

**LIBRARY RESEARCH METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

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**GOALS** This two-course sequence is an introduction to the rationale and application of basic methods of political research. While broad in scope, PLS 210-211 *do not* presume previous acquaintance with either traditional or empirical research methods. Rather, they are intended to precede more advanced courses in the department.

**PLS 210** focuses on library research -- the information sources of government and politics. You will learn the search strategies appropriate to the specialized finding aids and reference sources of the major subfields of the discipline. *The basic goal is to make you an expert user of any American academic library.* Topics include:

- *finding aids* (indexes and catalogs) for books, articles in edited books, periodicals, government documents, and compilations of statistics, biographies, and news chronologies
- location, content, and use of basic political *reference works*, including: specialized encyclopedias, dictionaries, almanacs, and directories, as well as primary and secondary sources for legal research
- creation of an *annotated bibliography* using APSA style guidelines for manuscript writing

**PLS 211** introduces quantitative methods -- the principles, applications, and limitations of statistical and computer analyses of political phenomena. Skills taught include hypothesis formulation, data collection, computer programming, and statistical analyses. *The basic goal is to learn to describe, explain, and predict the behavior of significant political actors and events.* Topics include:

- hypothesis formulation
- data definition, measurement, and collection
- data storage, transformation, and analysis
- interpretation of findings -- research and policy implications
- research report writing

As an introduction to political research, PLS 210-211 will allow you to better meet the demands of your present educational and future employment careers. After completing this sequence, you will be better able to think, speak, and write with insight and precision -- i.e., to ask meaningful questions; to pose relevant, testable hypotheses; to locate and evaluate relevant published research; to collect appropriate empirical evidence; to use computer and statistical tools to analyze the data; to draw warranted conclusions; and to report your results effectively in oral and written form to your friends, colleagues, instructors, and employers.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS (PLS 210)**

- Lowery, Roger C. and Sue A. Cody. 1993. *Library Research Guide to Political Science: With an Introduction to Legal Research for Undergraduates.* Ann Arbor, MI: Pierian Press.
- Plano, Jack C. and Milton Greenberg. 1993. *The American Political Dictionary.* 9th ed. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace.

**MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION (PLS 210)**

Your course grade will be calculated from three sources totalling 350 points. A series of quizzes keyed to assigned readings will total 100 points. A 150 point final will be presented as a library search exercise. Numerous in- and out-of-class, ungraded exercises will allow you to acquire and polish your search skills. A

100 point annotated bibliography, on an instructor-approved topic of your choice, will allow you to apply your library search and documentation skills.

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Early in the semester, you will learn to do word-processing on the University's VAX 6000 computer system in order to compile and print out working-draft copies of your annotated bibliography. Learning to log-on, create files, edit them, and print out hard copies of your work will give you the basic computer literacy that will be greatly extended in the data-analysis assignments of PLS 211.

Grading will be on a 10 point scale -- i.e., 90-100% = A, 80-89% = B, etc. Scores below 60% are failing. *Any form of cheating on any exam or plagiarism on the annotated bibliography will result in an automatic grade of F for the course, no matter what the quality of all other course work.*

*You should budget a minimum of 6 hours per week for preparing your class assignments in this course.*

**ATTENDANCE (PLS 210)****1. Normal Circumstances that Commonly Occur**

In the real (job) world, unforeseen circumstances (alarm clock doesn't go off, car trouble) are accepted as legitimate excuses for *short and infrequent* absences from work. Similarly, in this course *two unpenalized absences* (equivalent to one week's attendance) will be allowed. *For each additional absence, your final course grade will be reduced by one letter grade.*

If late to class, it is your responsibility to ensure (*after class*) that you are recorded present on the class attendance roll. *Should you fail to ask to be marked present, you will have used up one of any remaining unpenalized absences.* Your being late to class is not a problem as long as this happens infrequently. Just be sure to see me *immediately after class* to make sure that you are counted on the roll.

Once in class, it is expected that you will stay until dismissed or unless some foreseen or unforeseen emergency occurs. In the former case, please advise me ahead of class; in the latter case, leave class as quietly as possible and inform me as soon as possible of the circumstances that led to your unexpected departure. *Otherwise, you will be marked absent for that day.*

*No makeup quizzes or exams will be given for absences occurring under normal circumstances. Such an absence will result in a grade of zero for that quiz or exam.*

**2. Extraordinary Cases that Rarely Occur**

In the real (job) world, frequent or lengthy absences are excused only in cases of serious illness or injury, death in the immediate family, or other catastrophic events. Similarly, in this course, *truly extraordinary circumstances that rarely occur* may warrant special arrangements that will be made on a case-by-case basis. *The following circumstances do not constitute an excused absence: job conflicts or any of the normal reasons for missing class listed in part 1 that may occur after you have used up your two unpenalized absences. All requests for excused absences must be submitted in writing with supporting documentation.*

**3. Rationale for Attendance Policy**

In-state tuition pays for about *one-fifth* of the total cost of your academic program at UNC-W (*over \$6000 per year*). *The taxpayers of North Carolina pay the difference, which amounts to about \$5000 per year.* These taxpayers have a right to expect that you and I do not waste their money. That means that both you and I should come to class and be prepared not only to have fun but also prepared to work hard at our respective jobs.

**THESE ARE THE TERMS OF THIS COURSE.**

**YOUR CONTINUED ENROLLMENT WILL SIGNIFY THAT YOU UNDERSTAND AND ACCEPT THEM.**

**I WISH YOU SUCCESS AND WILL PROVIDE EVERY REASONABLE EFFORT TO ASSIST YOU.**