

# Introduction to Political Science Research Methods

Spring 2010  
PLS 201-001

Instructor: 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 at UNCW.EDU

## 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 design, literature review, qualitative approach, and basic statistical analysis. When the semester is over, I expect you to be equipped with various research approaches and perspectives. 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 not only what is right from wrong, but also what is “not even wrong” in study of politics.

## IV. COURSE MATERIALS AND TEXTBOOK

Lecture power points are to be posted after class on the **Seaport Course Homepage**

- Click on “files” on Course Tools column

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 (Feb 8) = 25 %**
- Second Midterm (Mar 22) = 25 %**
- Three Practice Question Set (Due May 3) = 15%**
- Final Exam (May 3) = 15%**

Three in-class exams are 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.

- Randall Library Search Assignment (Due Feb 17, Wed: no exception) = 10 %**

**One-page assignment** will be provided in the first special session on Feb 15 (M), which should be filled and submitted on the second session on Feb 17 (W).

- Attendance = 10 %**

I WILL do attendance check 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.
- 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: Jan 6 (M) – 8 (F)**

**Course Introduction**

- ☐ “Scientific inquiry of politics” & “How do we know what is true?” (JRD Ch 1)
  - Deductive vs. inductive approach & empirical vs. normative question
  - “Dual-representation theory and the US Senate delegations”

**Week 2: Jan 11 (M), 13 (W), 15 (F)**

**Studying the Presidency Scientifically**

- ☐ Prediction, explanation, and test (JRD Ch 2)
  - Presidential election, success, and power
  - Economic voting theory, psychological & rational choice approach

**Jan 18 (M)**

**Martin Luther King State Holiday**

**Week 3: Jan 20 (W), 22 (F)**

**Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables**

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

**Week 4: Jan 25 (M), 27 (W), 29 (F)**

**Measurement/Research Design I**

- ☐ Operational definition of concepts and variables (JRD Ch 4 & 5)
  - Level of measurement and research process

**Week 5: Feb 1 (M), 3 (W), 5 (F)**

**Research Design II**

- ☐ experimentation and spurious correlations (JRD Ch 5)
  - Effects of negative campaigns ads
  - Time-series analysis, cross-sectional analysis, panel study
  - Prisoners’ dilemma game

**Feb 8 (M)**

**First Midterm Exam (25%) (Chapters 1 through 5)**

**Week 6: Feb 10 (W), 12 (F)      Literature Review and Document Analysis**

- Reviewing and writing literature (JRD Ch 6 & 9)
  - Literature on party polarization and diversionary war
  - Types of written records and content analysis

**Week 7: Feb 15 (M), 17 (W)      Special Sessions: Randall Library Research**

- By Ms. Beth Kaylor (Randall Library)
  - Session I on Feb 15 (M) and Session II on Feb 17 (W)
  - Library Assignment *due in class of Feb 17 (W)*

**Week 8: Feb 19 (F), 22 (M), 24 (W), 26 (F)      Sampling/Survey/Interviewing**

- “Statistical inference”
  - Population parameters vs. sample statistic
  - Probability sample vs. non-probability sample
  - Sampling distribution
  - JRD Ch 7 & 10

**Week 9: Mar 1 (M), 3 (W), 5 (F)      Basic Statistics I**

- Central tendency and dispersion
- Statistical inference and hypothesis testing
- JRD Ch 11

**Week 10: Mar 8 (M), 10 (W), 12 (F)      Spring Break!!!**

**Week 11: Mar 15 (M), 17 (W), 19 (F)      Basic Statistics II**

- Confidence Intervals
- Standard Normal Distribution and Z-Score
- JRD Ch 11

**Mar 22 (M)      Second Midterm Exam (Chapters 6, 7 and 9, 10, 11)**

**Week 12: Mar 24 (W) 26 (F)      Cross-tab analysis/statistical independence**

- *JRD Ch 12*

**Week 13: Mar 29 (M) 31 (W)      Chi-square test I**

- *JRD Ch 12*

**April 2 (F)      Good Friday State Holiday**

**Week 14: Apr 5 (M) 7 (W) 9(F)      Chi-square test II/population-mean test I**

- *Practice Question Set #1*
- *JRD Ch 12*

**Week 15: Apr 12 (M) 14 (W) 16 (F)      Population-mean test II**

- *Practice Question Set #2*
- *JRD Ch 12*

**Week 16: Apr 19 (M) 21 (W) 23 (F)      T-test (difference-of-means test)**

- *Practice Question Set #3*
- *JRD Ch 12*

**April 26 (M)      Last Day of Classes**

***May 3 (M)      Final Exams (Ch 12) (8 am – 11 am)  
& Three Practice Question Set Due***