

POLS 200 Methods of Political Science

Yue Zhang

Spring 2009

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Office Hours: Monday 3-5 PM

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Class Time: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:45 PM (304 2 BH)

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the methods of political science inquiry. Unlike most college courses, in this course we will focus on learning *how* to know (inquiry), rather than *what* to know. The course will be divided into three parts: theory and research preparation, data collection, and data analysis. By the end of the semester, students should have a more sophisticated understanding of the logic of inquiry and also be proficient in reading, interpreting, and evaluating research reports and studies found in academic journals and books, magazines, newspapers, and other news media.

Requirements and Expectations

Your grade will be based on three components:

Attendance and participation: 10%

Homework: 60%

Homework I: 10%

Homework II: 10%

Homework III: 10%

Homework IV: 10%

Homework V: 20%

Research Design: 30%

Class attendance is required. If you must miss a class for any reason, please let me know in advance. An excessive number of missed classes will be cause for a failing grade in the class. In order to get full points in participation, you must actively involve in class discussion.

A substantial proportion of your grade is based on your homework. You will have at least one week between the time the assignment is given and the time it is due. All assignments must be submitted in class on the day that they are due. Late homework will be returned to students with comments and feedbacks, but will not be given a grade. In other words, students will not get credit for late assignments.

Homework V will be mini-fieldwork. Students will be divided into groups to finish the assignment. Every group will present its fieldwork report to the whole class after the Spring Break.

Students are required to submit a research design at the end of the class. Research topics should be developed in consultation with Professor Zhang. Research designs should be 5-7 double-spaced pages and are due on April 30 in class. Late research designs will be penalized one third of a grade for every 24 hours that they are late.

Grades for homework and research designs will be based on both substance and style. Use proper grammar, appropriate language, and proofread and spell-check the final copy of every assignment. Unstapled assignments will not be accepted. Emailed assignments will not be accepted.

Academic Honesty

Cheating will not be tolerated. You must write your own homework and your own research designs. Any student caught cheating will receive a failing grade in the class and be referred to the administration for disciplinary actions. If you are unclear what constitutes plagiarism please talk to Professor Zhang.

Required Reading:

Empirical Political Analysis: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods,
Jarol Manheim *et al.* eds., 2008 (7th edition), Longman.

The textbook is available at the UIC Bookstore. There is the chance that I will assign supplemental readings; I will let you know about these changes at least one week in advance. Additional readings will be available on Blackboard.

Course Outline

January 13 Review of the course

PART I Preparing To Do Research

January 15 Introduction (Chapter 1)

January 20/22 Theory Building (Chapter 2)

January 27/29 Bibliographic Search (Chapter 3)

February 3/5 Internet Research (Chapter 4)

***** Homework I Due on February 5**

February 10/12 Operationalization and Measurement (Chapter 5)

February 17/19 Research Design (Chapter 6)

February 24/26 Sampling (Chapter 7)

***** Homework II Due on February 26**

PART II Collecting Data

March 3/5 Survey (Chapter 8)

***** Homework III Due on March 5**

March 10/12 Direct Observation (Chapter 19)

***** Homework IV Due on March 12**

March 17/19 Interviewing (Chapter 21)

***** March 23-27 Spring Break, Class Canceled**

March 31/April 2 Student Fieldwork Report

***** Homework V Due on March 31**

April 7/9 Comparative Research (Chapter 12)

April 14/16 Social Network Analysis (Chapter 13)

PART III Analyzing Data

April 21 Data Preparation and Data Processing (Chapter 14)

April 23 Statistics (Chapters 16-18)

April 28 Writing the Research Report (Chapter 22)

April 30 Conclusion (Chapter 23)

***** Research Design Due on April 30**