

POLS 2000: Introduction to Political Science
Fall 2020
Online Instruction

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Office Hours: By appointment. Meetings will take place via Zoom.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the systematic study of politics. We will learn about how political scientists ask and go about answering research questions. The primary objectives of this class are that you will become a more intelligent consumer of political science and have a grounding in how to conduct original research. We will cover topics like the scientific method, measuring concepts, data collection, designing and implementing surveys, and how to ask & refine research questions.

Course Project

Our class will work collaboratively to conduct multiple types of original research into the 2020 election. One project focuses will center on the collection of original data about selected state legislative races in Georgia and other states. You will use some of these data to understand how to measure and describe political concepts. Our second project centers on the design, fielding, and analysis of an original political survey related to the 2020 election.

Structure

This is an entirely online course that will structured primarily around asynchronous delivery. This is a fancy term meaning that most of the course material will be posted on eLC and you will have some control over when you engage with them. There will still be regular deadlines, however you will have some control over when you complete them. There will also be regular opportunities to meet with me and the members of your class using Zoom. The class is divided into six short units, each of which will consist of readings, recorded lectures, some form of individual or group reflection, and an open-book/open-note quiz.

Office Hours and Help

I will strive to make sure that the course is understandable and that you do not feel lost. If you have any questions about the course content, structure, or assignments please do not hesitate to contact me. This is especially important because of our content delivery. Finally, each week I will offer an optional live chat section through Zoom.

Course Text

Our required text is available at the campus bookstore. If you choose to purchase it from another location, make sure you obtain the correct edition. The required text is:

- *The Craft of Political Research (10th Edition)*. Philip Shively. ISBN: 1138284378 Other required readings can be accessed using eLearning Commons (eLC).

Grading

The following are each of the areas in which points are assigned in the class.

State Legislative Election Project (30%): This project entails you collecting data about a state legislative election in Georgia and another state. You will study this election as a case study to generate an in-depth understanding of a key question in political science. This project is broken into multiple component assignments and you can consult the project assignment sheet for more detail and deadlines.

Election Survey Project (35%): For this project, you will work on your own and with other students in the class to create, distribute, and analyze an original survey about the 2020 election. This project is also broken up into multiple individual assignments. You can find more detail about the assignment and deadlines on the project assignment sheet.

Module Quizzes (30%): Each content module contains a quiz that you are required to complete. Quizzes are open-book and open-note. They are also timed. Each quiz is worth 5% of your grade and your lowest quiz grade will not be counted in your final grade calculation. Quizzes are available on eLC.

Participation Activities (10%): There are regular activities that you are required to complete for the course. The nature of the activity will depend on the module. For example, you may have to complete a peer review, fill out a worksheet, and/or post a reaction on a discussion board. These activities are generally graded on a pass/fail basis.

Letter Grades

Your letter grade in the class reflects the percentage of the total number of available points you obtain in the class. The distribution I use is:

Grade	Percent
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	60-69
F	<60

Grade Change

Any appeals of a grade must be made at least 24-hours after I hand back the assignment or test. If you would like to appeal a grade, prior to meeting with me you must submit a written statement detailing why you think that your grade should be changed. I will then meet with you to discuss your statement.

If I have made a mistake in totaling your grade in the class (e.g., I did not add up all of the points correctly) then you do not need to write the statement. Talk to me after class or during office hours and I will fix the mistake.

If you are reading this, then send me an email with an image of Uga. I will make a collage to use as our class eLC background.

Class Administration

eLearning

Our course is administered through eLC. You will find all of our course materials through this website. You will also submit assignments using dropboxes on eLC. Finally, my primary means of communication with the class will be through announcements posted in eLC. Makes sure you make a habit of checking the site regularly for updates related to the class. We will also be using Flipgrid, which is described in our introductory video.

Qualtrics

You will use the software platform Qualtrics to field your survey. Qualtrics allows you to easily write survey questions, collect responses, and analyze your results. Best yet, it is free to use for all UGA undergraduates. If you have not already done so for another class, you need to submit a request to EITS to activate your account. You can find more information here: https://eits.uga.edu/web_and_applications/qualtrics/

Deadlines

All assignments are due *at the beginning of class* on the due date. If an assignment is turned in after the beginning of class on the due date 15% will be deducted from your assignment grade. An additional 15% will be deducted for each day the assignment is late. For example, if you turn in an assignment one full day after it was due, it will be deducted 30% (15% for not being turned in at the start of class on the day it was due and another 15% for being turned in one day later). Assignments turned in more than 3 days late will receive an F.

Academic Honesty

The University of Georgia has an academic honesty policy. Academic integrity is required for a positive learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an F in the course. Additionally, I will forward your name to the University. You can read the policies in their entirety here: https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/Definitions_for_Purposes_of_this_Policy/

Disability Resource Center

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

Withdrawal Policy

Undergraduate students can only withdraw from four courses and receive a withdrawal-passing (WP) grade while enrolled at the University. Students can drop any class without penalty during the drop/add period at the beginning of every semester. Dropped courses during the drop/add period do not qualify as withdrawals. Instructors have the ability to withdraw a student from the class due to excessive absences. Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here: <http://www.reg.uga.edu/policies/withdrawals>

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).

If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.

Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Class Schedule & Structure

The class is divided into six modules. Each module will open at 8am on the first date listed for the date range attached to the module. Modules will remain open during the semester, but you must complete the required reading quiz by the date listed in the syllabus. Beyond these requirements, you have the freedom to watch the lectures, read, and complete assignments when you want to. Each module contains a quiz that is designed to test your basic understanding of the materials covered in the module. This quiz will open near the end of the module and you will have a window of time in which you are required to complete the quiz.

Readings listed as “Craft” refer to your textbook for the course. All of the other listed readings are available as .PDFs on eLC. I expect you complete the readings in the order they are listed in the syllabus. As you will see in eLC, each module also contains additional information the links specific readings to the recorded lectures and other required activities.

Introduction (8/20)

This session is an introduction to the course.

Tasks: Review course syllabus; Watch introductory videos; Join class Flipgrid group; Post introduction to Flipgrid page.

Readings: None

Quiz Deadline: 8/21 by 5pm. This is an ungraded syllabus quiz.

Module 1 – Science & Causality (8/24-9/4)

This module serves as an introduction to scientific research and the study of politics as a science. Readings focus on how to think systematically about scientific concepts and the challenges of treating politics as a science.

Readings:

- Scientific study of politics: *Craft* (Ch. 1); Malici and Smith (Ch. 1); Smith 2002; Lupia 2000
- Thinking causally: *Craft* (Ch. 2, pgs. 14-22); Kellstedt and Whitten (pgs. 3-19)

Quiz Deadline: Module 1 quiz opens on 9/3 at 8am; Quiz must be completed by 9/8 by 8am.

Module 2 – The Research Process (9/8-9/18)

This module focuses on how to begin conducting political science research. We will focus on how to identify research topics, conducting literature reviews, and how to write research hypotheses.

Readings:

- Research topics: *Craft* (Ch. 2, 22-end); Putman 1995
- Literature Review: Johnson & Reynolds (81-101)
- Hypotheses: Johnson and Reynolds (102-124)

Quiz Deadline: Module 2 quiz opens on 9/17 at 8am; Quiz must be completed by 9/21 by 8am.

Work Week 1 – Legislative Race Data Collection (9/21 – 9/25)

This is a work week in which you have a break from new course material. You will use this time to finish collecting data about the legislative elections and begin your assignment writeup.

Module 3 – Measurement (9/28-10/2)

This short module covers how to measure concepts. We will cover topics like how to translate broad concepts into concrete measures and the various qualities of measured variables.

Readings:

- Accuracy: *Craft* (Ch. 4)
- Precision: *Craft* (Ch. 5)

Quiz Deadline: Module 3 quiz opens on 10/1 at 8am; Quiz must be completed by 10/5 by 8am.

Midterm Week – Measurement Paper (10/5-10/9)

For this week you are required to write your measurement report for the state legislative election project.

Module 4 – Survey Questions (10/12-10/16)

The module covers how to write survey question to measure key concepts. **Note:** There is no reading quiz this week.

Readings:

- Johnson & Reynolds (327-341); Asher (Ch. 3)

Due: Group Survey questionnaire draft (10/16 by 5pm).

Module 5 – Research Design (10/19-10/30)

This module returns to the key topic of how to research causal relationships between variables. In doing so, we will cover two general approaches to causal analysis: randomized experiments and observational studies. The observational studies topic will also cover survey sampling.

Readings:

- Causal analysis: *Craft* (Ch. 6)
- Randomized experiments: McDermott 2002; Butler and Broockman 2011
- Observational Studies: Kellstedt and Whitten (78-88); Dancey & Sheagley (2013);
- Survey sampling *Craft* (Ch. 7; 101-108; 112-115).

Quiz Deadline: Module 5 quiz opens 10/29 at 8am; Quiz must be completed by 11/2 at 8am.

Module 6 – Descriptive Statistics (11/2-11/13)

This module focuses on how to summarize and describe variables numerically and using visualizations (i.e., graphs). We will also cover how to measure and describe the relationship *between* variables.

Readings:

- Summarizing variables: Jaisingh (Chs. 1 & 2)
- Crosstabs: *Craft* (Ch. 8, 117-119; Ch. 9, 138-142)
- Controlled Comparisons: TBD

Quiz Deadline: Module 6 quiz opens 11/12 at 8am; Quiz must be completed by 11/16 at 8am.

Module 7 – Advanced Relationships (11/16-11/24)

This is our final module and will introduce you to the concepts of correlation and regression.

Readings:

- *Craft* (Ch. 8, 119-135)

Quiz Deadline: Module 7 quiz opens 11/25 at 8am and closes 11/30 at 5pm (note the extended deadline).

Work Week 2 – Election Survey (11/30-12/8)

This is a work week to give you sufficient time and instructor support to analyze the data from your election survey and to prepare your final report about the election.

Final Exam

There is no comprehensive final exam in this class. Rather, this is the deadline for your final survey analysis research report.