Spring 2011
PLS 201-001/002
Introduction to Political Science Research Methods

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I. CLASS MEETINGS (Randall Library Auditorium: RLA)
M & W: 3:30-4:45 P.m.

II. OFFICE HOURS
T & TH: 10:00 am -12:00 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? 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 fundamental principles of research design in political science, along with research tools and skills for rigorous analyses of political institutions and behavior. Indeed, we will explore together some basic mathematical approaches to hypotheses test. Do note, however, that this is not a statistics course. A wide range of political science methods, including research question, literature review, research design, qualitative approach, and basic statistical analyses will be examined. The ultimate goal of this course is to have students to be equipped with various political science research perspectives so that they should be ready to write a good research paper later in their course taking at UNCW.

There is one suggested (NOT required) textbook for this course; Janet B. Johnson, H. T. Reynolds and Jason D. Mycoff, ***Political Science Research Methods****, 6th edition* (Washington D.C.: CQ Press) (**JRM**). If you want to refer to other books, my recommendation is; 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).

- Lecture power point slides AFTER each class are to be posted on blackboard.

IV. COURE REQUIREMENTS

- ***First Midterm (Feb 21, M) = 20%***
- ***Second Midterm (Mar 30, W) = 25%***
- ***Three Homework Assignments (Due May 6, Final Exam Class) = 15%***
- ***Final Exam (May 6, F, 3-6 pm) = 20%***

  There will be two midterms and a non-cumulative final exam (all in class). 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 prior notification or written evidence, make up exams could be administered only for 10 % credit.

- ***Randall Library Search Assignment (Due In Class of Feb 16, W) = 10%***

  One-page assignment sheet will be distributed at the end of the first special session on Feb 14, M. Students should fill and submit it in the beginning of the second session on Feb 16, W. Late submission will only receive 3%.

- ***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* B*ulletin* 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.

VI. CLASS SCHEDULE

- **Week 1 (Jan 12)** **Course Introduction**

  - ❑ "Scientific inquiry of politics"
    - Deductive vs. inductive approach/ empirical vs. normative question

Jan 17 (M) Martin Luther King Holiday

- **Week 2 (Jan 19)** **Studying Politics Scientifically I**

  - ❑ The American presidency through a lens of prediction, explanation, and test
    - Exploring presidential election, success, and power
    - Economic voting, psychological approach, and rational-choice perspective

- **Week 3 (Jan 24-26)** **Studying Politics Scientifically II**

- **Week 4 (Jan 31, Feb 2)** **Hypotheses, Variables, and Measurement**

  - ❑ Dependent vs. independent variables
    - Characteristics of "good" Hypotheses
  - ❑ Operational definition of concepts and variables
    - Level of measurement and research process

- **Week 5 (Feb 7-9)** **Research Design**

  - ❑ Experimentation and spurious correlations
  - ❑ Time-series analysis, cross-sectional analysis, panel study, case study, and formal theory
  - ❑ "Prisoners' Dilemma" Game

- **Week 6 (Feb 14-16)** **Special Session**

  - ❑ Session I on Feb 14 (M) and Session II on Feb 16 (W) By Ms. Sue Cody
    - **Library Search Assignment (10%):** ***Due in class of Feb 16 (W)***

- ***Feb 21 (M)*** ***<u>First Midterm (20%)</u>***

- **Week 7 (Feb 23)** **Document Analysis and Literature Review**

  - ❑ Document Analysis
    - Types of written records and content analysis

- ❑ Literature Review: why and how?
- ❑ Citation: American Political Science Association (APSA) Style Manual

- **Week 8 (Feb 28, Mar 2)** **Sampling and Statistical Inference**

  - ❑ "Statistical inference"
    - Population parameters vs. sample statistic
  - ❑ Confidence level and Sampling distribution
    - 95% confidence interval
    - Probability sample vs. non-probability sample

- **Week 9 (Mar 7-9)** **Descriptive Statistics**

  - ❑ Descriptive Statistics
    - Central tendency and dispersion
    - Statistical inference and hypothesis testing

- **Week 10 (Mar 14-16)** **Spring Break!!!**

- **Week 11 (Mar 21-23)** **Standard Normal Distribution**

  - ❑ Standard Normal Distribution and Z-Score

- **Week 12 (Mar 28)** **Z-score applications**

- ***March 30 (W)*** ***Second Midterm (25%)***

- **Week 13 (Apr 4-6)** **Cross-tab analyses & statistical independence**
- **Week 14 (Apr 11-13)** **Chi-square analysis**
- **Week 15 (Apr 18-20)** **Population-mean Test**
- **Week 16 (Apr 25-27)** **Difference of Means Test (t-test)**

- ***May 6 (F), 3-6 pm*** ***Homework Assignments (15%) Due***
  In class of Final Exam (20%)