

Research Methods in Political Science

PSC 301

Fall 2016

Instructor: Professor McAvoy
Office: Curry 306
E-mail: gemcavoy@uncg.edu

Class: T,Th 12:30-1:45pm
Office Hours: T,Th 11:00am-12pm,
T 1:45-2:15pm
and by appointment

Course Outline

This course will give students an overview of the research methods used by political scientists. The goal is to provide students with the background to better understand political science questions and the types of evidence that researchers rely on to answer them. Topics the course will cover include: the design of a research project, development of theories, selection of measures, and methods to gather and analyze data. Students will also learn how to construct and interpret graphs and tables using political science data as well as to conduct basic statistical analysis.

What You Will Learn in this Class:

- How to design research projects
- How to use primary data to answer questions about politics
- How to integrate data analysis into your writing
- How to be an informed reader of public opinion polls

Required Texts

1. Phillip H. Pollock. 2016. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, 5th edition. Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.
2. Mark J. Hetherington and Thomas J. Rudolph. 2015. *Why Washington Won't Work: Polarization, Political Trust, And The Governing Crisis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pollock's textbook is abbreviated as PP in the course schedule (below). Hetherington and Rudolph's book is abbreviated as H and R in the course schedule. There are a couple of readings available through electronic reserve or posted on Canvas. These readings are indicated by (R) or (CV) next to the reading assignment. Occasionally, you will be asked to read a daily newspaper or news magazine in order to find examples of concepts or issues for class discussions.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to come to class fully prepared to discuss the assigned readings or homework assignments. You should bring the assigned readings to class since we will often refer to these in our discussions. We will have class and small group discussions in order to apply the course material to specific examples, and meaningful participation in these is required. Grades for the course will be determined on the basis of the following course requirements: quizzes (10%), illustrations and examples (5%), one paper (15%), a midterm (25%), homework assignments (20%), and a final project (25%). Some quizzes are noted in the course schedule but others may be added as needed and will be announced beforehand. Written assignments will be marked down half a grade for each day that they are late. **All course assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade in the class.**

Letter grades are assigned as follows:

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|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| A (100-94) | B+ (89-87) | C+ (79-77) | D+ (69-67) |
| A- (93-90) | B (86-83) | C (76-73) | D (66-63) |
| | B- (82-80) | C- (72-70) | D- (62-60) |

Academic Integrity

A fundamental tenet of all educational institutions is academic honesty; academic work depends upon respect for and acknowledgment of the work and ideas of others. Misrepresenting someone else's work as one's own is a serious offense in any academic setting and it will not be condoned. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for academic evaluation (e.g. papers, projects, examinations and assessments - whether online or in class); presenting, as one's own, the ideas, words or calculations of another for academic evaluation; doing unauthorized academic work for which another person will receive credit or be evaluated; and presenting the same or substantially the same papers or projects in two or more courses without the explicit permission of the instructors involved. A student who knowingly assists another student in committing an act of academic misconduct shall be equally accountable for the violation, and shall be subject to the sanctions and other remedies described in The Student Code. Violations of the university honor code will be prosecuted. The full text of the Academic Integrity Policy can be viewed at: <http://www.uncg.edu/reg/Policy/HonorPolicy.html>.

Do NOT engage in either cheating or plagiarism. The penalties for both offenses range from the need to re-do assignments to expulsion from the University, depending upon the severity of the cheating or plagiarism offense. If you have any questions regarding what constitutes either cheating or plagiarism, please see me immediately.

Etiquette During class sessions, I do not check my cell phone for messages, walk out of the room to take calls, text message, surf the Internet, check my email, go get something to eat from the vending machine, and neither should you.

During class, computers may only be used for taking notes. **Students who plan to use computers during class need to charge their computer battery before class and must sit in the first row of seats.**

Course Schedule

| Date | Topic | Readings | Assignment |
|---|--|---|----------------|
| <i>Overview of the Research Process</i> | | | |
| 23-Aug | Introduction | Syllabus | |
| 25-Aug | Overview and Epistemology | PP Intro Watts, Preface and Ch. 1 (CV) | |
| <i>Theory Building and Testing</i> | | | |
| 30-Aug | What are Theories and Concepts? | PP 1, 3-11 | CV Quiz |
| 1-Sep | Examples of Theories | <i>H and R</i> , 1-2 | Quiz |
| 6-Sep | Validity and Reliability | PP 1, 11-20 | Examples |
| 8-Sep | Measurement | PP 2 (all) | CV Quiz |
| 13-Sep | Hypotheses | PP 3, 48-58 | |
| 15-Sep | Making Comparisons (Crosstabs) | PP 3, 58-70 | |
| 20-Sep | Visualizing Data | Meet in Curry 304 | Paper Assigned |
| 22-Sep | Examples | <i>H and R</i> , 3-5 | Quiz |
| <i>Research Design</i> | | | |
| 27-Sep | Experiments | PP 4 | Paper Due |
| 29-Sep | Quasi-Experiments | Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 5, 147-166 (CV) | CV Quiz |
| 4-Oct | Sampling | PP 6, 123-128, Asher 4 (CV) | |
| 6-Oct | Midterm Examination | | |
| <i>Data Analysis</i> | | | |
| 11-Oct | Descriptive Statistics | PP 2, 29-44 PP 4, 102-106 | CV Quiz |
| 13-Oct | Lab (Meet in Curry 304) | | Homework #1 |
| Fall Break | | | |
| 20-Oct | Difference of Means Lab (Meet in Curry 304) | PP 7, 156-164 | Homework #2 |
| 25-Oct | Measures of Association | <i>H and R</i> , 6-8 PP 8, 183-188 (Correlation) | Quiz |
| 27-Oct | Lab (Meet in Curry 304) | | Homework #3 |
| 1-Nov | Significance Testing | PP 6 | CV Quiz |
| 3-Nov | Lab (Meet in Curry 304) | | Homework #4 |
| 8-Nov | Crosstabs and Difference of Means | PP 7, 156-170 | |
| 10-Nov | Lab (Meet in Curry 304) | | Homework #5 |
| 15-Nov | Regression | PP 8, 188-198, | |
| 17-Nov | Lab (Meet in Curry 304) | | Homework #6 |

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|--------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| 22-Nov | Analysis | <i>H and R</i> 9-10 PP 1 | Quiz |
| 29-Nov | Review Validity and Reliability | | |
| 1-Dec | Lab (Meet in Curry 304) | | Homework #7 |

Final Project Due: Thursday, Dec 8th, 3:00pm