

# Introduction to Political Science Research Methods

Fall 2010  
PLS 201-001

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## I. CLASS MEETINGS (LH 110)

M, W, F: 10:00-10:50 a.m.

## II. OFFICE HOURS

Mon & Wed, 3:30-5:00 p.m. or by appointment

## III. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Can we study politics scientifically? What do we mean by scientific inquiry of political behavior and institution? How can we as students of politics distinguish ourselves from those of journalism or history? Is it plausible and desirable for you to be able to call yourself a political scientist? What tools and skill-sets are available for better understanding of policymaking processes? How can we use basic statistics to test hypotheses? Ultimately, can we predict, for example, who is going to be the next president of the United States? If yes, how so? If not, why not?

This course will introduce the basic principles of research design in political science and research tools and skills for analyzing politics rigorously. I like to make it clear that this is NOT a statistics course; although we will learn some basic level of statistics, this is a class about learning how to conduct political science research. We will explore a wide range of political science methods, including research question, literature review, research design, qualitative approach, and basic statistical analysis. The ultimate goal of this course is to have students to be equipped with various research approaches and perspectives so that they know how to write a good research paper. Using the tools of scientific inquiry, you can improve your ability to address and answer research questions on your own. At the end of the day, I want you to tell what is “not even wrong” in study of politics.

## IV. COURSE MATERIALS AND TEXTBOOK

**Lecture power points** are to be posted on blackboard

**Suggested Textbook:** *Political Science Research Methods*. (Washington D.C.: CQ Press) By Janet B. Johnson, H. T. Reynolds and Jason D. Mycoff (denoted as **JRD**)

## V. COURE REQUIREMENTS

- ❑ **First Midterm (Sep 24) = 25%**
- ❑ **Second Midterm (Nov 3) = 25%**
- ❑ **Take-home Final Exam (Due Dec 6) = 20%**

Two in-class exams and one take-home final exam (NOT cumulative). Also, note that make up exams will ONLY be allowed for the case of excused absences as notified in advance or emergencies evidenced by relevant and signed documents. Without notification or evidence, make up exams are only possible facing severe penalty.

- ❑ **Literature Review with Citation/Reference Assignment (Due Dec 1) = 15%**

Students are required to write and submit a **4-page, double-spaced** literature review addressing one designated research question or a question of your choosing, with a proper citation and reference required/included. Details on this assignment will be explained in class. Late submission will only receive 5%.

- ❑ **Randall Library Search Assignment (Due In Class of Sep 29, W) = 5%**

One-page assignment sheet will be provided at the end of the first special session on Sep 27, M. Students should fill and submit it in the beginning of the second session on Sep 29, W. Late submission will only receive 1%.

- ❑ **Attendance = 10%**

I **WILL** do attendance check for every class and **APPLY** it into your final grade. If necessary, all documentation regarding attendance issue should be submitted in advance.

- For the whole course, letter grades will be assigned according to the following point totals:

A=92.5 or more	A-=89.5-92.49	
B+=87.5-89.49	B=82.5-87.49	B-=79.5-82.49
C+=77.5-79.49	C=69.5-77.49	
D=59.5-69.49	F= less than 59.5	

- According to *University of North Carolina Bulletin* and the *Student Handbook*, you are advised that: (1) Do not commit plagiarism. (2) Do not receive unauthorized assistance during the exams. (3) Violations of these rules in any assignment may be subject to a minimum penalty of failing grade for the assignment and could result in a grade of "F" for the course.

## VI. CLASS SCHEDULE

### ● Week 1 (Aug 18-20)                      **Course Introduction**

- “Scientific inquiry of politics” (JRD Ch 1)
  - Deductive vs. inductive approach
  - Empirical vs. normative question

### ● Wee 2 (Aug 23-27)                      **Studying Politics Scientifically I**

- U.S. Presidential Politics and Prediction, Explanation, Test (JRD Ch 2)
  - Exploring presidential election, success, and power
  - Economic voting theory, psychological approach, and rational-choice perspective

### ● Week 3 (Aug 30- Sep 3)                      **Studying Politics Scientifically II**

**September 6 (M)                      Labor Day Holiday**

### ● Week 4 (Sep 8-10)                      **Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables**

- Dependent vs. independent variables (JRD Ch 3)
  - Characteristics of “good” Hypotheses

### ● Week 5 (Sep 13-17)                      **Measurement and Research Design I**

- Operational definition of concepts and variables (JRD Ch 4 & 5)
  - Level of measurement and research process
- Experimentation and spurious correlations (JRD Ch 5)
  - Time-series analysis, cross-sectional analysis, panel study
  - “Prisoners’ Dilemma” Game

### ● Week 6 (Sep 20-22)                      **Research Design II**

**Sep 24 (F)                      Midterm I**

● **Week 7 (Sep 27- Oct 1)**      **Special Session: the Randall Library**

- ❑ By Ms. Sue Cody (Randall Library)
  - Session I on Sep 27 (M) and Session II on Sep 29 (W)
  - Library Search Assignment ***Due in class of Sep 29 (W)***
- ❑ Document Analysis and Literature Review I (JRD Ch 6 & 9)
  - Types of written records and content analysis

● **Week 8 (Oct 4 - 8)**      **Fall Break and Poli-sci Day**

● **Week 9 (Oct 11-15)**      **Literature Review II and Sampling**

- ❑ Citation and Reference
  - American Political Science Association (APSA) Style Manual
- ❑ “Statistical inference” (JRD Ch 7)
  - Population parameters vs. sample statistic
  - Probability sample vs. non-probability sample
  - Sampling distribution

● **Week 10 (Oct 18 – Oct 22)**      **Survey/Interviewing and Basic Statistics I**

- ❑ Descriptive Statistics (JDR Ch 11)
  - Central tendency and dispersion
  - Statistical inference and hypothesis testing

● **Week 11 (Oct 25 – Nov 1)**      **Basic Statistics II**

- Standard Normal Distribution and Z-Score (JDR Ch 11)

**Nov 3 (W)**

**Midterm II**

● **Week 12 (Nov 5)**      **Statistical Independence**

● **Week 13 (Nov 8 – Nov 12)**      **Chi-square Test (JDR Ch 12)**

● **Week 14 (Nov 15 – Nov 19) Population-mean Test (JDR Ch 12)**

● **Week 15 (Nov 22) Difference of Means Test (JDR Ch 12)**

**November 24-26 Thanksgiving Holiday**

● **Week 16 (Nov 29) Difference-of-Means Test (JDR Ch 12)**

**Dec 1 (W) Literature Review Assignment (Due 5 pm)**

**Dec 6 (M) Take-home Final Exam (Due 5 pm)**