

PSC 302
Research Methods in Political Science
Fall 2006

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

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 Media Library link on the course menu or via the learning modules located on the course home page.
2. The Monroe and Levin and Fox texts and course readings, which are accessible via the Media Library link on the course menu or via the learning modules.
3. Web based interactions among students and instructor (details below).

Be sure to pay attention to the Calendar and Announcements on the course menu, which provides information about discussion topics and assignments, as well as updates and other course information.

Course Material:

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

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

Course Reader, available via the course WebCt site.

A calculator capable of doing square roots (for part three).

Requirements:

1. Exams (60%) – Three exams that occur after each section of the course (exams are not cumulative). Exams are open note and open book. The first two exams consist of essays, short answers, identifications, and applications. Exam three occurs in finals week and consists of short answer, statistical calculations, and statistical interpretation. 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. Homework (20%) - Six homework assignments. Due dates for each assignment are posted on the course calendar. Homework assignments can be accessed repeatedly through the Assessment link on the course menu during the time period that they are available. **Late work is not accepted.**

3. Quizzes (10%) – Six quizzes. Your lowest quiz is dropped. Quizzes 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.**

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. I will post one or two discussion topics per week that you 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 and depth, as well as the use of proper grammar and spelling.

b. E-mail interactions between the instructor and students. I strongly encourage you to e-mail with me regularly whenever questions arise. E-mail can be accessed via the Mail option on the course menu.

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 WebCt or Distance Education should be directed to those offices.
3. The honor code is strictly enforced. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred to the university for investigation.
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. The University 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>).
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, plan ahead and either adjust your schedule or study habits accordingly.
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. Learning Enhancement Services (LES) houses Disability Services, Tutoring Services, and Learning Strategies. If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you need to contact the LES for coordination in your academic accommodations. LES is located in Reynolds Student Services Complex, Suite 317. The phone number is 895-0866. You may also visit their website at <http://www.unlv.edu/studentilife/les>.
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 28-September 3

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

1. Scientific Inquiry

Monroe: pages 1-3

Reader: “Book Reviews of Subjective Research”

Assignments and Quizzes

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

Quiz 1

Week 2: September 5-10

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

2. Overview of Political Science

Monroe: pages 10-16

3. Formulating the Research Question

Monroe: pages 3-9

Assignments and Quizzes

Homework 1

Week 3: September 11-17

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

Assignments and Quizzes

Quiz 2

Week 4: September 18-24

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”

Assignments and Quizzes

Quiz 3

Week 5: September 25-October 1

Exam 1 (September 25-26)

Part II: Operationalization and Research Design

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

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

Week 6: October 2-8

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

9. Measurement Monroe: chapter 4, pages 83-90
Reader: “The Poverty Measure”

Assignments and Quizzes

Quiz 4

Week 7: October 9-15

Streaming Video Lecture

Reading

10. Research Design Monroe: pages 32-46
11. Sampling and Data Sources Levin and Fox: chapter 6
Monroe: chapter 5

Assignments and Quizzes

Quiz 5

Week 8: October 16-22

Streaming Video Lecture

Reading

12. Modes of Scientific Inquiry

Levin and Fox: chapter 1
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”

Assignments and Quizzes

Homework 2

Week 9: October 23-29

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

13. Internal and External Validity

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”

Week 10: October 30-November 5

Exam 2 (October 30-31)

Part III: Introduction to Quantitative Methods

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

15. Introduction to Statistics

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

Week 11: November 6-12

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

16. Descriptive Statistics

Levin and Fox: chapters 3 and 4

Assignments and Quizzes

Homework 3

Week 12: November 13-19

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

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| 17. Probability | Levin and Fox: chapter 5 |
| 18. Statistical Significance | Levin and Fox: chapter 6 |

Assignments and Quizzes

Quiz 6

Week 13: November 20-26

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

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

Homework 4

Week 14: November 27-December 3

Streaming Video Lectures

Reading

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| 20. Correlation and Measures of Association | Levin and Fox: chapters 9,10,12
Monroe: chapters 8,9
Reader: "Packin' In the Hood?"
Examining Assumptions of Concealed-Handgun Research" |
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Assignments and Quizzes

Homework 5

Week 15: December 4-8

Streaming Video Lectures

Readings

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| 21. Bivariate Regression | Levin and Fox: chapters 11, 13
Reader: "Ideological Values and the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices" |
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Assignments and Quizzes

Homework 6

Finals Week: December 11-16

Exam 3 (December 11-13)

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