

PSC 302
Research Methods in Political Science
Fall 2005

Instructor: Dr. David Damore
Office Hours: Via course internal email and by appointment
Office: WRI 213

Scope and Purpose:

This course provides students with the skills necessary to evaluate systematic empirical research in the social sciences. Specifically, course material 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 and the questions and concerns central to these areas of study. In addition, the prospects of and limitations to a scientific study of politics and the ethics associated with the research process and the application of scientific research are addressed. Part two examines the research design process in detail (e.g., theory building, hypothesis formulation, measurement, data collection, and inference). An introduction to quantitative methods (e.g., statistics) used in political 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.
2. The Monroe, Levin and Fox texts, and course readings.
3. Web based interactions among students and instructor.

Success in the course necessitates that students make use of all components.

Information about discussion topics, assignments, as well as updates and other course information are communicated via the Course Calendar.

Readings and Course Material:

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 Press.

Course Reader (accessible via the “Course Readings” link on the course homepage)

Calculator for part three.

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

Requirements:

1. Exams (50%) – Exam one is essay and short answer in format, occurs at the end of the second section of the course, and covers parts one and two. **Be forewarned, this exam is quite difficult.** Exam two occurs in finals week and focuses on basic the material covered in part three. Exam one counts for 35% of your grade and exam two counts for 15% of your grade. Note that the first exam does not occur until the week of the drop deadline. However, there are a number of quizzes and homework assignments prior to the time, which will allow you to assess your performance in the course prior to the drop deadline.

2. Homework (20%) - Seven homework assignments. Due dates for each assignment are posted on the course calendar. Homework assignments can be accessed repeatedly throughout the time period that they are available. **Late work is not accepted!**

3. Quizzes (20%) – Seven quizzes. Your lowest quiz is dropped. Quizzes are timed, may be accessed only once during the time period that they are available, and typically consist of 15 multiple choice and true false questions.

4. Participation (10%) - Participation is based upon students' involvement with their discussion team and interactions with the instructor.

a. Discussion teams. Within the first few days of the course, students will be divided into discussion teams. Each team will have a separate discussion thread within the main course thread (do not create your own thread as it will be deleted). After the teams have been established, one or two discussion topics per week will be posted by the instructor. Students are expected to respond to each topic and the postings of other team members. **Students will only receive credit for postings made within their team's thread during the time period in which the topic is available.** Discussion postings are assessed in terms of quality and depth of content, as well as use of proper grammar and spelling. Prior topics will be removed once a new topic is posted.

b. E-mail interactions between the instructor and students. I strongly encourage you to email with me regularly whenever questions arise.

In addition, if you are taking classes on campus, feel free to stop by my office so that I can put a face with a name.

Policies and Miscellaneous:

1. All announcements and updates about the course are posted on the course calendar.

2. The honor code is strictly enforced. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred to the proper authority.
3. 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 University's copyright web page (<http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright>).
4. 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, plan ahead and either adjust your schedule or study habits accordingly.
5. 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.
6. 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).
7. If you have a documented disability that requires assistance, you need to contact Disability Service (DS) for coordination in your academic accommodations (the DS is located within the Learning Enhancement Services office in the Student Services Complex, room 137, 895-0866, www.unlv.edu/studentlife/les).
8. 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

Part I: Introduction

Week 1: August 29 – September 4

Familiarize yourself with all course material and introduce yourself to your discussion team.

Streaming Video Lectures

1 – The Nature of Scientific Inquiry

Reading

Monroe: pages 1 – 8

Reader: “Why Bush Won,” “Small Inroads Make the Difference for Bush,” “Terrorism, Gay Marriage, and Incumbency: Explaining the Republican Victory in the 2004 Presidential Election”

Assignments

Quiz 1

Week 2: September 5 – 11

Streaming Video Lectures

2 - Overview of the Research Process

Reading

Monroe: pages 8 – 16

Assignments

Homework 1

Week 3: September 12 – 18

Streaming Video Lectures

3 – Ethics of the Research Process

Reading

Reader: “The Politics of Government Funded Research,” “Fingerprint Science on Trial,” “Official Played Down Emissions’ Link to Global Warming,” “Former White House Official Takes Exxon Job,” “Review of Medical Research Turns Up Contradictory Results” and “Doonesbury”

Assignments

Quiz 2

Part II: Research Design

Weeks 4 and 5: September 19 – October 2

Streaming Video Lectures

4 – Theory Building

Reading

Monroe: chapter two

Reader: “Reading Journal Articles,” “War and the Fate of Regimes,” “Occam’s Razor and Parsimony”

Assignments

Homework 2

Quiz 3

Week 6: October 3- 9

Streaming Video Lectures

5 - Operationalization

Reading

Monroe: chapter four

Reader: “War and the Fate of Regimes,” “Presidential Campaigns and the Knowledge Gap,” and “The Multi-Layered Impact of Public Opinion”

Assignments

Homework 3

Week 7: October 10 – 16

Streaming Video Lectures

6 – Research Design

Reading

Monroe: chapters three and five

Reader: “Online Polls Raising Concerns”

Assignments

Quiz 4

Week 8: October 17 – 23

Streaming Video Lectures

7 – Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to the Study of Political Science

Reading

Levin and Fox: chapter one

Reader: “Presidential Leverage over Social Movements: the Johnson White House and Civil Rights,” “War and the Fate of Regimes,” “A Spiral of Cynicism for Some: the Contingent Effects of Campaign News Frames on Participation and Confidence in Government:

Assignments

Homework 4

Week 9: October 24 – 30

Streaming Video Lectures

8 – Inferential Limitations

Assignments

Quiz 5

Week 10: October 31 – November 6

Assignments

Exam 1

Week 11: November 7 – 13

Streaming Video Lectures

9 – Descriptive Statistics

Readings

Levin and Fox: chapters 2 – 4
Monroe: chapters six and seven

Assignments

Homework 5

Week 12: November 14 – 20

Streaming Video Lectures

10 – Statistical Significance

Readings

Levin and Fox: chapters five and six

Assignments

Quiz 6

Week 13 – 15: November 21 – December 11

Streaming Video Lectures

11 – Inferential Statistics I
12 – Inferential Statistics II

Readings

Levin and Fox: chapters ten through thirteen
Monroe: chapters eight through ten

Assignments

Homework 6 and 7
Quiz 7

Finals Week: December 12 - 17