

POLITICAL SCIENCE 30 Summer 2018 (Draft 7.4.18)

POLITICAL INQUIRY

Lectures Tuesday WLH 2111 5-7:30 Th first week only

Lab Thursday CSB 115 (starts week 2)

Final Assignment due by Saturday, August 5, 3 PM

Note: minor changes may be made to this syllabus throughout the quarter (especially the first two weeks). You are responsible for any changes mentioned in class, even if you are absent. Changes will also be posted.

Professor Peter Galderisi

Office: 449 Social Sciences Building

Office Hours: Thursday 3-4:30

Graders:

Hernan Picatto

Yile Zhang

INTRODUCTION

This class will introduce you to the fundamentals of political (actually any) research. We will first deal with the aspects of scientific research--how one can ask questions that can be logically answered--and the use of the 'scientific method' in the study of political events. We will review several common methods of acquiring the necessary data for our answers, discuss the benefits of and the problems with each, and review the basics of standard research design. Throughout the quarter, you will be introduced to the use of elementary statistics as tools sometimes necessary for the analysis of political data. As we cover statistics, you will apply what you have learned by carrying out analyses, using SPSS software, of a data set or sets that I will provide (more on this later in class).

This class will be more interactive than my regular quarter offering. We will only meet for lectures and basic instructions on Tuesdays. We will meet in lab every Thursday, **starting week 2**. To accommodate the class size, you will be divided into two groups for the labs, one meeting 5-6, the other 6:15-7:15.

REQUIREMENTS:

I. READINGS:

A. Two books are available for purchase through the campus bookstore:

Galderisi Understanding Political Science Statistics: Of Observations and Expectations
Galderisi SPSS Manual to Accompany UPSS

You will be able to download the SPSS data files directly from the class TritonEd (TED.ucsd.edu) course page. Full instructions will be given.

B. Several readings may also be required and are or will be listed later in this syllabus. They can be found through the course page. Again, full instructions will be given.

We **STRONGLY** suggest reading the material both **before and after** the appropriate class or section.

We **STRONGLY** suggest going through the sample questions at the end of each chapter. Answers to all odd number questions can be found at the end of the text.

C. Several videos, mainly dealing with using SPSS, will be posted. They can be opened by clicking onto the provided link on TritonEd.

II. SOFTWARE

You will use SPSS in an on-campus computer laboratory and you may also acquire it for a compatible computer of your own using a campus license. Instructions on acquiring that license will be given within a day or so.

III. ATTENDANCE AND EFFORT:

A. Attendance is MANDATORY!

Class lectures will proceed in a logical, progressive fashion (much more so than in any other class). One missed lecture (there are only 4 more after the first introductory day) can lead to a total lack of comprehension over the next series of classes. Lab sections will be conducted in a manner intended to maximize your understanding and complete your class project. Attendance in lab will be taken.

B. Hard work and perseverance.

Remember, research methodology and especially statistics are like a foreign language. Without constant exposure, practice, and repetition, languages are hard to master, especially in five (or fewer) weeks. The same is true here. Conclusion? Expect to work hard at the beginning of this class, harder in the middle, and harder still at the end. Payoff? You may actually understand this stuff, and we may all maintain what little sanity we have left (well, that ship has sailed for me, but as the immortal albeit still living Jimmy Buffett wrote: "If we all weren't crazy, we'd all go insane").

C. Weekly Preparation guides will be posted covering the major points you need to learn. If you follow them you will get more out of this class.

Speaking of phones: The only reason why you need to ever look at them is to use the calculator function or, for some of you, take notes. Anyone using the phone for personal (other than emergency) reasons will be asked to leave. It distracts me, other students, and is becoming increasingly and annoyingly prevalent. Millennials!

IV. ASSIGNMENTS: To be discussed in class and posted, along with weekly readings.

A NOTE ON GRADING:

Any request for a grade review must be made to your grader in writing (typed) with a full explanation of why you are requesting the review. Note that any review may result in a higher or lower grade (or no change).

FINAL GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

Understanding the difficulty of this class for many, the grade “curve,” especially at the low, passing end, is rather generous. A few A+ grades may also be given to the top students in class.

Also—do NOT wait until the last minute to start your work. Just like the man (woman, your view of a divine order) upstairs, we can only help those who help themselves.

INCOMPLETES

The university grants us precious little discretion here. To qualify for an incomplete, I must demonstrate that you have been doing passable work (which may be difficult if we only have a final assignment) and you must demonstrate a reason for requesting an incomplete that conforms to university guidelines (documented illness, death or emergency in the family, unexpected military deployment, etc.). Again, the university makes this decision—not me nor the graders.

“Going on an early vacation” is not a university sanctioned excuse.

WEB PAGE:

All information, announcements, lab prep materials, readings, World Cup scores, etc. will be posted on the class TritonEd (formerly TED, formerly Blackboard) page.

A NOTE ON THE USE OF STATISTICS:

I will not attempt in this class to indoctrinate you into believing that only statistically-based research is valid research. Obviously, such an undertaking would be methodologically ludicrous. One begins one's research by asking theoretically important questions. Sometimes, and only sometimes, statistics can help us to answer those questions. Statistics are merely a summary tool. They allow us to test whether what we expect is confirmed by what we observe (thus, the subtitle of the text). They help us with our research, but they are not the driving force behind it. Learning statistics yields some valuable results. First, you will have a greater choice of research questions to ask. You will no longer need to shy away from at least some questions that require statistically-based answers. Second, you will be better able to evaluate others' scholarly research. We sometimes tend to accept others' statistical findings as gospel, or reject them as trivial when, in fact, we make no attempt to try to understand what the researcher tried to accomplish (hear that, politicians). Ignorance may be bliss, it may even help in politics, but it is not academically virtuous. Third, you will acquire the foundation needed to do advanced work in statistical methods if you so choose. I will be more concerned with teaching you the basic how and why of statistical generalization, than in making sure that we cover every statistic available. Last, you will acquire or refine a set of skills sets deemed valuable in the real world that can actually make you more employable. What a concept!

SCHEDULE:

Week 1 Lecture:

A. The Language of Scientific Research: Facts, Concepts, Hypotheses, Theories

Text, Chapter 1

Martin Kelly (2015), "Predicting the presidential election with baseball."

<https://www.thoughtco.com/predicting-the-presidential-election-with-baseball-104619>

For your review: Complete odd numbered exercises, Text, Chapter 1 (answers in back)

Make sure you understand and can respond to the following:

- What is the difference between a unit of analysis/fact and a property? Between a property and a category of that property?
- E.G. If our analysis required us to measure the age of citizens legally eligible to vote in California:

Units of analysis: eligible voters in California

Total units: all eligible voters in California Property: Age

Category: dependent on how we aggregate information:

Any individual year (46 or 60 or 72)

If combined into groups--e.g., "65 and older" or, if defined elsewhere, "older"

Note: "citizens over 65" is neither a property nor a category. It represents several units of analysis (a complete universe if we are only concerned about these individuals or a subset of all citizens within a certain jurisdiction).

- The nature/format of a hypothesis:

Falsifiability (potential):

- properties are clearly defined explicit comparison
- explicit direction of relationship
- not a value judgment that is "true" based on faith

Not immediately verifiable: *general* statement--not true/false on limited investigation

- safety "test"--do you have two properties (also called variables once we get to the point of measurement) =one implied "independent" (potential cause) and one implied "dependent" (outcome)?
- If not, then you probably have a (immediately verifiable) statement -- t/f on limited investigation.
- What role does a "theory" or "theory sketch" play in hypothesis testing?
 - Theories explain WHY two properties SHOULD BE related the way our hypothesis suggests. Without a useful theory or theory sketch, we may just have an accidental or coincidental correlation. For example, is there any theoretical reason to believe that presidential victories should be influenced (as specified in the Kelly essay) by which league wins the World Series?

B. Variables, Measurement, and Beginning Statistics (we will only start this)

Text, Chapter 2, 3, 4 (skip section on the IQV)

McDonald, Michael P., Samuel L. Popkin. 2001. "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter."
American Political Science Review. 95:4 (December) 963-74.

www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS234/articles/mcdonald.pdf

For your review: Complete odd numbered exercises, Text, Chapters 2-4 (answers in back)

Measurement Issues:

- Generally, what is an internal validity measurement problem?
- What is the 'Bradley effect'? Is it an internal or external validity problem?
- Should we now call this a "Trump" effect?
- What is the 'Chicago effect'?
- With surveys, what are the potential problems with question wording and ordering?
- Why might Political Scientists have overestimated the decline in turnout from 1960 on (see Popkin)?
- What is the difference between the VAP and VEP?
- Why is the difference relevant over the time period in the essay?

Levels of Measurement and Frequency Distributions:

- The different assumptions of nominal/ordinal/interval data--examples of each
- The importance of standardization when looking at frequency distributions
- How nominal data can be aggregated into interval data
- How categorization can influence our interpretation of frequency distributions

Central tendency:

- Differences among the mode, median and mean--which type(s) of data can each summarize?
- Skewness and what can be inferred from the difference between median and mean values.
- Why the mean of state figures in the text is not necessarily the same as national results.

Dispersion/variation (if we get to it):

- The meaning of the variation ratio and when it reaches 0, when it reaches 1
- *Do not worry about the IQV—skip this except for your own enlightenment*
- The Range
- The MAD
- Variance and Standard Deviation

Week 2 Lab: Data Sets and Familiarization of SPSS

- The 2016 American National Election Study (ANES) and the 2016 Comparative Congressional Election Study (CCES)—methodology, concepts, formats, weights
- Opening up an SPSS data file (see 'Trial Run' instructions--TritonEd)
- Running a simple SPSS instruction set
- Full instructions in Lab **July 12** Instructions (TritonEd)