

Political Analysis
PSC 200
Wednesday 4:15PM - 7:00PM
Sample Syllabus

Instructor: Drew Seib

Office: Faner 3161

Phone: 618-453-3191

Email: seibjd@siu.edu

Office Hours: M 9:00-11:00, T 10:00-12:00, Th 2:00-4:00, and by appointment

1 Course Description

While your other courses examine the results of research, this class will take you through the process of learning how political scientist reached those results. The class incorporates techniques for analyzing political questions logically and systematically, and introduces basic research design, methodological, and library usage skills appropriate to the political science discipline. While this course does place an emphasis on quantitative methods, we take some time to discuss qualitative methods and how qualitative and quantitative methods can complement each other.

2 Course Objectives

- To learn how to ask a good research question.
- To learn how to design a plan for answering research questions.
- To learn how to write a literature review.
- To become familiar with quantitative and qualitative methods.
- To understand how quantitative and qualitative methods can complement each other.

3 Class Requirements and Grading

3.1 Exams

There are three exams in this class. Since this class only meets once a week for three hours, each exam will take place in the first hour of the class. The exams will consists of identification, short answer, and statistical analysis questions. The first exam will cover all material up to week 5. The second exam will cover material from week 6 to week 10. The

third exam will cover material from week 11 through the end of the course. Each exam is worth 10% of your grade for a total of 30%.

3.2 Problem Sets

Throughout the semester, you will be required to do a series of problems sets. These are designed to ensure that you understand the topics and can apply what you have read and learned in class. Problems sets are marked on the course schedule and are due the day they appear on the schedule. All problem sets can be found in the Pollock SPSS Companion book. Problem sets account for 30% of your grade in this class. For all work that involves SPSS, you should provide your answers along with a printout of the SPSS output. This helps to ensure that you did the assignment and didn't just copy someone else's answers. Moreover, if you are having problems with an assignment, I can look through your output to see where you were having problems and help you get to the right solution. Problem sets account for 30% of your grade in this class.

3.3 Attendance and Participation

While this course is largely lecture based, discussion is a useful way to help you connect your own ideas with the material we learn in class. As such, this requires that you come to class prepared, meaning that at a minimum you have actually put some effort into reading the assigned reading for the day. I encourage you to make an effort to understand the ideas and lessons in the readings prior to coming to class. This does not mean that I expect you to fully understand everything prior to arriving at class. However, I do expect you to come to class with questions about things that you did not understand in the readings. In addition, I would encourage you to complete the the exercises at the end the chapters in the Pollock text. Although, these will not be graded, they will help you to understand the material and we will go over them in class so that you have answers to the exercises for your own notes. Attendance an participation account for 10% of your grade in this class.

3.4 Research Paper

Instead of a comprehensive final exam, you are going to be responsible for writing a political science research paper. Unlike the problem sets and exams in the class, the research paper will require you to apply everything that you have learned in this class. In the end, you will have gone through the scientific process of producing a piece of research, just like other scholars in this field. You will be writing the paper in sections through out the semester and we will take some class time to discuss how to write each of the sections. If you have any trouble or get stuck at any point in this paper, I encourage you to see me during office hours. Below is a list of the sections and their value to your grade. You can find their due dates in the course schedule. By the time this paper is complete, it will account for 30% of your grade in this class.

Paper proposal: Your first task is to propose a research question (not a topic), to be approved by the instructor. Your proposal should be half a page to one page single-spaced and layout the question of your paper, why you picked this question, and identify your dependent and independent variables. Your paper proposal will account for 2% of your grade in this class.

Literature Review: For your literature review you should provide a 2-3 page synthesis of the literature related to your research question. This means that you should not summarize individual works (this is not an annotated bibliography), but rather describe the state of the what has already been written on your topic. What are the major findings related to your topic? Do scholars generally agree on how your independent variable affects your dependent variable? Even if there is little work on your topic, what does the work out there suggest about the relationship between your independent and dependent variable? At a minimum, you should cite six peer reviewed articles or books. This portion of the paper accounts for 6% of your grade in this class.

Hypotheses: In this section, you should lay out your expectations for the relationship between your independent and dependent variable. Use the Lave and March problem set as a basis for writing this section. This portion of the paper accounts for 3% of your grade in this class.

Description of Variables: In this section, your first task is to describe how your independent and dependent variables are measured. You should then describe other variables you want to control for. Your description should include the mean, standard deviation, and range for each variable. It should also describe the labels for each of the values of the variable. This portion of the paper accounts for 4% of your grade in this class.

Analysis: In this section of the paper you will actually analyze the data. You should begin by stating how you will analyze your data and why it is the appropriate way to analyze your data. You should present a table of your results and discuss the results in the table. At a minimum you should address the hypotheses that you developed earlier in your paper. This portion of the paper accounts for 5% of your grade in this class.

Final Draft of Paper: The final draft of your paper should piece each of these sections together. You will want to use section headers to identify each section in the paper. In addition you should correct any problems that were identified in earlier drafts of individual sections. The final draft is due on the day your final exam is scheduled. It is worth 10% of your grade in this class.

3.5 Grades

Exams: 10% each for a total of 30%

Problem Sets: 30%

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Paper: 30%

3.6 Grading Scale

- A 90-100%
- B 80-89%
- C 70-79%
- D 60-69%
- F 59 and below

4 Class Policies

4.1 Attendance

You are expected to attend every class. If you must miss a class you may receive an excused absence by contacting the instructor in advance. I reserve the right to ask for documentation of your absence and decide what constitutes an excused absence. It is your responsibility to figure out what you missed on any days that you are absent. I strongly encourage you to exchange contact information with one of your classmates.

4.2 Late Work

Late assignments will not be accepted in this class, except as university policy applies. I encourage you to plan ahead and start assignments early.

4.3 Classroom Decorum

In order for this to be a productive learning environment, we need to keep basic classroom decorum. Classroom behavior that disrupts class will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Talking while others are speaking.
- Crossing the civility line.
- Texting, surfing the internet, or answering a call on a cell phone (please put your phone on silent or vibrate prior to arriving to class). If you must take a call, you should let the instructor know prior to class.

- Reading the newspaper.
- Working on assignments for another class.
- Leaving early or arriving late.

4.4 Make-Up Exams

There are no make-up exams, except as university policy applies. If you miss an exam, you will receive a zero for that exam. If you are late to an exam, you must take it in the time remaining. If you must miss an exam, you should contact the professor prior to class.

4.5 Academic Dishonesty and Cheating

I will not tolerate any cheating or academic dishonesty. Anyone engaging in cheating or academic dishonesty will receive an F in the course and be reported to the Dean of Liberal Arts for further disciplinary action outlined in the University Code of Student Conduct. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with university policies and codes. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty or cheating, you should contact the instructor prior to submitting any work.

4.6 Problems and Emergencies

If a problem or emergency arises that prevents you from coming to class, taking a test, or turning in an assignment, you should contact the instructor as soon as possible. The best way to contact me is via email (seibjd@siu.edu). Students contacting me prior to missing an assignment will receive greater leniency. Examples of excuses that do not qualify as problems and emergencies include, but are not limited to, the following: oversleeping, taking too much medication, being incarcerated, or having a cold. You are welcome to clarify what I consider to be an acceptable excuse to me at any point in the semester.

4.7 Contacting the Instructor

I am happy to help you in any way that I can. If you have any questions please feel free to send me an email and I will reply back as soon as possible. If the question requires a lengthy explanation, please stop by my office during office hours or make an appointment. Correspondence should be professional. If you send an email to the instructor, it should:

- respectfully address the instructor;
- identify the student's name and class;
- use proper grammar, including capital letters, complete sentences, and periods;
- include information on where the instructor can best reply with an answer to your question.

5 Required Texts and Reading

5.1 Assigned Readings

Pollock, Phillip H. III. 2008. *The Essentials of Political Analysis, 3rd Edition*. Washington, D.C: CQ Press.

Pollock, Phillip H. III. 2005. *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*. Washington, D.C: CQ Press.

Other reading are available through Blackboard

6 Course Schedule

Week 1

- Introduction to the Course
- The Scientific Study of Politics
- How to ask a good research question
- Overview of qualitative and quantitative research methods

Week 2

- Defining and Measuring Concepts
- Read: Pollock Chapter 2

Week 3

- Conducting a Literature Review
- Read: Sample Literature Review (Blackboard)
- Problem Set: Pollock Companion Chapter 2 Exercises
- Paper Proposal Due

Week 4

- An Introduction to SPSS
- Read: Pollock Companion Chapters 1 and 3

Week 5

- Measuring and Describing Variables
- Read: Pollock Chapter 3
- Problem Set: Pollock Companion Chapter 1 and 3 Exercises

Week 6*Exam 1*

Explanations, Framing Hypothesis, and Making Comparisons

Read: Pollock Chapter 4

Read: Lave and March (Blackboard)

Week 7

Case Selection for Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Read: Geering (Blackboard)

Problem Set: Lave and March modeling assignment for your research question

Week 8

Qualitative Analysis

Read: Mahoney and Terrie (Blackboard)

Read: Rathburn (Blackboard)

Literature Review Due

Week 9

Research design and controlling for Rival Causes

Read: Pollock Chapter 5

Week 10

Making Statistical Inferences

Read: Pollock Chapter 6

Problem Set: Pollock Companion Chapter 5 Exercises

Hypothesis Section Due

Week 11*Exam 2*

Significance Tests and Measures of Association

Read: Pollock Chapter 7

Description of Variables Due

Week 12

OLS-Use and Interpretation

Read: Pollock Chapter 8

Problem Set: Pollock Companion Chapters 6 and 7 Exercises

Week 13

Logistic Regression-Use and Interpretation

Read: Pollock Chapter 9

Problem Set: Pollock Companion Chapter 8 Exercises

Week 14

Open Lab

This time is set aside to work on the analysis section of your papers. It is also a good opportunity to ask questions about parts of your analysis that you are having problems with or need more clarification.

Problem Set: Pollock Companion Chapter 10 Exercises

Analysis Section due to my office or mailbox by 3:00 PM Friday.

Week 15*Exam 3*

Using Multiple Research Methods

Read: Collier and Elman (Blackboard)

Read: Fearon and Laiton (Blackboard)

Final Draft of Paper Due in my office by (insert date scheduled for final exam)