



PSCI.347

Political Science 347: Introduction to Research Methods

Fall 2020

"Just because someone quotes you a statistic or shows you a graph, it doesn't mean it's relevant to the point they're trying to make. It's the job of all of us to make sure we get the information that matters, and to ignore the information that doesn't."

Daniel J. Levitin, *A Field Guide to Lies: Critical Thinking in the information Age* (2016)

"Sometimes the job of a data scientist to know when you don't know enough."

Cathy O'Neill, *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* (2016)

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Ayal K. Feinberg

Office Location: 148 Ferguson Social Sciences

Office Hours: By Appointment – Available Through Zoom for All Students

University Email Address: Ayal.Feinberg@tamuc.edu

Communication Response Time: 48 Hours Maximum

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Texts:

Howard, Christopher. *Thinking like a political scientist: a practical guide to research methods*. University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Referred to as TLPS from this point on

Optional Texts:

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, Henry T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. *Political science research methods*. Cq Press, 2019.

Referred to as PSRM from this point on

Any additional course material and documents will be posted to MyLeo. All announcements related to the course, including changes to the due dates of assignments or exams, will be posted on MyLeo.

Course Description:

This course focuses on the important empirical research methodology employed in Political Science. Topics covered include the scientific method, research design, sampling, probability, as well as descriptive and inferential statistics.

Student Learning Outcomes

By completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Formulate social science research questions and hypotheses
2. Design a research project involving data analysis
3. Employ basic statistical methods to test hypotheses about politics

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional Methods

This is a web-based university course that requires you engage with all assigned online materials. For this class, you will be required listen to lectures, participate in interactive simulations, and engage in lively discussions through the course website on MyLeo. It is vitally important you complete all assigned reading for the course, and submit all assignments in a timely manner.

While this will be an *asynchronous* course, many lectures will be recorded live for students and will allow you the opportunity to interact with and ask questions of the instructor. Live attendance of these lectures will be optional. Furthermore, the class will be polled to determine the best time to hold these live lectures at the start of the semester. All lectures will be available through the course's YouSeeU-Virtual Classroom link and will be accessible through the course's website less than 2-hours after they are recorded.

Student Responsibilities and Succeeding in this Course

First, define what *success* means to you. If you want to get an A in the course, focus on doing well on every assignment. If you want a B or a C for the course, you may want to emphasize some assignments over others. Remember, this course is absolutely critical for political science majors. Your grade will send important signals to the political science department, the university, and potential employers, about your abilities.

Second, take good notes. Taking good notes starts when you begin your assigned reading. Don't wait to see what topics I cover during class presentations, as they will not necessarily be exhaustive. Review each reading assignment for key terms and concepts, and make sure you are familiar with them. Test yourself on defining these terms and concepts with a focus on being able to explain their importance in designing political science research.

Third, get together with your peers on Zoom to prepare for your exams. Form study groups and review assigned readings with each other. This will not only help you to fill in possible gaps in your course notes, but discussing class topics with peers often leads to new

insights on the materials. It can also lead to lifelong friendships. If you are shy, come to your instructor as they may know who is already engaging in study groups.

Grading and Assessment:

You are required to read the chapter(s) in your textbook associated with each topic being reviewed in the scheduled lecture. Course grading and assessment expectations will be discussed in greater detail below.

Major Course Assignments and Examinations:

Research Paper	50%
Midterm Exam:	20%
Final Exam:	20%
Homework:	10%

Research Paper (50%)

You will be writing an original research design paper in this course. Your research design must be a scholarly paper that assesses a causal relationship(s) surrounding a social science phenomenon that interests you. The assignment requires everything you would expect in a published empirical political science journal article except for the actual data analysis (and related components). A full outline of your research design assignment expectations will be provided to students on MyLeo at the start of the course. All parts of the research design, including the final paper, must be turned in through the course website on MyLeo. All aspects of your research design paper are subject to review through plagiarism software such as TurnItIn and all plagiarized assignments will receive a zero and result in an F for the course.

Although you will be writing a single research paper, this assignment contains three parts, all of which are required to receive a grade for your research design paper. The first part of your paper (due September 14th) will consist of a 2-page double-spaced document that summarizes your social science research question and your interest in it. It also requires the citation of at least two scholarly sources. The second part of your paper (due November 2nd) will consist of a draft of your literature review, theory, and hypotheses and requires at least six scholarly sources. The third part of your paper is your final draft (due December 2nd). It will consist of an abstract, introduction, literature review, theory with original hypotheses, data and measurement section, conclusion, reference sections, and appendix. Students interested in earning an additional 1% extra credit to their final grade will have the opportunity to present their research design paper during lectures on December 3rd, 4th, and 5th.

Midterm Exam & Final Exam (20% each, 40% total)

There are two exams in this class. You may think of them as a midterm and a final, and they generally correspond to the middle and end of the semester. Each exam will cover completely different material. These exams will include objective (multiple-choice, true-false, and math) questions as well as more subjective short answer questions and essay questions. Dates for the exams are on the course schedule; both exams will be provided through our course website. Exams may be re-scheduled if you contact me prior to the exam date with a

university accepted excuse (work, trips to the beach, and midnight opening of movies are not considered reasonable). Make-up exams will be given on a case-by-case basis and may have an entirely different format from the original assessment (such as a closed-note essay). Make-up exams tend to be significantly more challenging than the original, so make every possible effort to take the exams on the dates they are given.

Homework (10%)

There will be two separate homework assignments that each count for 5% of your final grade. They will consist of a mix of both analytical and statistical problems. These homework assignments tend to incorporate questions that will be critical to the construction of your research paper. Consequently, timely and careful completion of your homework assignments for the course is strongly correlated with a higher research paper and course grade. All homework assignments will be available on MyLeo at least a week before their due date. All homework assignments must be submitted through MyLeo as well. Homework assignments emailed to the professor will not receive a grade of zero. If you have any issues with submitting your homework through MyLeo, you must contact the professor before the due date.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Because this is a web-enhanced course, all students must meet the following technology requirements to successfully complete this course.

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

Access and Navigation

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Regular, high-quality Internet access, specifically, a high-speed internet connection, not dial-up or a cellular phone. Students should use the eCollege tutorial to test the quality and speed of

their browser and ensure that it is compatible with the system. Students will need access to an Internet browser such as Internet Explorer.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Pandemic Response

A&M-Commerce requires the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research classrooms/laboratories. Exceptions may be made by faculty where warranted. Faculty have management over their classrooms. Students not using face-coverings can be required to leave class. Repetitive refusal to comply can be reported to the Office of Students' Rights and Responsibilities as a violation of the student Code of Conduct.

Students should not attend class when ill or after exposure to anyone with a communicable illness. Communicate such instances directly with your instructor. Faculty will work to support the student getting access to missed content or completing missed assignments.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

Students with Disabilities – ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status.

Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law

enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

DATE	TOPIC	READING
August 24 – August 30	Course Introduction	None
August 31 – September 6	Introduction & Philosophy of Science	PSRM Chp. 1
September 7 – September 13	Studying Politics Scientifically	PSRM Chp. 2 & TLPS Chp. 1
September 14 – September 20	Scholarly Work & Literature Reviews	PSRM Chp. 3
September 21 – September 27	Theory & Generating Hypotheses	PSRM Chp. 4 & TLPS Chp. 2
September 28 – October 4	Measurement	PSRM Chp. 5 & TLPS Chp. 3
October 5 – October 9	Measurement Continued	PSRM Chp. 5
October 13	Exam	Review
October 14 – October 18	Research Design	PSRM Chp. 6 & TLPS Chp. 4
October 19 – October 25	Sampling	PSRM Chp. 7 & TLPS Chp. 5
October 26 – November 1	Collecting Data	PSRM Chp. 8 & TLPS Chp.6
November 2 – November 8	Collecting Data Continued	PSRM Chp. 9 & Chp.10
November 9 – November 15	Univariate & Descriptive Statistics	PSRM Chp. 11 & TLPS Chp.7
November 16 – November 22	Statistical Inference & Investigating Relationships	PSRM Chp. 12 & 13
November 22 – December 2	Review Week	Review
December 3 – December 5	Class Presentations	None
December Exam Time	Final Exam	Review

***Research Paper due on December 2nd