

Political Science 30

Political Inquiry

Winter 2007: Prof. Thad Kousser, tkousser@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

› Phillip H. Pollock, III, *The Essentials of Political Analysis, Second Edition*, CQ Press, 2005, and Phillip H. Pollock III, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, Second Edition*, CQ Press, 2005.

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 Soft 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)

- > 20% Midterm Exam (Monday, February 12th, in class)
- > 10% Section Attendance and Participation

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 problem 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

1. Monday, January 8th. Research Methods: Putting the Science in Political Science.
 - a. No reading assigned.
2. Wednesday, January 10th. The Grammar of Causal Theories.
 - a. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, Introduction (pp. 1-5) and Chapter 2 (pp. 28-47).
3. Wednesday, January 17th. The Fundamental Problem of Causal Inference.
 - a. Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, pp. 72-77.
 - b. *Associated Press*, "How Grade Delay Affects Children," October 7, 1997.
 - c. *Associated Press*, "Math Adds Up to College, Report Says."

- d. Mike Schleeter, "Restrictions Miss the Point," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 23, 1997.
 - e. *Reuters*, "Young Drinkers More Likely to Turn Out Alcoholic," January 15, 1998.
 - f. *New York Times*, "You Gotta Believe," July 4, 1997.
4. Monday, January 22nd. Experiments: Isolating a Causal Factor by Randomly Assigning It.
- a. Stanley Milgram, "Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority," *Human Relations*, 1965.
 - b. Donald R. Kinder and Shanto Iyengar, *News That Matters*, The University of Chicago Press, 1987, Chapters 2-3.
5. Wednesday, January 24th. Quasi-experiments: Good Enough for Social Science.
- a. Donald T. Campbell et al., "Connecticut Crackdown on Speeding," *Law and Society Review*, 1968.
 - b. Wilma Rule, "Women's Underrepresentation and Electoral Systems," *PS*, 1994.
 - c. Jared Diamond, "A Natural Experiment of History," pp. 53-66 of *Guns, Germs and Steel*, W.W. Norton and Company, 1999.

Part II. Describing and Collecting Data

6. Monday, January 29th. Measurement I: We Know a Good Measure When We See It.
- a. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, Chapter 1 (pp. 7-25).
 - b. Robert D. Putnam, "Tuning in, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *PS*, December 1995.
7. Wednesday, January 31st. Measurement II: Quantifying and Describing Variables.
- 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.
- a. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, Beginning of Chapter 5 (pp. 102-107).
 - b. Michael Kagay, "A Sample of a Sample," *New York Times*, Nov. 4, 1999.
 - c. Lynda Gledhill "Poll on State Budget: It's All in the Asking," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 18, 2003.
9. Wednesday, February 7th. Monday, October 31st. Drawing a Good Sample.
- a. Jim Rutenberg, "Report Says Problems Led to Skewed Surveying Data," *New York Times*, November 5, 2004.
 - b. Michael Traugatt, Ben Highton, and Henry Brady, *A Review of Recent Controversies Concerning the 2004 Presidential Exit Polls*, The National Research Commission on Elections and Voting, 2005.

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 webpage.

Part III. Testing Causal Hypotheses

11. Wednesday, February 21st. Probability Theory and the Magic Distribution.
- a. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, another part (pp. 110-120).
12. Monday, February 26th. Exploring Causal Relationships.
- a. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, Beginning of Chapter 5 (pp. 139-140).
 - b. Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*, Chapter 5.
 - c. Stephen Knack and Martha Kropf, "Who Uses Inferior Quality Products?" *Journal of Public Economics*, 2002.
13. Wednesday, February 28th. Isolating Causal Factors by Using Statistical Controls.
- a. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, End of Chapter 5.
 - b. Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*, Chapter 5.
 - c. Wolfinger and Rosenstone, Chapter 2 of *Who Votes?* Yale University Press, 1980, especially Tables 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6.
14. Monday, March 5th. How Sure is Sure? Quantifying Uncertainty.
- a. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, More of Chapter 5.
 - b. Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*, Chapter 5.
15. Wednesday, March 7th. Linear Regression I: Scatterplots and Regression.
- a. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, Chapter 7 (pp. 170-171).
16. Monday, March 12th. Linear Regression II: Interpreting Regression.
- a. Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*, Chapter 7.
 - b. Helmut Norputh "From Primary to General Election: The Effect of the Presidential Vote," and "As New Hampshire Goes (in January 2004 and January 2005)." *Journal of Public Economics*, 2004.
17. Wednesday, March 14th. Qualitative Research Design.
- a. King, Keohane and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, Princeton University Press, 1994. "Intentional Selection of Observations" (pp. 139-140).
 - b. Clem Miller, "Walnut Growers and Poultrymen," *Memories of a Congressman*, Ed. John Baker, Simon and Schuster, 1989.
 - c. Dreze and Sen, "China and India" from *Hunger and Public Policy*, Cambridge University Press, 1989.