

DePauw University  
POL 318: Political Science Research & Writing  
Spring 2016

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## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

The primary purposes of this course is to introduce students to empirical political research and how to communicate such research. Students who complete this course will be prepared to design and carry out a substantial, original empirical research project, consistent with the Political Science Department's general expectations for writing in the senior seminar.

Course objectives:

- Learn to generate and identify good research questions;
- Learn to use research questions to organize research and writing;
- Learn to identify, develop, and critique theoretical claims related to that research question;
- Learn to research existing scholarly literature;
- Learn to carry out analytic/theoretical literature reviews;
- Learn to identify research designs that might be useful in evaluating theoretical claims;
- Learn to identify informational requirements of those research designs;
- Learn to carry out research
- Learn to use a statistical software program to describe and make sense of information;
- Learn to use information to evaluate theoretical claims;
- Learn to recognize limits of their own research and analysis;
- Learn to effectively communicate research.

There are several tasks that we will complete to realize the purpose of this course. We will begin by examining basic concepts used in empirical political research, such as theories, hypotheses, concepts, dependent and independent variables, validity, reliability, and sampling. Next, we examine the processes and purposes of literature reviews in empirical political science. Then, we will discuss how to model an argument, and developing a research design to analyze the argument.

After this general discussion of the research process, this course will introduce students to several basic tools and techniques of empirical research: such as descriptive statistics, probability, comparison of means, measures of association, correlation, and regression. Students will learn how to perform these techniques using a statistical software program. By the end of the course, students should be able to read, understand, and evaluate much of the empirical political research published in political science journals.

\*\*\*\*During the semester you should be constantly researching and revising your work. We will spend a great deal of class time working on the writing, but you have to complete research on your own if you want to use this time productively. Do not expect to walk into my office to talk about your research WITHOUT doing any research. My conversation will always begin with asking what you have done to prepare for the meeting. This is VERY important. You will find yourself playing catch up if you do not research and revise your paper regularly. Please note that a revision is not an edit. When I read your paper, I will make comments. Simply replying to those comments is an edit. A revision involves looking at the comments, fixing those issues, fixing other similar issues (since I do not note everything that is wrong with your paper), and then revising your paper to make sure it flows and completes the requirements of the assignment. Many class sessions will devote some time to peer editing your papers although it is not always written in the daily schedule.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS & READINGS**

- (1) Baglione, Lisa A. 2016. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Washington, D.C.; CQ Press.
- (2) Pollock, Phillip H. 2011. *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. (SPSS on syllabus)

Additional readings may be posted on Moodle

Some suggestions regarding new vs. used vs. rentals:

- It is **absolutely imperative** to purchase the correct (4<sup>th</sup>) edition of the SPSS companion. Lab exercises from previous editions will not be accepted. For this course, there is no point in purchasing any other edition.

## **SPSS SOFTWARE**

We will use SPSS for this course and the DPU helpdesk will be able to install SPSS on your computers. The university charges a fee to install it, but some computers have trouble installing the statistical package. All of you will be able to use the version installed on the DePauw computers and will need to have a flash drive or some resource for saving your data files. I will not be able to help you install the program on your computer or navigate the technical issues relative to your personal computer.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES**

### 1. Participation 10%

Attendance and participation (see rubric on Moodle)

### 2. Lab Exercises & Quizzes 20%

Students will complete several lab assignments over the course of the semester. Students may be given unannounced quizzes over the semester to make sure they are keeping up with the readings. You may use handwritten notes to complete the quizzes. You will not be able to use typed or photocopied notes because I cannot authenticate their source... Please do not ask. You may bring your lap tops for any scheduled lab day, but they are not to be open during any other class session.

### 3. Writing Assignments 50%

You will have several writing assignments.

- 5% Assignment 1 Develop a research question
- 15% Assignment 2 Develop literature review for your research question
- 15% Assignment 3 Develop research design to investigate your research question
- 15% Assignment 4 Analyze your research question using data from the SPSS textbook

All writing assignments are due on Moodle before the next day. For example, Writing assignment 1 is due the evening of February 9 by 11:59 and 59 seconds. See Moodle for details on individual writing assignments.

#### 4. Final Research Paper 20%

In this course you will develop an empirical political research project. The components of this project include the writing assignments that you complete over the semester.

### WRITING ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Assignment 1 Develop a research question due 2/9

Assignment 2 Develop literature review for your research question due 2/25

Assignment 3 Develop research design to investigate your research question due 3/29

Assignment 4 Analyze your research question using data from the SPSS textbook 4/28

**Completed Project due May 17**

### LATE WORK

The material in this course is strongly cumulative. Therefore, it is essential that students keep up with all readings and all coursework. Any assignment can be turned in early if you believe there will be a conflict with the due date.

- **Late lab assignments will not be accepted and cannot be “made up.” You will earn a 0 if it is not in on time.**
- **Missed in-class exercises and quizzes cannot be “made up.”**
- **Late assignments will be penalized IF accepted at all. For example, if a paper is due Tuesday and you turn it in on Wednesday, the highest grade the paper can earn will be an A-. The same policy applies to weekend. A paper due on Friday, but turned in on Monday is 3 days late.**

### TECHNOLOGY POLICY

You are **only permitted to use personal laptops in this course when you are asked to bring them to class**. During this time, you should not be engaged in checking email, reading for other classes, checking social media, or any other activity unrelated to this course. Any misuse of your laptop during the class session will result in being asked to close your laptop. I will determine if you are misusing the computer and will ask you to

close it. If you absolutely need your computer to take notes in class, please discuss this with me the first day of class.

**\*Special Note**

Although we are working with data, please recognize that the most important skill is your ability to present the data. Your tables should be neat and all of your work must indicate your ability to present the information to anyone reading your work.

**Course Schedule (which may be revised)**

- 2/2 Introduction to Course: Review Syllabus, Moodle Page
- 2/4 Research Questions  
Read: Baglione Chapters 1-2
- 2/9 Writing Assignment 1 due February 9 (Writing Assignment 1)**  
**Bring possible research questions to class**
- 2/11 Away at a meeting  
Read: Baglione Chapter 3  
Investigate your research question and begin an annotated bibliography.
- 2/16 Political Science visitor Professor Khalilah Brown-Dean
- 2/18 Literature Review  
Read: Baglione Chapter 4
- 2/20 Lab  
You will learn to use SPSS and review the codebook to see how the data fits with your research questions. If you plan to put SPSS on your laptop, please have it already installed on your computer.
- 2/23 Workshop literature review  
Please bring a copy of your literature review to share with colleagues
- 2/25 Literature Review due
- 3/1 Thesis, Model, and Hypotheses  
Read: Baglione Chapter 5 and 6
- 3/3 Research Design  
Read: Baglione Chapter 7

3/8 Lab

SPSS Chapters 1 and 2

Make sure you read the chapters and complete the tasks *before* you get to class. Thinking about the direction of your research design, what is plausible given the available data?

3/10 Workshop paper

3/15 Work on drafts in class

3/17 Away at meeting...

3/22-3/24 Spring Break

3/29 Research design due

3/31 Qualitative Analysis

Read: Baglione p155-163

4/5 Transforming Variables

Lab:SPSS Chapter 3

4/7 SPSS Lab Chapter 4 \*turn in for grade

Make sure you completed the work throughout the chapter before you get to class. You will not have time to catch up.

4/12 Lab

SPSS: Chapter 5

4/14 Share paper with classmate and provide feedback

4/19 Lab

SPSS: Chapter 6

4/21 Lab

SPSS: Chapter 7

4/26 Correlation & Bivariate Regression

Lab: SPSS, Chapter 8

4/28 Multiple Regression

Lab: SPSS, Chapter 9

5/3 Analysis Paper due

**\*\*\*\*\*Analysis Paper due 5/3. Please note this due date because it is close to the end of the semester. Your analysis paper will consist of putting together some subsets of the labs you have been doing throughout the semester. You are welcome to turn this paper in before May 3, but May 3 is the last possible date to turn in this paper. The final paper is due Tuesday May 17.**

5/5-5/12 Workshop Final Comprehensive Paper