

POL 30001: Research Methods (CRN#: 17255)
Fall 2016
Department of Political Science
Kent State University
MWF 12:05 p.m.-12:55 p.m.
Bowman 204

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Office Hours: MW 9:30 a.m.-noon and by appointment

Course Description

The study of politics is more than just describing what is taking place. Political science involves investigating political phenomenon in a scientific manner, that is, using accepted research methodologies to investigate some issue of interest. Common political science questions include why people vote a certain way, what influences how legislatures, what causes war, and also interpreting and critically examining actions by relevant actors. This course will cover both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Students will learn how to develop their research interests and turn those into research questions, develop theories regarding how to explain certain observations or results (e.g. what, how, why, and under what conditions something occurs), how to develop testable hypotheses to explain theory, and developing skills to test those hypotheses and interpret results. This course will help students build a foundation in data analysis and interpretation that can be utilized in a variety of careers, or provide a solid introduction for future graduate coursework.

This course may be used to fulfill the university's Experiential Learning Requirement (ELR) which provides students with the opportunity to initiate lifelong learning through the development and application of academic knowledge and skills in new or different settings. Experiential learning can occur through civic engagement, creative and artistic activities, practical experiences, research, and study abroad/away.

Required Textbooks

It is essential that the 5th editions of the texts are purchased, as the homework assignments are based on the most recent editions. *If you are renting your textbooks, please be sure the books contain all pages, as you will need them for homework assignments. If you rent a book that comes with missing pages, it is not my responsibility to scan and print the missing pages for you.* The required textbooks are:

Pollock, Philip, H. III. 2016. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. 5th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. (ISBN: 978-1506305837).

Pollock, Philip, H. III. 2016. *An IBM SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*. 5th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. (ISBN: 978-1506305790).

The bookstore carries a bundled edition of *Essentials* and the *SPSS Companion* (ISBN: 978-1506328928) that is also available on various websites.

SPSS Software

This course requires the use of a statistical software package called SPSS. SPSS is a program that specializes in computational statistical analysis that allows students to apply the concepts learned in lectures, presentations, and workbook practices using real-world data. SPSS is available on computers across campus and does not have to be purchased. However, to use the software on your personal computer, you must purchase and download the program from IBM or the campus bookstore. The software, the *SPSS Statistics Standard GradPack*, comes with a single-user license for 6- or 12- months and can be renewed after your license expires. You can purchase the *SPSS Statistics Standard GradPack* from official distributors of SPSS as well as Kent State University, here:

https://kent.onthehub.com/WebStore/OfferingsOfMajorVersionList.aspx?pmv=12c7bd0a-436e-e511-9411-b8ca3a5db7a1&cmi_mnuMain=6fdef3d5-795d-e111-8056-f04da23e67f6&cmi_mnuMain_child=bda074c9-795d-e111-8056-f04da23e67f6&cmi_mnuMain_child_child=2f08e02e-9h

Student Responsibilities

Please come to class prepared. This means you need to read the assigned section of the textbook beforehand. Attending class and participating is important, as there will be material discussed only in lectures that will be tested on exams and quizzes. You are also responsible for treating your fellow classmates with respect, especially during class discussions. We each come to this course with diverse backgrounds and different ideas regarding various issues and how government should work. Please respect your classmates by not talking when others have the floor.

If you have an excused absence and need to make up an exam, you must notify me as soon as possible after the absence. You are responsible for providing satisfactory evidence to the instructor the next class session after your absence. Please refer to the Kent State University Student Rules for more information regarding excused absences.

Technology Policy

Cell phone use in class is inappropriate and distracting to both myself and other students. If you use a laptop or tablet to take notes, please do not surf the Internet during class or use social media. I reserve the right to ask students to leave if you are using your cell phone, or a laptop/tablet, if not used for note-taking purposes.

Attendance

Class attendance is important and affects your final grade as quizzes and other in-class assignments cannot be made up unless an absence is excused (e.g. approved university activity, funeral, illness with a doctor's note indicating a return to work/school date). Absences related to your academic workload, outside work schedule, car problems, etc. are not usually excused absences. If you do miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining the missed material (e.g., notes) from another student, as my notes/PowerPoint slides will not be made available.

Instructor Responsibilities

As part of being your instructor, I have responsibilities to you. I will help answer questions regarding the course, and help you understand all the material. I will be available during office hours and also available by appointment if you cannot make office hours. I will also try to answer questions via email within 48 hours (does not include weekends). All questions regarding grades must be asked in person either after class, or during office hours.

My responsibility to you is to provide clear guidelines as to what is expected. I will be using Blackboard Learn to communicate and post grades. Please check Blackboard Learn regularly to make sure you can view course announcements and review your grades as the semester progresses. I am also responsible for ensuring the classroom provides an environment for everyone to learn and to express themselves.

Grading

Exams: 50% (Two at 25% each)
Research design paper: 25%
Homework: 15%
Quizzes: 10%

Final grade scale: A = 94% and above, A- = 90%-93%, B+ = 87%-89%, B = 84%-86%, B- = 80%-83%, C+ = 77%-79%, C = 74%-76%, C- = 70%-73%, D+ = 67%-69%, D = 60%-66%, F = 59% and below (Note: I do not round up final grades if you are just below the cutoff, such as having a 93.8%. I have to define the scale at some point, and some students are always going to fall on the other side of the divide).

Exams (50% or 25% each): A midterm and a final exam will be scheduled. Exams will be given in class and alternative exams are only allowed with an approved excuse. The format of the exams will be multiple choice, short answer, essay and as well as completing some math problems. Bring a scientific calculator that can calculate square roots. Cell phones may not be used as a calculator. You are responsible for bringing a Blue Book on exam days. Blue Books can be purchased in the bookstore, library, and several departments for about 50 cents. Students will not be allowed to take exams without a Blue Book and more time will not be given to students if they need to purchase one at the start of class.

Research design (25%): Students write a 6-8-page research design paper in this course. Students will develop a research question, write a literature review, and propose conducting original research using qualitative or quantitative methods discussed during the course, and present the proposal in class. Several class sessions will be used to help students with their projects, and students will need to meet with me later in the semester during office hours regarding their project. There will also be a mandatory session on either Nov. 28 and 30 where you must attend one of those sessions to discuss your progress on the research design. Notice there are several deadlines throughout the semester regarding different parts of the paper (research question, literature review, methodological approach, final paper.) The final paper is the research question, literature review, and methodical approach that is tied together with an introduction, transitions between sections, and a conclusion. The components of the research design and the final paper will be submitted using Blackboard Learn and SafeAssign will be used to check for potential plagiarism.

Proper spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure will be part of your research paper grade. Students need to develop the ability to write clearly and in common political science style that includes a research question, literature review, methodology, and results section, as well as a conclusion. Students are expected to carefully read, edit, and proofread their written work. If English is not your native language, or even if it is and you would like further assistance, there are on-campus resources that are there to help you. The Writing Commons center is located on the fourth floor of the library. More information can be found at <http://www.kent.edu/writingcommons>. All exercises, research proposals, etc. must have the following information displayed at the header: student's first and last name; course number (e.g. POL 20001); and assignment name (e.g. Homework 1). Any assignment submitted without this information will be ungraded and the student will receive a zero for that assignment.

The breakdown for the research paper grade is as follows:

- Research question – 10%
- Literature review– 10%
- Methodological summary – 10 %
- Presentation – 10 %
- Final paper – 60%

Homework (15%): Homework assignment will be given most weeks throughout the semester, with several coming from the *SPSS Companion* workbook. These assignments will help familiarize on how to conduct political science research and familiarize yourself with SPSS. The SPSS homework assignments can be completed using a personal computer if you purchase an SPSS license or in computer labs across campus. The unavailability of SPSS will not be considered a valid excuse for not completing homework assignments. Due dates for assignments are below. Assignments are due at the beginning of class, and any assignments submitted after that are considered late. Late assignments submitted within 24 hours of the due date will be penalized by 50 percent and no assignments will be accepted after 24 hours of the due date, regardless of the reason. Homework assignments from *SPSS Companion* will be will only be accepted if the perforated sheets are either torn out from your book or are photocopied (I will not make copies for students). Type-written homework or photocopies of hand-written s workbook sheets will not be accepted, nor are electronic submissions of homework assignments accepted. Homework must be legible and pages must be stapled together. You may work together for homework, but must submit your own sheets, and the write-up for any assignments must be in your own words. All exercises, research proposals, etc. must have the following information displayed at the header: student's first and last name; course number (e.g. POL 30001); and assignment name (e.g. Homework 1). Any assignment submitted without this information will be not be graded and the student will receive a zero for that assignment.

Quizzes (10%): In lieu of an attendance, grade, several quizzes will be given throughout the semester that will not be announced beforehand and could be given at the start, in the middle, or at the end of class. Quizzes will cover readings for day and will measure how prepared you are for that day's lecture and activities. The two lowest quizzes will be dropped. No make-ups are allowed for quizzes unless the absence is university approved.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

University policy 3-01.8 addresses academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism. Academic dishonest, cheating, or plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment in question. Repeat violations academic dishonesty/cheating/plagiarism on exams or the final paper will result in a failing grade for the course. I reserve the right to refer students for Plagiarism School or recommend to the Chair of the Department of Political Science that further action be taken. Kent State University policy on academic honesty can be found at www.kent.edu/policyreg/administrative-policy-regarding-student-cheating-and-plagiarism.

Student Accessibility

University policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a

documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Accessibility Services (contact 330-672-3391 or visit <https://www.kent.edu/sas>) for more information on registration procedures for accommodation.

Registration Requirement

The official registration deadline for this course is September 4. Course drops must be completed by September 11 to not receive a Grade “W”, and the last day to withdraw with a Grade “W” is November 6. Please refer to the bursar’s policies regarding pro-rated tuition refund dates. University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Each student must confirm enrollment by checking his/her class schedule (using Student Tools in FlashFast) prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline.

Class Schedule

Readings will come from the *Essentials* textbook, as well as additional readings to be noted here will be available through the Kent State Library website if you are on campus or using the university’s Virtual Private Network (VPN) or posted on Blackboard Learn as noted. You should be prepared to discuss the assigned readings on the days they are listed below. I retain the right to make changes to the schedule as needed.

August 29, 2016: **Introduction**
Review syllabus

August 31, 2016: **Research examples**

- Lacy, Dean, and Barry C. Burden. 1999. “The Vote-Stealing and Turnout Effects of Ross Perot in the 1992 U.S Presidential Election,” *American Journal of Political Science* 43 (1): 233-55.
- Wright, John R. 1990. “Contributions, Lobbying, and Committee Voting in the U.S. House of Representatives.” *American Political Science Review* 84 (2): 417-38.
- Handout Homework #1

September 2, 2016 **Ethics in Research**

- Milgram, Stanley. 1965. “Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority.” *Human Relations* 18 (1): 57-76.
- Mazzei, Julie, and Erin E. O'Brien. 2009. “You Got It, So When Do You Flaunt It?” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 38 (3):358-283.

- September 7, 2016: **Ethics in Research (cont.)**
- Bhattacharjee, Yudhijit, 2013. “The Mind of a Con Man.” *New York Times Magazine* (April 26). (Posted on Blackboard Learn)
 - Campos, Paul. 2015. “Alice Goffman's Implausible Ethnography.” *Chronicle of Higher Education*. (August 2015). (Posted on Blackboard Learn)
 - Singal, Jesse. 2015. “Michael LaCour Probably Fabricated a Document About Research Integrity.” *New York Magazine Science of Us blog*. (June 1). (Posted on Blackboard Learn)
- September 9, 2016 **Definition and Measurement of Concepts**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 1
- September 12, 2016: **Definition and Measurement of Concepts (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 1
- September 14 2016: **Definition and Measurement of Concepts (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 1
 - Homework #1 due
- September 16, 2016 **Qualitative Research Methods**
- Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, Chap. 1 – Intro to Qualitative Research (Posted on Blackboard Learn)
- September 19, 2016 **Qualitative Research Methods (cont.)**
- Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences, Chap. 2 – Designing Qualitative Research (Posted on Blackboard Learn)
 - Gerring, John. 2004. “What is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?” *American Political Science Review* (May): 341-354.
- September 21, 2016 **Qualitative Research Methods (cont.)**
- Coy (2003)
 - Geertz (2005)
 - Walsh (2009)
 - All readings on Blackboard Learn
- September 23, 2016 **Qualitative Research Methods (cont.)**
- In-class coding exercises
- September 26, 2016: **Defining and Measuring Variables**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 2
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 1

- Handout Research Question assignment.
 - Handout Homework #2
- September 28, 2016: **Defining and Measuring Variables (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 2
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 2
- September 30, 2016: **Defining and Measuring Variables (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 2
 - Homework #2 Due
 - Handout Homework #3
- October 3, 2016: **Proposed Explanation, Framing, and Making Comparisons**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 3
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 3
- October 5, 2016: **Proposed Explanations and Making Comparisons (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 3
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 3
 - Research Question due
 - Handout Literature Review assignment.
- October 7, 2016: **Proposed Explanation and Making Comparisons (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 3
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 3
- October 10, 2016: **Research Design**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 4
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 4
 - Homework #3 Due
 - Handout Homework #4
- October 12, 2016: **Research Design (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 4
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 4
- October 14, 2016: **Research Design (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 4
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 4
 - Homework #4 due
 - Handout Homework #5
- October 17, 2016: **Bivariate Statistics and Controlled Comparisons**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 5
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 5
 - Literature review due

- October 19, 2016: **Bivariate Statistics and Controlled Comparisons (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 5
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 5
- October 21, 2016: **Bivariate Statistics and Controlled Comparisons (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 5
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 5
- October 24 2016: **Bivariate Statistics and Controlled Comparisons (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 5
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 5
 - Homework #5 due
 - Study for Midterm!
- October 26, 2016: **Mid-term**
- Bring a Blue Book!
- October 28, 2016: **In-class video**
- Literature Review Due
- October 31, 2016: **Foundations of Statistical Inference**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 6
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 6
 - Handout Homework 6
- November 2, 2016: **Foundations of Statistical Inference (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 6
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 6
 - Homework #5 due
 - Handout Homework #6
- November 4, 2016: **Foundations of Statistical Inference (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 6
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 6
- November 7, 2016: **Significance Tests and Measures of Association**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 7
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 7
 - Homework #6 due
 - Handout Homework #7
 - Handout Methodological approach assignment

- November 9, 2016: **Significance Tests and Measures of Association (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 7
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 7
- November 11, 2016: **No class (Veteran's Day)**
- November 14, 2016 **Significance Tests and Measures of Association (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 7
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 7
 - Homework #7 due
 - Handout Homework #8
- November 16, 2016: **Correlation and Linear Regression**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 8
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 8
- November 18, 2016: **Correlation and Linear Regression (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 8
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 8
 - Sign up for in-class or office hours visit
 - Methodological approach assignment due
- November 21, 2016: **Correlation and Linear Regression (cont.)**
- *Essentials*, Chap. 8
 - *SPSS Companion*, Chap. 8
 - Homework #8 due
 - In-class presentation dates assigned
- November 23, 2016: **No class (Thanksgiving)**
- November 25, 2016: **No class (Thanksgiving)**
- November 28, 2016: **Library session (mandatory)**
- November 30, 2016: **Library session (mandatory)**
- December 2, 2016: **In-class presentations**
- December 5, 2016: **In-class presentations (cont.)**
- December 7, 2016: **In-class presentations (cont.)**

December 9, 2016: **In-class presentations and review (cont.)**

- Research papers due end of the day, Sunday, Dec. 11.

December 14, 2016: **Final Exam (10:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m.)**

- Bring a Blue Book!