

PSC 301-01  
Research Methods  
Fall 2016  
MWF, 10:00-10:50  
238 Curry

Charles Prysby  
318 Curry Building  
Office phone: a victim of budget cuts  
E-mail: prysby@uncg.edu  
Office hours: MWF, 11:00-12:00

## Syllabus

This course is concerned with the basic methods and techniques used in the empirical analysis of political and social data. We will cover the various aspects of research in political science, including definition of the project, design of the research, collection of the data, and analysis of the data.

The focus of this course is on the logic behind the application of various methods, with the aim of improving your understanding of the principles of quantitative research. This course should increase your ability to interpret and evaluate such research, including both proposed research and completed studies. It also should improve your ability to conduct empirical research in political science.

This is not primarily a statistics course. It is a course in research methods. A substantial portion of this course is devoted to data analysis in political science. In covering this topic, we will cover applications of statistics to data analysis, but this course is not a substitute for a course in statistical theory. No statistical background is required for this course, but those with some exposure to statistics (e.g., STA 108) should benefit from that experience.

### Student Learning Objectives

As a result of taking this course, students should improve their ability to:

1. Develop researchable questions and hypotheses.
2. Evaluate research questions and hypotheses put forth by others.
3. Construct good measures of political and social data.
4. Conduct and assess data analyses that would be used in political science.

### Books

The following book is at the bookstore:

Janet Johnson, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason Mycoff, *Political Science Research Methods*, 8th ed. (CQ Press, 2016).

If you are buying a used copy of the book, be sure that you buy the most recent edition, which is identified above. The Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff book has earlier editions, which you should not purchase. Most of the reading for this course is in the textbook. For a few topics, there is inadequate coverage from the text, so there is a small amount of reserve reading in those cases. These reserve reading items are identified in the syllabus as "(ER)" and are available as e-reserves through Canvas.

### Course Requirements

My philosophy is that students learn research methods best by active engagement, not by taking tests. Therefore, I have planned a set of four papers, each of which is intended to improve your research skills in some way. The first two papers have to do with the development of research questions and research designs. The final two papers deal with the analysis of data to answer research questions. In addition to the four papers, in-class quizzes, performance in computer lab sessions and general class participation will count toward the final course grade. Further details on each of these items are below:

1. A paper on hypothesis construction is tentatively scheduled to be assigned on August 29 and due on September 14. This paper will count 15% toward the final course grade.
2. A paper on measurement is tentatively scheduled to be assigned on September 14 and due on October 12. This paper will count 20% toward the final course grade.
3. A paper on the analysis of survey data is tentatively scheduled to be assigned on October 19 and due on November 14. This paper will count 20% toward the final course grade.
4. A paper on the analysis of aggregate data is tentatively scheduled to be assigned on November 16 and due on the final exam day (December 7). This paper will count 20% toward the final course grade.
5. There will be at least 12 pop quizzes throughout the semester. Each quiz will be given at the start of the class and will be a brief quiz on the assigned readings. Your best 10 quizzes will count 10% toward the final course grade.
5. There are four computer lab sessions scheduled for this course. The tentative dates are: October 14, October 24, November 11, and November 18. Performance in the lab sessions will count 5% toward the final course grade.
6. Class participation will count 10% toward the course grade. This includes class attendance, participation in class discussions, and involvement in group work.

### Course Policies and Expectations

1. Class attendance and participation are extremely important in this course. You cannot expect to do well in this course if you do not attend class. Attendance will be taken, and your participation in class discussions and group activities will be noted. These factors will be count toward determining your final grade, as explained above. **Asking good questions is an important aspect of good class participation.** This is especially true in this course, where you may find much of the material difficult to understand. Unless you understand all of the material perfectly, you should ask questions in class.

2. Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned material and prepared to discuss the material in class. Many class sessions will involve group work or other exercises that involve applying the assigned readings to problems. If you are not prepared for these class sessions, you will not be able to participate effectively. Also, if you have not read the assigned material, you will not be able to ask intelligent questions about it in class.

3. Students are expected to follow appropriate classroom etiquette. Among other things, this means that you should arrive on time (the class starts at 10:00, not 10:05 or 10:10), should turn off your cell phone, and should not bring food to eat during the class session (a drink is fine).

4. Students are expected to follow the UNCG Academic Integrity Policy for all work. Further information on the academic integrity policy, including information on plagiarism, can be found at: <http://sa.uncg.edu/dean/academic-integrity/>.

5. Students are encouraged to discuss the course material with others and to otherwise work together to better understand the material. Of course, all written work that is submitted by a student must be that person's own work.

6. Late papers will be marked down unless you receive permission to submit your paper late. Such permission must be requested prior to the due date and will be granted only for legitimate reasons.



## Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

TOPIC	DATES	READING ASSIGNMENT
<b>A. Formulating researchable questions</b>		
1. The aims of quantitative research	Aug. 24-26	Johnson et al., chpt. 1-2
2. Variables and hypotheses	Aug. 29- Sept. 12	Johnson et al., chpt. 4 Janda, Berry, and Goldman, chpt. 1 (ER)
<b>B. Measurement and data collection</b>		
1. Principles of measurement	Sept. 14-23	Johnson et al., chpt. 5
2. Data collection	Sept. 26-30	Johnson et al., chpts. 8-10
<b>C. Research design</b>		
1. Types of research designs	Oct. 3	Johnson et al., chpt. 6
2. Inference from non-experimental designs	Oct. 5-7	Putnam, <i>Bowling Alone</i> , chpts. 10, 13 (ER)
3. Sampling	Oct. 10	Johnson et al., chpt. 7
<b>D. Describing and presenting data</b>		
	Oct. 12-19	Johnson et al., chpt. 11
<b>E. Analyzing survey data</b>		
1. Elementary survey analysis	Oct. 21-26	Johnson et al., chpt. 13 (pp. 420-430)
2. Advanced survey analysis	Oct. 28- Nov. 4	Johnson et al., chpt. 14 (pp. 516-528) Kay, <i>Analysis of Political Data</i> , chpt. 17 (ER)
3. Statistics for survey analysis	Nov. 7	Johnson et al., chpt. 13 (pp. 431-449)
<b>F. Inferential statistics</b>		
	Nov. 9-14	Johnson et al., chpt. 12, 13 (pp. 449-467)
<b>G. Analyzing aggregate data</b>		
1. Bivariate regression analysis	Nov. 16-21	Johnson et al., chpt. 13 (pp. 478-513) Moore, <i>Statistics</i> , chpts. 14-15 (ER) Pollock, chpt. 8 (pp. 159-173) (ER)
2. Multiple regression analysis	Nov. 28-Dec. 5	Johnson et al., chpt. 14 (pp. 528-532)