	Levin & Fox Chapter 3-4; Norusis Chapter 5-7
<b>Week 5:</b>		
September 21	Conceptualization and Operationalization	Schutt Chapter 4; <i>Oliver and Mendelberg</i>
	Case Selection and Sampling	Schutt Chapter 5; Norusis Chapter 8
<b>Week 6:</b>		
September 28	Probability and the Normal Curve	Levin & Fox Chapter 5-6
	Populations and Samples	Norusis Chapter 10-11
<b>Week 7:</b>		
October 5	<b>MIDTERM</b>	
<b>Week 8:</b>		
October 12	Research Design	Schutt Chapter 6 & 7
	Difference of Means Tests	Levin & Fox Chapter 7; Norusis Chapter 12-14
<b>Week 9:</b>		
October 19	Survey Research	Schutt Chapter 8
	Analysis of Variance	Levin & Fox Chapter 8; Norusis Chapter 15-16
<b>Week 10:</b>		
October 26	Qualitative Research	Schutt Chapter 9 & 10; <i>Wolcott (1983-read first) &amp; Wolcott (1990)</i>
<b>Week 11:</b>		
November 2	Evaluation Research	Schutt Chapter 11; Fernandez & Neiman
	Nonparametric Measures of Significance	Levin & Fox Chapter 9;
<b>Week 12:</b>		
November 9	Historical and Comparative Research	Schutt Chapter 12; <i>Aviles</i>
<b>Week 13:</b>		
November 16	Secondary Data & Content Analysis	Schutt Chapter 13
	Correlation	Levin & Fox Chapter 10 & 12; Norusis Ch. 9
<b>Week 14:</b>		
November 23	Regression	Levin & Fox Chapter 11; Norusis Chapter 20-22
<b>Week 15:</b>		
November 30	Multiple Regression	Norusis Chapter 23-24 <b>Research Design Due</b>
<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	<b>TBA (either Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 or Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> at 6pm)</b>	

## 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
<b>Week 3:</b>		
September 7	Email Research Topic to Instructor	Homework #1: Come up with a specific research question for your research design and 5 citations
<b>Week 4</b>		
September 14	SPSS	Homework #2: Norusis p.72-5 #1, 3, 8, 9, 16, 17
<b>Week 5:</b>		
September 21	Measures of Central Tendency & Variability	Homework #3: Levin & Fox Ch. 3-4*; Norusis p.99-101 #4, 11; p.114-15 #3, 12; p.138 #2
<b>Week 7:</b>		
September 28	The Normal Curve; Samples and Populations	Homework #4 Levin & Fox Chapter 5-6*; Norusis p.216 #1, 2 and p.235 #4, 5
<b>Week 9</b>		
October 12	Difference of Means Tests	Homework # 5:Levin & Fox Chapter 7*; Norusis p.253 #1; p.271 #1; p.303 #8
<b>Week 10</b>		
October 19	Analysis of Variance	Homework #6: Levin & Fox Chapter 8*; Norusis p. 331-2 #10; p.361 #1
<b>Week 11</b>		
October 26	PROGRESS REPORT	Homework #7: progress report – Revised Research Question; Elaborate on the Theoretical Framework(s),Controversy/niche filled; Data Sources; Provide Bibliography (min. 12 citations)
<b>Week 13</b>		
November 2	Nonparametric Measures of Significance	Homework #8: Levin & Fox Chapter 9*; Norusis p.382 #6
<b>Week 14</b>		
November 16	Correlation	Homework #9: Levin & Fox Chapter 10*; Norusis p.200 #9; p.474 #8, 9
<b>Week 15</b>		
November 23	Regression	Homework #10: Levin & Fox Chapter 11*; Norusis p.495-6 #1, 2; p.519-20 #1, 2

\* Homework for Levin and Fox's Elementary Statistics will be provided in a handout available on the course webpage <http://faculty.unlv.edu/kfernandez/psc701.htm>

## SPSS

The homework assignments will frequently require you to use the SPSS statistical software package to analyze datasets.

### How to get SPSS:

The software is available to purchase at a discounted price from e-academy.com <http://unlv.e-academy.com>

### SPSS is also available to use in selected student computer labs at UNLV

- [BEH 114](#)
- [BEH 235](#)
- [BEH 239](#)
- [BHS 131](#)
- [BHS 200](#)
- [BHS 451](#)
- [CBC B131](#)
- [CBC B135](#)
- [CBC C125](#)
- [CBC C129](#)
- [CBC C321](#)
- [CBC C323](#)
- [CEB 212](#)
- [CEB 309A](#)
- [FDH 235](#)
- [GUA 3202](#)
- [LLB 3251](#)
- [LLB 3266](#)
- [MSU 233](#)
- [TBE A311](#)
- [WRI C211](#)