

POL 251: Introduction to Political Science Methods

Spring 2002: M/W 4:00-5:15 in Hume 110 (likely to be changed)

Instructor: Chris Lawrence <cnlawren@olemiss.edu>

Office: 208 Deupree Hall. Hours: M/W 2:00-3:45 or by appointment.

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Course Web Page: <http://www.lordsutch.com/pol251/>

RSVP Course Code: 3992

The purpose of this course is to train students in how to analyze political phenomena in a rigorous and scientific manner. This knowledge requires an understanding of two different components: research design and statistics. In the first component, students will learn how to discriminate between theories, pose proper research questions, construct a relevant hypothesis, make valid causal inferences, operationalize concepts, and test their hypotheses. The latter component offers the student a “statistical toolbox” to use as s/he pursues the scientific study of all things political. This component covers quantitative topics such as central tendency and dispersion, measures of association, and regression analysis. By the end of this course, the student should have mastered the basic requirements to begin conducting, comprehending, and critiquing research in political science.

Texts:

- Shively, W. Philips. 2002. *The Craft of Political Research*, 5th edition. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall. ISBN 0-13-092232-3. (Required.)
- Schacht, Steven P., with Brad Stewart. 1995. *Social Statistics: A User-Friendly Approach*. Needham Heights, Mass. Allyn and Bacon. ISBN 0-205-14004-1. (Required.)
- Scott, Gregory M., and Stephen M. Garrison. *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual*, 4th edition. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall. ISBN 0-13-040447-0. (Suggested.)

These textbooks should be available at area bookstores (if they aren't, please let me know!). You may also be able to order it from retailers on the Internet at a discount. Note that the Scott and Garrison book is *not* required, but it may be a useful reference in this and other courses.

You will also need a scientific or statistical calculator if you do not already have one. Any calculator that is at least as sophisticated as the TI-25X will be sufficient; if you have any questions about this requirement, feel free to ask me. (You do *not* need any computer software or a graphing calculator.)

Assignments and Grading: For the purposes of this syllabus, the “assigned materials” include any readings specifically assigned on the syllabus and all subjects and materials covered by the instructor during class.

Your grade in this course will be based on the following elements:

Quizzes	10%
Homework	20%
Research Design	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%

Research Design: The research design will be a 7–10 page paper (double-spaced, with one-inch margins and a font in a similar size to this one) in which you present the framework for a larger research project in political science. The topic is up to you, and can come from the fields of American politics, comparative politics, or international relations; however, it must be approved by me in advance. Topics such as “The History of the Christian Coalition” or the like are unacceptable; such topics are political *history*, not

political *science*. After selecting an appropriate topic, you must: (1) explain the relevance of the topic; (2) conduct a literature review critiquing previous literature on the topic; (3) place the topic in some theoretical framework; (4) propose an hypothesis (or hypotheses) and explain how this hypothesis (or these hypotheses) can be tested; and (5) describe the data or information you would use to test this hypothesis (these hypotheses) and how this data would be obtained.

Policies: Attendance at class is required, per university policy. Please discuss any planned absences with me at least two weeks in advance. Regular attendance is essential for understanding the material; if you don't come to class, you will probably be hurting your grade.

The instructor reserves the right to add assignments, such as quizzes, at his own discretion.

Any form of **cheating or plagiarism**, or any other form of academic misconduct as defined by the current edition of the *M Book*, will be punished. The minimum consequence of any academic misconduct will be a failing grade on the assignment in question; more egregious (or repeated) violations may lead to disciplinary action through University procedures. Students are strongly advised to consult the instructor if they believe they may be in danger of violating this policy.

Students will be expected to demonstrate their oral communication skills through classroom discussion. Oral communication competency will be evaluated in terms of appropriate interactive skills, adequate oral delivery, the ability to construct a clear and logical message, and the ability to communicate in the context of the discipline.

This syllabus is subject to revision by the instructor.

Important Dates:

Midterm Exam: Wednesday, March 6.

Research Design Due: Wednesday, April 4.

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 8 at 4 p.m.

This class will not meet, and no office hours will be held, on the following days:

Midwest conference: April 24.

University holidays: January 21 (Martin Luther King holiday); March 11, 13 (Spring Break).

Your instructor reserves the right to cancel class on additional days with one session's advance notice. He may also adjust the syllabus as needed in light of the speed of the progress of the class; however, the exam dates will not change barring unforeseen circumstances.

A complete list of chapters and topics to be covered will be circulated on Wednesday, January 9.