

POL 30: Political Inquiry

Fall, 2021

Last update: September 29, 2021

Lecture: MW 12:00pm - 12:50pm.

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Welcome to POLI 30!

This course provides an introduction to the tools of political inquiry, including research design, causal inference, and basic statistical methods. Understanding these topics is essential for assessing the validity of others' studies and for conducting your own research. It is also fun. Really!

Course Objectives

After completing this course, students will:

1. Have a clear understanding of research design, hypothesis testing, and theory building. With this understanding, you will be prepared to evaluate political science research, understand the methods used by scholars, and assess the strengths and weaknesses of research techniques. In addition, you will be able to apply this knowledge to other scientific disciplines.
2. You will be capable and critical consumers of qualitative and quantitative research, in politics and other areas of scientific inquiry.
3. You will acquire the basic applied skills needed to conduct your own research projects.

Practically, this means that by the end of this course, you will be equipped to critically analyze others' work, including their sample framework, measurement, design, methods, and analysis. You will be able to create and explain a variety of statistics, both graphical and numerical. You will be able to analyze relationships between several types of variables. You will also learn how to use a statistical software program, Stata. These skills will be useful in reading, understanding, and conducting research in political science, as well as in many other disciplines.

Reasons to take this course

1. To understand research in political science, you need to understand research design and methods. Open any one of the top political science journals where the best scholarship is published and you will see that almost every article uses the basic techniques that we will learn in this class.
2. The skills you will learn in this course are valuable. Many of you will go on to run government agencies, administer nonprofit organizations, or have your own businesses or law practices. The logic of political research will provide a powerful set of tools for understanding problems and making decisions. If you master the material in this course, you will have an additional set of resources for your future career. If you do not, you will always be at the mercy of those that are trained in these methods. In addition, we are in the midst of an explosion in data availability, which has been accompanied a dramatic growth in demand for skilled professionals capable of analyzing such data. If you like this course, you may wish to consider our advanced classes and certificates.
3. The material is challenging, but many students enjoy it. Research methodology can be abused, but it has an underlying logic and objectivity that many students find appealing. In addition, the basic analysis skills you learn in this class will empower you to ask and answer innumerable questions about the world.
4. And of course, the best reason to take this course: you have to.

Preparation

Whatever your background, you can do this if you are willing to work at it. This course is heavy on intuition and logic, and only occasionally requires basic math.

Study Methods

You should stay on top of the material and not leave anything until the last minute. The material covered in this course is inherently cumulative. If you do not keep up, you will quickly find yourself too far behind to catch up. Hence you should not expect to be able to blow off this class until the week before the final.

A great deal of your grade comes from the homework assignments. Take them very seriously and start them as soon as they are assigned.

Every student can earn any grade they want in this course. The teaching staff are absolutely committed to supporting your success and will work with you to achieve your goals. We encourage you to reach out to us with any questions or issues.

Evaluation

- Final Exam - 30%

There will be a cumulative final exam per the Schedule of Classes. It will be worth 30 percent of your grade.

- Homework - 60%

There will be four homework assignments, worth a total of 60 percent of your grade. Homework will cover most of the core material on the final examination, but it is not just an exam preparation tool. An important component of the homework will be your conducting independent and original research, using the datasets provided in class, or even some other dataset should you so desire. Some problems will come straight from the text, others from the workbook, and others from me.

Your lowest-scoring homework will be weighted downward, so that the final formula for your homework score will be:

$$\text{HW}_{\text{Score}} = \left(\frac{15}{16} * \text{Average of Three Best Scores}\right) + \left(\frac{1}{16} * \text{Lowest Homework Scores}\right)$$

- Quizzes and Discussion - 10%

Ten percent (10%) of your grade will come from quizzes, section attendance, and other participatory assignments. I will post a quiz weekly on topics covered in lecture. I may also post discussion questions periodically. Points in this category will largely come from participation (doing the quiz, coming to section) rather than performance (whether you get it right or wrong).

- Extra Credit - Up to 5%

There may be a number of extra credit assignments worth up to 5 percentage points. One such assignment is a “Data of the Day” report. This assignment will involve finding and assessing a published representation of data. You can use a newspaper or magazine, or a research journal. You will write a summary of your observations in one page or less, and present your results to the class. More details will be provided in class and on the class Canvas website.

There may be additional extra credit available for participation in discussion boards.

Late Assignments and Exams

Late homework assignments will be marked down by 5 percent per day, and will only be accepted for one week after the original due date. Any assignment due in week 10 can only be accepted late until the beginning of finals week. After one week (or the start of finals week), late assignments will not be accepted for credit. Final examinations may not be submitted after the deadline and cannot be rescheduled; please plan your travel and other obligations accordingly. Medical and family emergencies will be accommodated with standard documentation and conditions.

Policy on Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be subject to disciplinary action consistent with University rules and regulations. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with University regulations regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

Syllabus

The syllabus and course outline is intended to provide an overview of the course. In particular, some topic order and dates may change.

Communications

We will use the university's online classroom system, at <https://canvas.ucsd.edu>. Assignments, updates, and other information will be posted there during the quarter. Please login regularly for updates. Please also post general questions there so that all students can see your question and the teaching staff's response. Any issues or questions that you wish to raise privately should be sent to a member of the teaching staff via email or raised in office hours as appropriate. Per university policy, limit your use of online class resources to appropriate academic activities.

The instructor and Teaching Assistants will all offer office hours once per week. To maximize accessibility, each member of the teaching staff will hold office hours on a different day of the week, and you may attend office hours of any teaching assistant, not just your own. You are also always welcome to visit Professor Desposato's office hours.

Textbooks

The following are required and may be purchased online:

- Galderisi, Peter. *Understanding Political Science Statistics*.
- Seljan, Ellen and Galderisi, Peter. *Understanding Political Science Statistics Using Stata*

There will be some supplemental readings, available via the library's reserves system. To access these, you may need to establish a virtual private network, or VPN, connection to UCSD. See Blink for details on how to set this up.

We will use iClickers in this course. You are required to acquire an iClicker device and register it at the Canvas site for this course. You should bring your iClicker device to every class. We will NOT use the REEF Wireless app in this course as there have been some reported issues with reliability and connectivity. You can find instructions on how to register your iClicker device on canvas at <https://blink.ucsd.edu/faculty/instruction/tech-guide/clickers/before-class/plan-course.html>

You may purchase required materials at the campus bookstore. You may find them at other vendors on and offline as well.

Computer Software This term we will use Stata, a statistical software program, to conduct original research as part of the class. Instructions on how to obtain Stata are available on the course Canvas website.

You may also use Stata in an on-campus computer laboratory or run it remotely under at UCSD license.

Format

This class will meet in both lecture and section. Lecture will consist of two 50-minute meetings per week, scheduled for 12:00pm-12:50pm, Monday and Wednesday. Section will consist of a 50 minute meeting with a teaching assistant in a smaller group.

Lectures will be recorded by the university's podcast system, so that you may be able to watch and listen to lectures whenever you wish. You are strongly encouraged to attend, but should you ever be unable to make it to class, you can listen to the podcast and review the lecture slides. If you do not attend, you may miss a quiz or other for-credit assignment. A link to the podcast will be on the course website. Lecture notes will also be posted on the course website. While the podcast and lecture notes are intended to help you study and make up for any class you may miss, they are not an obligation or commitment of the university or the instructor and students should always plan on attending class. Any problems caused by a failure of the podcast system will not be considered grounds to waive any requirements or due dates.

The tentative course schedule is described below:

Topic 1: Introduction, Measurement, and Describing Concepts

- **September 27**

- **Introduction**

- * Reading: None

- **September 29**

– **Political Science? Theories and Hypotheses**

- * Galderisi, Chapter 1.
- * Supplemental reading:
 - Gruber, Jonathan. Public Finance and Public Policy. Chapter 9, pages 243-246.
 - Lyall, Jason. Does Indiscriminate Violence Incite Insurgent Attacks? Evidence from Chechnya. JCR. 2009. Pages 331-333 and 336-338
 - Optional: Lodge, Milton, Patrock Stroh, and John Wahlke. 1990. “Black-Box Models of Candidate Evaluation”. *Political Behavior*. 12:1. Esp Pages 6-11
 - Optional: Revkin, Mara Redlich. 2020. “What Explains Taxation by Resource-Rich Rebels? Evidence from the Islamic State in Syria”. *Journal of Politics*. P757-758

• **October 4**

– **Concepts, Variables, and Measurement**

- * Galderisi, Chapter 2, pages 20-39.
- * McDonald, Michael P., Samuel L. Popkin. 2001. “The Myth of the Vanishing Voter.” *American Political Science Review*. 95:4 (December) 963-74. [Link to Article via JSTOR](#)
- * Optional: Stevens, Stanley. “On the Theory of Scales of Measurement.” *Science*. 7 June 1946: 677-680. [Link to Article via JSTOR](#)
- * Optional: Hill and Tausanovitch. 2009. “A Disconnect in Representation? Comparison of Trends in Congressional and Public Polarization”. see pages 1060-1061, 1064, 1067 on measuring polarization.
- * Optional: Most, Benjamin A., Harvey Starr. 1983. “Conceptualizing ‘War’: Consequences for Theory and Research.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 27:1 (March) esp pages: 137-41. [Link to Article via JSTOR](#)

• **October 6**

Homework #1 Assigned

– **Collecting Data / Surveys and Sampling**

- * Michael Kagay. “A Sample of a Sample”. *New York Times*. 11/4/1989.
- * Lynda Gledhill. “Poll on State Budget: It’s All in the Asking”. *San Francisco Chronicle*. 9/18/2003.
- * Cohn, Nate. “No One Picks Up the Phone, but Which Online Polls are the Answer?” NY Times. July 2 2019.

- **October 11**
 - **Describing Variables Numerically**

- * Galderisi, Chapter 3.
- * Galderisi, Chapter 4.

- **October 13**
 - **Describing Variables Graphically**

- * Galderisi, Chapter 2, pages 39-48.

Topic 2: Causal Inference and Research Design

- **October 18**
 - **Causality and Challenges**

- * Earl Babbie. *The Practice of Social Research*. pp. 72-77.
- * Associated Press. “How Grade Delay Affects Children”. October 7, 1997.
- * Associated Press. 1997. “Math Adds Up to College, Report Says”.
- * Mike Schleeter. “Restrictions Miss the Point”. *SF Chronicle*. 9/23/1997.
- * Reuters. “Young Drinkers More Likely to Turn Out Alcoholic”. 1/15/1998.
- * *New York Times*. “You Gotta Believe”. July 4, 1997.
- * Optional: [Woodward, James. 2016. Causation in Science. The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Science. Edited by Paul Humphreys](#)

- **October 20**
 - **Experimental Studies**

- * Butler, Daniel and David E. Broockman. 2011. ”Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators”. *American Journal of Political Science* V55:3. 463-477.
- * Optional: Cunow, et al. 2021. “Less is More: The paradox of choice in voting behavior”. *Electoral Studies*. V69. February.

- **October 25**
Homework #2 Assigned

- **Natural Experiments and Observational Studies**

- * Donald T. Campbell et al., “Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding,” *Law and Society Review*, 1968.
- * Jared Diamond, “A Natural Experiment of History,” pp. 53-66 of *Guns, Germs and Steel*, W.W. Norton and Company, 1999.

Topic 3: Measuring and Evaluating Relationships Between Variables

- **October 27**
 - **Crosstabs**
 - * Wolfinger and Rosenstone, Chapter 2 of *Who Votes?* Yale University Press, 1980, especially Tables 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6.
- **November 1**
 - **Correlation**
 - * Galderisi, Chapter 11.
- **November 3**
 - **Bivariate Regression**
 - * Galderisi, Chapter 11.
- **November 8**

Homework #3 Assigned

 - **Multivariate Regression**
 - * Galderisi, Chapter 12, pages 272-281.

Topic 4: Hypothesis Testing and Statistical Significance

- **November 10**
 - **Introduction to Inference**
- **November 15**
 - **Confidence Intervals and Significance Tests**
 - * Galderisi, Chapter 6.
- **November 17**

Homework #4 Assigned

 - **Inference for Regression**
 - * Galderisi, Chapter 7.
 - * Karol, David and Edward Miguel. 2007. “The Electoral Cost of War: Iraq Casualties and the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election”. *Journal of Politics* 69(3) 633-648.

- **Note:** Because many students travel at this time, for the November 22 and 24 lectures, we MAY use a flipped classroom. If we use this approach, videos of lectures will be available on Canvas, and we will have a zoom session during the regularly schedule lecture period to discuss the material and address any questions you have.
- **November 22**
 - **Inference for Crosstabs: The Chi Square Test**
 - * Chapter 9, P185-196.

Topic 5: The Future of Political Science

- **November 24**
 - **The Credibility Crisis in Science and How to Fix It**
 - * John P. A. Ioannidis. 2005. “Why Most Published Research Findings Are False”. PLOS.
- **November 29**
 - **New Methods for Causal Inference**
 - * Erikson, Robert S., and Titiunik, Rocio. 2015. Using regression discontinuity to uncover the personal incumbency advantage. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 10(1):101-119.
 - * Optional: Desposato, et al. 2021. “The Long-Term Impact of Mobilization and Repression on Political Trust”. *Comparative Political Studies*.
- **December 1**
 - **Review**