

POLS 329 Seminar in American Politics

Instructor: Barry S. Rundquist
2:00-4:30 Monday
Class: BSB 1115

Office: 1122C BSB
Office Hours: 11 -12 M W
email (barryr@uic.edu)

The purpose of POLS 329 is to introduce upper division Political Science majors to producing research and analysis of American politics and writing about it. There are (famously: see *Political Science: State of the Discipline*, APSA, 2002) a lot of different topics, research approaches, and theoretical explanations in political science. Different instructors in POLS 329 often focus on different topics and theories and encourage the use of different research methods. This semester, POLS 329 is concerned with *who benefits* from public policies, a central question (says Harold Lasswell in *Politics: Who Gets What, When, and How* (1936) and others) in the study of politics. The goal is to propose answers, ideally from the political science literature, and to assess as well as you can the extent to which they are true.

POLS 329 is organized into two parts. In the first part we think, read, and write. In the second part we think, read, research, analyze, and write. Both parts are important. The first part determines what is to be researched and written about. The second part addresses the truthfulness of one's written conclusions. The goal is a paper that follows the outline shown in Appendix 1.

Part 1: Getting off the Ground

Although we start right off by asking you to commit yourself to a topic, explanation, and research design, you can (and probably should) modify or completely change these things as we go along. Why would you change? Mainly because you find another topic or explanation that is *more interesting*, find that there are alternative explanations of who benefits in your policy area that raise the natural question "is yours or the alternative view" more accurate (in many cases this disharmony can become the topic of your research), or because you find that there are *no data* to use in testing your hypothesis or hypotheses. The solution to most of the problems that will (inevitably) occur this semester is to talk to your instructor. Anyway, here is what we will do in Part 1:

First, write a short one page essay on who (i.e., what persons, places, or things) we think are the main winners and losers from either *tax cuts*, *the Iraq war*, and *globalization*. (This is due today and is marked #1 in the schedule below)

Second, (by next week) write a short essay asserting *why* we think the beneficiaries we identified in the first week tend to benefit and *why* those we identified as deprived this week tend to be deprived. In other words, based on your guess, 200 years of scholarly wisdom, clever Sherlock Holmes-like reasoning, the Daily Show, or something, identify an X that causes somebody or thing to benefit and somebody or thing to be deprived. You can stay with the problem area you deal with this week (e.g., tax cuts) or change to a different one (check with me first if you want to change). (#2 in schedule)

Third, provide an example or two of the causal argument you submitted in week 2. (i.e., if one thinks X causes Y1 to benefit or Y2 to lose, provide an example of a Y1 benefitting and Y2 losing). Be careful to define what you mean by winning and losing so that you can observe it. (#3)

Fourth, review some of what the political science literature has to say about who does and/or should benefit in American politics and why. We will write a short paper on what the literature we are reading says about our “X causes Y1 and Y2” hypothesis (in addition to class readings, go to Google scholar and type in the nouns in your hypothesis and/or question to see what articles in political science journals come up. Does the literature agree with you? If not, what X or Xs does it suggest is/are the causes? Are there any problems with the research and/or theory on which these alternative explanations are based? Are these explanations better than yours? Why or why not? (#4)

Fifth, design a study to test our who benefits/is deprived hypothesis. (#5)

Sixth, find some data to test your hypothesis(es). The internet has relevant data on a lot of questions of interest to political scientists. To find relevant data Google your variables with the words “data” or “statistics.” (#6)

Part 2: Flying

In Part 2 you will implement your research design using the data you have found, analyze the data and find a way to summarize your analysis, present your findings, discuss the strengths and limitations of your study, and conclude regarding the validity of your hypothesis.

This part of the course involves submitting three or four drafts of your paper, getting your instructors comments, and then submitting a final version of the paper (#7, #8, #9, and #10 in the schedule below). We will meet for class every Monday but some of the classes may be very short. During this part of the seminar the key thing is to keep in touch with your instructor, by email or face-to-face or both.

Requirements and Grading

Students are expected to attend class (I will take attendance and more than three unexcused absences will result in a lower grade in the course) and to participate. *Participation* means reading the assigned material before class and being prepared to discuss it and to comment on one another’s research – this is after all a *seminar*. Discussion leaders may be appointed for each day’s readings and students will be called upon to discuss their ideas for their papers. I will try to call on students by name for their reactions to the various readings and the progress of their research. In addition to the writing assignments, students will be required to take a midterm examination. I will give a final exam if necessary, but if there is no final (which there will not be if the quality of the term papers is good enough), grades in POLS 329 will be based on the following:

Part 1	25% (15% content, 10% writing)
Midterm	20
Part 2	40 (25% content, 15% writing)
Participation	15
	100%

This course emphasizes *writing the best paper you can*. A paper is good to the extent that it has good content and is well written. In my experience, good written work comes about by writing a lot of drafts, using spell- and gram-check, and consulting regularly with your instructor. Although it has seldom happened in my last three versions of POLS 329, it is *possible* to write a paper that is so good in its early drafts that no additional drafts are required. Also this semester we have the advantage of having papers written in earlier versions of POLS 329 as well as some students who are taking the class for the second time. So we both models of good papers and hopefully models of good students.

Please note that in meeting the writing requirements in POLS 329, students should abide by UIC's and the Political Science Department's policies on plagiarism. As quoted from the University's Handbook for Undergraduate Studies, UIC's policy is as follows:

UIC's Policy on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or in part, without proper acknowledgment that it is someone else's.

Copying of any source in whole or in part with only minor changes in wording or syntax even with acknowledgment.

Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.

Paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgment.

(See the political science web site for the department's policy.)

s, Phil Shively's *The Craft of Political Research*, and Barry Rundquist and Tom Carsey's *Congress and Defense Spending*, University of Oklahoma Press, 2002, are available in the Circle Center bookstore and/or from on-line book sellers in new and used form. I am still uncertain regarding whether I will require readings from a common packet of articles or have each student search out relevant scholarly articles for their own particular topic, or both.

Tentative Schedule

ctions. #1

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ad Shively, Chapters 1-4.

ad Shively, Chapters 5-8.

ad Shively, Chapters 9 and 10.

ad Rundquist and Carsey, Chapters

ad Rundquist and Carsey, Chapters

erm Exam

ss #10 Final Paper Due

amination if Necessary

Outline for Final Research Paper

overview of what happens in the paper—what the reader can expect to see in it)

Question

the research question

s) (i.e., an answer or answers to the research question).

Design: how you can measure your independent and dependent variables so as to best test the hypothesis

transformations, etc.)

Describe the findings that test your hypothesis(es)

What your findings indicate about the validity of the hypothesis or hypotheses you set out to test and how the analysis relates to other relevant studies—i.e., the ones you described in your literature review)

Brief overview of what the paper was about)