



COURSE SYLLABUS

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODS

**PSCI 347 Section 01E
FALL 2025**

**August 25 through December 12, 2025
Monday/Wednesday/Friday 12-12.50pm
Location: Ferguson Social Science Building, Room 150**

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Barbara Laubenthal

Office Location: SS-162

Phone number: (903) 886-5317

Office Hours: Wednesday 2-4pm and by appointment. Please send me an email if you would like to make an appointment.

Email: Barbara.Laubenthal@etamu.edu

The best way to contact me is via email.

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Textbook: Political Science Research Methods. Authors: Johnson, Janet, HT Reynolds, and Jason Mycoff 2019. Publisher: CQ Press Edition: 9th. (Ebook or hard copy). Available through the ETAMU bookstore or other (online) stores.

Additional readings (as mentioned in the semester plan) are available as open education resources or will be provided via D2L.

Course Description

This course focuses on the empirical research methodology employed in Political Science. Topics covered include the scientific method, research design, sampling, and qualitative and quantitative methods.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will understand the nature of scientific inquiry in the field of political science.
2. Students will design an analytic research project in political science.

3. Students will learn about different types of quantitative and qualitative methods and practice their use.

Assignments

1. Two short response papers (method review) (300-500 words): 20% (10% per response paper)

- Each student will be asked to write a method review/research design review for two journal articles. They should focus on summarizing and evaluating the methodological choices made by the author/the quality of the research design.
- Guiding questions:
 - Briefly summarize the author(s)' main descriptive or causal claim. (What is their theoretical argument and/or their core hypothesis?)
 - How are cases or observations selected?
 - What methods are used?
 - Does the methodology fit the research topic and the research question? How strong is the methodological part of the article?
 - Outline the research design in a diagram.
 - Does the article have an internal logic, do the various parts build on each other?
 - Do the methods and approaches fit the research question?
 - Does the author provide the necessary explanations for the research design (example: is the hypothesis and connection to the theory/theories clear? Why were these cases chosen, what sampling method was used and why).

2. Research paper (1500 words): 30%

- Students will draft a description of a research project, including a review of literature, a research question, and a methods plan.

3. Short survey: 20%

Students will design and administer a short survey on a topic of their choice to fellow students.

4. Two tests: 20% (10% per test).

- Two tests with multiple choice and true/false questions. Tests will be taken in class. A review sheet will be available for each test one week before the test.

5. Participation: 10%

- Participation grade profiles: A (98) volunteers frequently and is always well-prepared
B (89) volunteers sometimes and is often prepared
C (79) does not usually volunteer but is moderately prepared
D (69) does not volunteer and is generally poorly prepared
F (0) is consistently unprepared.

Attendance

Class attendance is required. You have three unexcused absences; each unexcused absence after the third will result in a two-point deduction in your participation grade. Excused absences require documentation.

Communication with the class

I will sometimes send you information through the D2L email. Please make sure to regularly check the email address that is connected to your D2L account.

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material or have other issues that you would like to discuss, please contact me. I am here to help!

GRADING

Grading scale

A 90-100%; B 80-89.9%; C 70-79.9%; D 60-69.9%; F Below 60%

Schedule and work plan

Week and	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment
Week 1	8/25-8/31	Introduction Doing research: the foundations	<i>No reading</i>	
Week 2	9/1–9/7 9/1 <i>Labor day, no class</i>	History and Development of the Empirical Study of Politics	Johnson et al. Chapter 2	
Week 3	9/8–9/14	The Scientific Method	Franco et al Chapter 3 Introduction to Political Science Research Methods + Polimetrics – An Open Education Resource Textbook + Workbook	
Week 4	9/15–9/21	Research Design	Johnson et al. chapter 6	
Week 5	9/22–9/28	Research topic and research question	Johnson et al. chapter 3	Test 1
Week 6	9/29-10/5	Literature Review	Johnson et al. chapter 3	Response paper 1 due
Week 7	10/6–10/12	Theories and hypotheses	Johnson et al. chapter 4	
Week 8	10/13–10/19	Sampling	Johnson et al. chapter 5	
Week 9	10/20–10/26	Surveys	Clipperton et al. chapter 6	

			https://nulib-oer.github.io/empirical-methods-polisci/surveys.html	
Week 10	10/27–11/2	Qualitative methods and quantitative methods (I)	Johnson et al. chapter 7-10.	
Week 11	11/3–11/9	Qualitative methods and quantitative methods (II)	Johnson et al. chapter 7-10.	Test 2
Week 12	11/10–11/16	Research workshop	No reading	Response paper 2 due
Week 13	11/17–11/23	The Comparative method	Gray et al chapter 15	
Week 14	11/24–11/30 <i>Thanksgiving, 11/28 no class.</i>	Ethics in research	Bos chapter 3 https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/20.500.12657/42569/1/2020_Book_ResearchEthicsForStudentsInThe.pdf	
Week 15	12/1–12/7	Presentation of survey results		Survey presentation Research paper due
Finals week				Test 3

TECHNOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Activities in this course will require the use of D2L Brightspace.
- Minimal Technology Required.
- PLEASE USE CHROME OR FIREFOX BROWSERS WITH D2L—DO NOT USE Microsoft EDGE as this tends to have bugs when using this learning platform
- Minimal Technical Skills Needed: Using the learning management system, using Microsoft Word and uploading digital images.
- LMS:
 - All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University 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

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.

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>

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS AND NOTIFICATIONS

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced.

ETAMU Attendance

For more information about the University 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>

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.

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](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

If you have any doubt as to what may constitute academic dishonesty, please consult with me prior to submitting any assignments.

AI Policy in this course

East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, Chatbots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

For this course, students are prohibited from using AI to complete all assignments. Any use will result in a 0 for said assignment.

ETAMU Counseling Center Statement

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel.

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

East Texas A&M

Velma K. Waters Library- Room 162

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

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

<https://www.tamuc.edu/campuslife/campuservices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/default.aspx>

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University 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.