

Introduction to Political Science Research Methods

Fall 2009
PLS 201-001

Dr. Jungkun Seo
Department of Public and International Affairs
University of North Carolina at Wilmington

Office: Leutze Hall 272
Office Phone: (910)962-2287
E-mail: seoj@uncw.edu

I. CLASS MEETINGS (LH 110)

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

II. OFFICE HOURS

Mon & Wed, 3:30-5 p.m. or By Appointment (seoj@uncw.edu)

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? Do you want yourself to be called a political scientist? What tools and skill-sets are available out there for a better understanding of policymaking processes? Which approach is more appropriate, qualitative or quantitative? Ultimately, can we as political scientists 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 you to the basic principles of research design in political science and to research tools and skills for analyzing politics rigorously. This is not a statistics class; it is a class about how political scientists conduct their research. Thus, we will explore a wide range of political science methods, including research design, literature review, qualitative approach, and basic statistical analysis. When the semester is over, I expect you to be equipped with various research approaches, both qualitative and quantitative. Using the tools of scientific inquiry, you can improve your ability to pose 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 READING

Required Reading (Textbook)

Janet B. Johnson, H. T. Reynolds and Jason D. Mycoff. 2008. (JRD)
Political Science Research Methods. 6th edition. (Washington D.C.: CQ Press)

Suggested Reading

- ❑ James M. Carlson and Mark S. Hyde. 2003. *Doing Empirical Political Research* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company)
- ❑ Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press)
- ❑ David S. Moore and William I. Notz. 2006. *Statistics: Concepts and Controversies*, 6th edition. (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company)

V. COURE REQUIREMENTS

- ❑ **First Midterm (Sep 21st) = 20 %**
- ❑ **Second Midterm (Nov 2nd) = 25 %**
- ❑ **Final Exam (Dec 7th) = 30 %**

Make up exams will only be given for excused absences and emergencies evidenced by relevant documents.

- ❑ **Literature Review Assignment (due Dec 2nd: no exception) = 10 %**

Students are required to write and submit a 3-page, double-spaced literature review of party polarization, diversionary war, or your choice. Details on this assignment will be explained in class.

- ❑ **Library Search Assignment (due in class of Sep 25th: no exception) = 5 %**

One-page assignment will be given, following the special lecture on the Randall Library.

- ❑ **Attendance = 10 %**

I will do attendance check and apply it into your final grade. If necessary, all documentation should be submitted to me in a timely manner.

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.
- ❑ Students with diagnosed disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services (962-7555). If you require accommodation for test-taking please make sure I have the referral letter no less than three days before the test.
- ❑ I reserve the right to randomly assign articles that all students will be responsible for reading and knowing for the exams. I will make you aware of when I put these articles in the course documents folder on SeaPort.

VI. CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Aug 19-21) Course Introduction: “Scientific Inquiry of Politics”

- ❑ “How do we know what is true?”
 - deductive vs. inductive approach
 - “dual-representation theory and the US Senate delegations”
 - empirical vs. normative question
 - *JRD Chapter 1*

Wee 2 (Aug 24-28) Studying (US Presidential) Politics Scientifically

- ❑ prediction, explanation, and test
 - presidential election, success, and power
 - economic voting theory, psychological approach, and rational-choice theory
 - *JRD Chapter 2*

Week 3 (Aug 31- Sep 2) Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables

- ❑ dependent vs. independent variables(voting decisions by lawmakers)
 - voting decisions by members of Congress
 - characteristics of “good” Hypotheses
 - *JRD Chapter 3*

September 4 (F) No Class (instructor going to the APSA Conference)

September 7 (M) Labor Day Holiday

Week 4 (Sep 9-11) Measurement and Research Design

- ☐ operational definition of concepts and variables
 - legislators' ideological scores
 - level of measurement and research process
 - *JRD Chapter 4 and 5*

Week 5 (Sep 14-18) Research Design

- ☐ experimentation and spurious correlations
 - the effects of negative campaigns ads
 - time-series analysis, cross-sectional analysis, panel study
 - prisoners' dilemma game
 - *JRD Chapter 5*

Sep 21 (M) Midterm Exam #1 (Chapters 1 through 5)

Week 6 (Sep 23--25) Special Session: the Randall Library

- ☐ special sessions by Ms. Beth Kaylor (Randall Library): Sep 23 (W) & 25 (F)
 - library search assignment **due in class of Sep 25 (F)**

Week 7 (Sep 28-Oct 2) Literature Review and Document Analysis

- ☐ reviewing and writing literature
 - party polarization, diversionary war, etc
 - types of written records and content analysis
 - *JRD Chapter 6 & 9*

Week 8 (Oct 5-9) Fall Break and Poli-sci Day

Week 9 (Oct 12-16) Sampling

☐ statistical inference

- population parameters vs. sample statistic
- probability sample vs. non-probability sample
- sampling distribution
- *JRD Chapter 7*

Week 10 (Oct 19-23) Survey and Interviewing/ Statistics: First Steps

- central tendency and dispersion
- statistical inference and hypothesis testing
- *JRD Chapter 10 and 11*

Week 11 (Oct 26-30) Statistics: First Steps (II)

- Confidence Intervals
- Standard Normal Distribution and Z-Score
- *JRD Chapter 11*

November 2 (M) Midterm Exam #2 (Chapters 6, 7 and 9, 10, 11)

Week 12 (Nov 4-6) Cross-tabulation Analysis & Statistical Independence

Week 13 (Nov 9-13) Statistical Significance & Chi-square Test

- *JRD Chapter 12 & practice question set #1*

Week 14 (Nov 16-20) Chi-square Test & Population-mean Test

Week 15 (Nov 23) Population-mean Test

- *JRD Chapter 12 & practice question set #2*

November 25-27	Thanksgiving Holiday
Week 16 (Nov 30)	T-test: Difference-of-Means Test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>JRD Chapter 12 & practice question set #3</i>
Dec 2 (W)	Last Class Day and Final Exam Review
<i>Dec 7 (M)</i>	<i>Final Exam (Chapter 12) (8 am – 11 am)</i>