



**POLS 201:
Political Data Analysis, Fall 2008**

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Description:

This course seeks to provide an understanding of the variety of ways political scientists study political phenomena by analyzing the variety of the forms of political data. POLS 201 contains a two-fold purpose. First, it serves as a foundation to understanding political science literature. Second, it provides students with an opportunity to utilize what they have learned through development of a research proposal.

After examining the similarities amongst all types of “good” research, the course follows the preeminent concern of rigorous systematic study through an examination of qualitative and quantitative analyses. This includes discussion of the variety of qualitative techniques utilized (e.g. ethnography, historical/archival, comparative, and elite interviewing). Then, this course explores the quantitative methods of analysis (including both survey research and secondary data analysis). Readings from various political science sub-fields are utilized to demonstrate how these methodological techniques may be employed. SPSS is harnessed for univariate and bivariate analysis of political data. Finally, the principal project allows students to apply what they have learned by designing a rigorous systematic study dedicated to their individual interests. A better understanding of the difficulties and rewards of such a proposal emerge through student application of the techniques learned in a political science subfield of their own interest.

Texts:

Salkind, Neil J.. 2007. Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics, 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications. ISBN: 978-14129-5150-0 or 978-14129-5151-7.

Salkind, Neil J.. 2007. Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics, 3rd Edition, Data Sets. Available at: http://soe.ku.edu/faculty/Salkind/stats_fpwhs3e/

Texts (continued):

Various items placed on reserve in the Daley (Main) Library and/or available via the web at JSTOR (available free through the Library).

Objectives and Outcomes:

1. To acquaint students with the major paradigmatic approaches to conceiving political interaction.
2. To increase understanding of qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis.
3. To offer students the opportunity to apply this knowledge.
4. To impart to students the background necessary for making informed judgments about the quality of the research they read, see, or hear.
5. To encourage students to participate actively as global citizens and researchers.

Course Methodology:

This course utilizes several different teaching techniques to explain the substantive material:

1. Lecture and Discussion – The professor shares his knowledge, thoughts, and ideas with you on the various topics, books, and articles. He welcomes your input on this material. This also provides students a chance to voice their opinion about the study of politics in a free and open manner, which comprises the participation portion of the students' grades.
2. Audio-Visual Aids – The instructor utilizes items such as the overhead projector, maps, films, videotapes, computers, musical recordings and other items where appropriate.

Examinations and Grading:

Your performance determines your course grade in the following manner:

350 points possible = Assignments
100 points possible = Test I
100 points possible = Test II
150 points possible = Research Proposal
100 points possible = Participation
800 points possible = Total

Test Grade:

This course involves two non-cumulative examinations. These exams cover the textbook readings, the classroom lectures, and class discussions. The exams are closed book, closed note.

Research Proposal:

This class also requires students to write a research proposal. This assignment essentially combines all that you have learned this term into one final product. Further information regarding this paper disseminated at a later date. Generally, the 150 points for papers are further sub-divided in this manner: 25 points = Introduction, 25 points = Literature Review, 75 points = Methodology, 25 points = Findings.

Participation Grade:

The determination of the participation portion of your grade involves your active contribution to class discussions. Class participation provides the opportunity of receiving an "A" in this course. Therefore, I establish some guidelines for discussion. Concern your comments with the topics of researching politics. An open manner conducts this discussion. Feel free to disagree with me, the readings, the institutions and data discussed, and with your classmates. However, this discussion reflects the collegiate atmosphere in that it unfolds in an intelligent manner and you must support your opinion with facts (that may mean research). Interruption, use of slurs and making fun of other students encounters **strict prohibition**.

Technology:

All personal communications devices (i.e. cell phones, Blackberries, etc.) are to be turned off prior to entering the classroom. Utilizing these devices during regular class time will result in a reduction on your final course grade, and during test periods will be treated as cheating. I do not mind use of laptops for note-taking or in conjunction with internet resources I may discuss in class. However, abuse of this policy (i.e. checking E-mail, IM-ing, etc.) will necessitate revision of this policy (which may include banning laptops all together). Technology should aid in our academic endeavor, not hinder it.

All work requires standard grammatical English and prompt attention to due dates. We cannot grade what we cannot read. If we cannot read an assignment we will ask you once to rewrite it, and after that first warning you either receive a reduced grade or no credit. Cheating and plagiarism also encounter strict prohibition and require that I deal with them according to UIC policy and procedure.

Course and Topic Outline:

Tuesday, 8/26/08 Introduction

Thursday, 8/28/08 The Basics Are All the Same: We Need Rigor

Read: King, Gary. 1993. "The Methodology of Presidential Research." In George C. Edwards III, John H. Kessel, and Bert A. Rockman (eds.). Researching the Presidency. Pittsburgh. University of Pittsburgh Press. pp. 387-412. (E-mailed).

Tuesday, 9/2/08 Yardsticks v. Metersticks in the Social Sciences

Read: Salkind, Chapter 6 (Some of this is "stats stuff," don't worry about how to calculate these things right now, just try and get an understanding of the concepts).

Assignment #1 Due: Bring in at least two articles from JSTOR on an interesting topic. (50 pts.)

*Thursday, 9/4/08 The World is Rarely as Simple as $A \rightarrow B$,
or How to Increase Explanatory Power*

Read: Cozby, Chapter 10 (E-mailed).

Tuesday, 9/9/08 Getting Our Statistical Feet Wet

Read: Salkind, Part I;

Thursday, 9/11/08 Getting to Know Your Program

Do a "Computer Sit-Down" with Salkind, "Appendix A: SPSS in Less than 30Minutes,"
Thoroughly Read: Salkind, Chapter 20.

Tuesday, 9/16/08 Three Ways to Find the Middle, or Measures of Central Tendency

Read: Salkind, Chapter 2;

Thursday, 9/18/08 Variance

Read: Salkind, Chapter 3;

Assignment #2 Due: Worksheet A (50 pts.)

Tuesday, 9/23/08 Displaying Results: Figures & Tables, not Graphs and Charts

Read: Salkind, Chapter 4;

Thursday, 9/25/08 Pearson, Who's Pearson and Why is He Correlating My Coefficients

Read: Salkind, Chapter 5;

Tuesday, 9/30/08 Hypothesizing (H_0 , H_1 , H_2 , ...)

Read: Salkind, Chapter 7;

Assignment #3 Due: Worksheet B (50 pts.)

Thursday, 10/2/08

TEST I

- Tuesday, 10/7/08 Normality (Yeah Right!)
Read: Salkind, Chapter 8;*
- Thursday, 10/9/08 Significance & Error (Both Good as Long as it's not Significant Error)
Read: Salkind, Chapter 9;*
- Tuesday, 10/14/08 t-Test for Independent Samples (Boston Harbor and Lipton)
Read: Salkind, Chapter 10.
Assignment #4 Due: Worksheet C (50 pts.)*
- Thursday, 10/16/08 t-Test for Dependent Samples (Boston Harbor and
the East India Company)
Read: Salkind, Chapter 11;*
- Tuesday, 10/21/08 ANOVA, Not a Classic '69 Nova, but ANOVA Nonetheless
Read: Salkind, Chapter 12;*
- Thursday, 10/23/08 ANOVA Continued*
- Tuesday, 10/28/08 Factorial ANOVA, No they Don't Build Cars Here, Not Even in Mexico
Read: Salkind, Chapter 13.*
- Thursday, 10/30/08 Factorial ANOVA Continued
Assignment #5 Due: Worksheet D (50 pts.)*
- Tuesday, 11/4/08 Significant Correlations and How to Tell Off a Statistician
Read: Salkind, Chapter 14;*
- Thursday, 11/6/08 Basic Linear Regression, or Statisticians in the Outfield
Read: Salkind, Chapter 15;*
- Tuesday, 11/11/08 Linear Regression Continued*
- Thursday, 11/13/08 Who's Normal Again, and How Could We Tell if They Aren't?
Read: Salkind, Chapter 16;
Assignment #6 Due: Worksheet E (50 pts.)*
- Tuesday, 11/18/08 Multiple Regression, or the Advanced Statisticians in the Outfield
Read: Salkind, Chapter 17;*
- Thursday, 11/20/08 Multiple Regression Continued*
- Tuesday, 11/25/08 Is that Generally the Case, or Are You Using Stats to Lie to Me?
Read Cozby, Chapter 14 (E-mailed).
Assignment #7 Due: Worksheet F (50 pts.)*

Thursday, 11/27/08

Thanksgiving Break – No Classes

Tuesday, 12/2/08

Presentations

Thursday, 12/4/08

Presentations

Wednesday, 12/10/08

Final Examination Period, (10:30-12:30) TEST II

This syllabus remains subject to change at the instructor's discretion, without prior notice.

To obtain academic accommodations for this course, students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services and the professor as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services can be reached at 1-312-413-2183 (voice) or 1-312-413-0123 (TTY).