Political Science 30
Political Inquiry

Winter 2007: Prof. Thad Kousser, tkouss@ucsd.edu, 534-3239
Lecture: M/W noon-12:50, Center Hall 101
Office Hours: 369 Social Science Building, 9:30-11:30am Wednesdays
Final: Wednesday, March 21, 11:30am-2:30pm

Why do political scientists call themselves scientists? What can we learn about the world of politics using the tools of scientific inquiry? This course will introduce you to the basic principles of research design, and show you how they are applied to real data by real researchers in the real world to answer really important questions.

We will explore a wide range of methods, including experiments, statistical analysis of large data sets, and qualitative case studies. The readings combine textbook explanations of the methods with examples of how they are put into practice. Through a set of homework assignments, you will be asked to conduct your own analysis of a question of your choosing, using a dataset that we will provide. In order to work with the data, you will learn how to operate a statistics program (SPSS) which is used by scholars and practitioners in both the social and natural sciences. The two primary goals of the course are:

1. To provide you with analytic tools that will help you understand how political scientists do research.
2. To improve your ability to pose and answer research questions on your own.

Required Reading

These two books are available as a package at the Bookstore, and both are required. Students who have PCs – rather than Macs – can also buy these books packaged with SPSS Version 14.0 for Students, the software we will be using. If you do not want to purchase the software, or if you are a Mac user, you can use SPSS at the Solis Hall 105 Computer Lab for free.

The other reading assignments are contained in a Reader, available for purchase from AS Reserves (in the old Student Center) for $28.39. These are also required.

The course webpage, located at http://weber.ucsd.edu/~tkousser/PS30.htm, will contain information such as homework assignments, lecture slides, data, and course announcements.

Course Assignments
> 40% Four Homework Projects (10% each)
> 30% Final Exam (Wednesday, March 21st, 11:30am-2:30pm)
Sections: The course will include two weekly lectures and one discussion section. Please complete all readings and be prepared to discuss them in section each week. Students are responsible for both the information presented in class and in the readings, so please attend regularly.

Exams: There will be an in-class midterm on Monday, February 12th, as well as a final exam on Wednesday, March 21st. The final will be comprehensive, but will feature topics from the second half of the course more prominently. All exams will be closed book, and composed of short answers, identifications, true-false, math problems, and essays. Since the emphasis of statistical questions will be on understanding and interpretation, calculators will not be permitted (or needed).

Grade Changes and Extensions: All requests for grade changes must be made formally to your TA, within one week of getting back your assignment or test. Requests must be typed and double spaced, and review of a grade may result in either a higher or lower grade. Extensions on assignments and make-up exams will only be granted in cases of documented illness or family medical emergencies. Please contact your teaching assistant as soon as possible if you need to request one. We will return your assignments in a timely fashion in section, and you are responsible for picking them up in section to confirm that we did in fact receive and grade them.

Assignments: Each student will be required to turn in four homework assignments at dates to be announced. The assignments will be a combination of problems sets and portions of a research project based on the analysis of a dataset. You must select one of the provided political science data sets to work on in the first assignment, and the last assignment will consist of your 3-5 page report. The report will be graded on both substance and style. Each student must do his or her own exercises alone, subject to university regulations prohibiting plagiarism and cheating.

Reading Assignments

Part I. Exploring Causal Hypotheses

   a. No reading assigned.

   a. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, Introduction (pp. 1-5) and Chapter 2 (pp. 28-47).


5. Wednesday, January 24th. Quasi-experiments: Good Enough for Social Science.

Part II. Describing and Collecting Data

   a. Pollock, The Essentials of Political Analysis, Chapter 1 (pp. 7-25).

   a. Pollock, The Essentials of Political Analysis, Chapter 3 (pp. 51-74).
   b. Pollock, An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, Chapters 1-2 (pp. 5-23).

8. Monday, February 5th. Drawing a Sample.

Monday, February 12th. Midterm, in class.

10. Wednesday, February 14th. Surveys in the Real World
   a. Readings to be assigned and posted on the course web.

   **Part III. Testing Causal Hypotheses**


    c. Wolfinger and Rosenstone, Chapter 2 of *Who Votes?* 1980, especially Tables 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6.

14. Monday, March 5th. How Sure is Sure? Quantifying Uncertain

15. Wednesday, March 7th. Linear Regression I: Scatterplots and Re
    a. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, Chapter 7 (p

16. Monday, March 12th. Linear Regression II: Interpreting Regress
    b. Helmut Norputh “From Primary to General Election: Presidential Vote,” and “As New Hampshire Goes (in J.
    2004 and January 2005.

17. Wednesday, March 14th. Qualitative Research Design.