

PS 3000: Introduction to Political Research

University of Missouri

Spring 2022

M W, 11:00 - 11:50 AM, Neff Hall 204

Laron K. Williams, Ph.D.

Office location: Professional Building #209

Phone: 573-882-2820

Email: williamslaro@missouri.edu

Office hours: M W 12:00 - 1:00 PM over Zoom (Meeting ID: 980 5802 7358; Passcode: 3000)

Labs: Wednesday or Friday

Overview

This course introduces students to the practice of political science research. There are several learning objectives for the course:

- Students will be able to analyze and evaluate empirical claims about political processes, both within the media and political science literature.
- Students will be able to succinctly and effectively summarize their empirical findings in an easy-to-understand way.
- Students will be able to develop theories of political processes, design appropriate empirical tests, and interpret the findings.

For illustrative purposes, the class provides substantive examples from several fields of political science (American politics, international relations, comparative politics, and public policy). The goals of the course are to prepare political science majors for the more analytical upper-level political science courses, to improve their research skills, and to increase their ability to make valid causal statements about political events and behaviors.

This is a writing intensive course. Effective writing is encouraged through several writing assignments that require you to think clearly and express your thoughts concisely.

There are a number of ways how students can receive assistance or feedback or contact me in case of emergency:

- Call me at 573-882-2820
- Email me at williamslaro@missouri.edu or the teaching assistants (information below)
- Attend my weekly office hours via Zoom (information above)

Semester Plan

We are a traditional class with lectures and discussions on Monday and Wednesday and a lab on Wednesday or Friday. The weekly lab session will include exercises to help you learn the material and improve skills. Some of these exercises will emphasize writing and clear communication. Topics, for instance, include designing a research proposal, conducting original research and creating a report of research results. 20% of your grade comes from participating in class activities (see below), so I expect you to attend both lectures/discussions and labs.

Labs:

- A Friday 9-9:50am (Middlebush Hall #308)
- B Friday 10-10:50am (Middlebush Hall #304)
- C Friday 11-11:50am (Middlebush Hall #309)
- D Friday 12-12:50pm (Middlebush Hall #206)
- E Wednesday 1-1:50pm (Middlebush Hall #305)
- F Wednesday 2-2:50pm (Middlebush Hall #305)

Canvas: We will be using Canvas (courses.missouri.edu) to house online activities, provide discussion opportunities, understanding checks and quizzes, display grades, post additional readings, and for announcements. All assignments must be submitted on Canvas by the assigned date. Late work will be deducted a letter grade (10%) for each calendar day late. **I strongly encourage you to turn in the assignments late rather than not at all. A grade of 0 can be fatal to your final grade.**

Grades

Written Assignments (30%)

As this is a writing intensive course, writing assignments account for a substantial component of the course grade. Moreover, the writing assignments are intended to be vehicles for learning the material covered in the course. There will be two (approximately four to six pages) written assignments, each to be revised and resubmitted. The written assignments will focus on producing a summary of the academic literature on a political science topic (*Literature Review*) and interpreting regression results from an empirical model (*Regression Interpretation*). After your initial submission, your paper will be returned to you with comments regarding content and style. You must then rethink and revise your original paper (not merely correcting grammatical and stylistic errors).

You must double-space all written assignments and use APSA citation style. Make sure that you cite any and all appropriate sources whenever you use someone else's ideas. You must proofread each assignment that you turn in for this class. It is always a good idea to have the good people at the Writing Center look at your assignments before you submit them, **regardless of whether you think it is necessary or not!**

For both written assignments, a student makes an initial submission, receives comments on the paper, and submits a subsequent and final revision. Each written assignment is worth 15%; the first draft is worth 5% and the second draft is worth 10%.

Group Project (20%)

Students will also work as a group to generate expectations for some political science topic. This includes placing the topic within the academic political science literature, discussing the four hurdles of causality, identifying a credible mechanism, deriving hypotheses, and proposing an effective research design for testing the hypotheses. Students will then present the project to the class.

This entire component is worth 20%:

- Proposal: 2.5%
- Presentation: 2.5%
- Project: 12%
- Peer-Evaluation: 3%

Homework (30%)

There will also be a variety of smaller homeworks and assignments throughout the semester. The majority of these homeworks will have a written component. I will provide more information on specific assignments in future modules.

This entire component is worth 30%:

- Operationalization Assignment: 8%
- Survey Evaluation Assignment: 8%
- Bivariate Interpretation Assignment: 8%
- Topic Selection for Literature Review Assignment: 2%
- Political Preferences Survey Participation: 2%
- Group Project Assessment: 2%

Quizzes and Understanding Checks (20%)

This is a challenging class that requires consistent active participation in discussions and labs, watching and understanding online examples, and thoughtfully reading the required textbook. Moreover, the material is cumulative, so failing to understand material early on in the semester will make it difficult later on.

To aid in this process—and to encourage active participation in discussions and labs—we will have a variety of *Understanding Checks* throughout the semester. These checks will supply me with valuable information about what material you are and are not understanding and may be on Canvas, Google, or other platforms. Furthermore, we will have quizzes which will assess your understanding of the online examples. If you are fulfilling those requirements and actively participating in discussions and labs, you should be able to easily receive the 20%:

- Understanding Checks – Discussion: 10%
- Understanding Checks – Lab: 5%
- Quizzes – Online Examples: 5%

Grading Scale

Final class grades will be assigned with the following grading scale:

A+ = 97.0 - 100
A = 90.0 - 96.99
B+ = 87.0 - 89.99
B = 80.0 - 86.99
C+ = 77.0 - 79.99
C = 70.0 - 76.99
D+ = 67.0 - 69.99
D = 60.0 - 66.99
F = 0 - 59.99

Readings

There will not always be perfect unity between the course lectures and assigned readings. Thus it will be necessary to read the assigned materials and go through the Canvas modules in the correct order.

There is one required textbook for this course. All other readings are either available online or will be provided on Canvas.

- Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2018 *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. 3rd Edition. Cambridge University Press.

Decreasing the Risk of COVID-19 in Classrooms and Labs

MU cares about the health and safety of its students, faculty, and staff. To provide safe, high-quality education amid COVID-19, we will follow several specific campus policies in accordance with the advice of the Center for Disease Control and Boone County health authorities. This statement will be updated as information changes.

- If you are experiencing any COVID-related symptoms, or are otherwise feeling unwell, do not attend classes and contact your health care provider and/or student health immediately. COVID symptoms include: fever greater than 100.4 or chills; cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing; fatigue; unexplained muscle or body aches; headache; new loss of taste or smell; sore throat; congestion or runny nose; nausea or vomiting; diarrhea.
- I would appreciate that everyone wear face coverings while in the classroom, unless you have a documented exemption due to a disability or medical condition.
- Try to maintain a 6-foot distance from each other at all times (except in specific lab/studio courses with other specific guidelines for social distancing).
- Online office hours will be available for all students.
- This course may be recorded by the instructor for the sole purpose of sharing the recording with students who can't attend class. The instructor will take care not to disclose personally identifiable information from the student education records during the recorded lesson.

Compliance with these guidelines is required for all; anyone who fails to comply will be subject to the accountability process, as stated in the University's Collected Rules and Regulations, Chapter 200 Student Code of Conduct.

If an instructor has concerns about how a student is following COVID-19 policies and protocols, please report those concerns to the Office of the Dean of Students. You can fill out a COVID Safety Measures Reporting Form here:

https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofMissouriSystem&layout_id=38

By taking the above measures, we are supporting your health and that of the whole Mizzou community. Thank you in advance for joining me and your peers in adhering to these safety measures.

Other Considerations

- Out of respect for fellow students, each person will refrain from talking, whispering, eating, making offensive remarks, newspaper reading, and other disruptive behavior during lecture. This may include cell phones and laptops. Inappropriate classroom behavior may result in the student being requested to leave the classroom.
- The University of Missouri is committed to supporting student well-being through an integrated network of care, with a wide range of services to help students succeed. The MU Counseling Center offers professional mental health care, and can help you find the best approach to treatment based on your needs. Call to make an appointment at 573-882-6601. Any student in crisis may call or go to the MU Counseling Center between 8:00 5:00 M-F. After hours phone support is available at 573-882-6601.

Visit our website at <https://wellbeing.missouri.edu> to take an online mental health screening, find out about workshops and resources that can help you thrive, or learn how to support a friend. Download Sanvello, a phone app that teaches skills and strategies to help you maintain good mental health. Log in with your Mizzou e-mail to unlock all the tools available through Sanvello at no cost to you.

- Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any student plagiarizing (or cheating on tests) will receive an automatic grade of 0 for that assignment.

- Teaching Assistant: The role of the Teaching Assistant is to serve as an assistant to me. When a student needs help or clarification, the first step is to consult their lecture notes or readings. If that doesn't clear up the misunderstanding, then the student should contact the TA.
- The Writing Center, located in the Student Success Center, offers writing support to all students at the University of Missouri. Students can access tutors via synchronous face-to-face and Zoom sessions as well as the ever-present Online Writery for asynchronous submissions. Our tutors come from a variety of majors and are familiar with many writing styles and formats. Although tutors are not editors and therefore will not "fix" a student's writing, they will provide detailed feedback and revision options for

any writing project at any stage of the writing process, including initial brainstorming, early drafting, major (and minor) structural revisions, and/or finishing touches on a final draft. To make an appointment, submit your work to the Online Writery, or learn what else the Writing Center has to offer, visit their website at writingcenter.missouri.edu.

Though there may be specific times where we will request that a student meets with a Writing Center tutor before submitting an assignment, we encourage all students to use this excellent resource.

- If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible.

If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please establish an accommodation plan with the MU Disability Center, S5 Memorial Union, 573-882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for persons with disabilities, click on “Disability Resources” on the MU homepage.

- The University community welcomes intellectual diversity and respects student rights. Students who have questions or concerns regarding the atmosphere in this class (including respect for diverse opinions) may contact the departmental chair or divisional director; the Office of Academic Integrity; the MU Equity Office, or equity@missouri.edu. All students will have the opportunity to submit an anonymous evaluation of the instructor(s) at the end of the course.
- University of Missouri System Executive Order No. 38 lays out principles regarding the sanctity of classroom discussions at the university. The policy is described fully in section 200.015 of the Collected Rules and Regulations. In this class, students may not make audio or video recordings of course activity, except students permitted to record as an accommodation under section 240.040 of the Collected Rules. All other students who record and/or distribute audio or video recordings of class activity are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of section 200.020 of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters.

Those students who are permitted to record are not permitted to redistribute audio or video recordings of statements or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded. Students found to have violated this policy are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of section 200.020 of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters.

Late Assignments/Missed Class

If you miss class or turn in an assignment late because of illness, send me an email. Stay home if you're not feeling well. It is preferable if students who are sick stay home and that students not take unnecessary visits to a health care provider just to get documentation for missing class.

Teaching Assistants

The labs (on Wednesday or Friday) are a critical part of this class, and much of the material in the lectures and in the textbook leads toward the discussion and hands-on training that occurs in the labs. There are three excellent TAs for the course.

Joe Harrison

Labs: A and B

Email: jphmw2@mail.missouri.edu
Office Hours: Professional Building 22; M (2:30-3:30pm), W (1:30-2:30pm), R (4:30-5:30pm): Zoom Meeting
ID: 464 999 8795, Passcode: 3000

Aryanna Hyde

Labs: E and F

Email: aryanna.hyde@mail.missouri.edu

Office Hours: Professional Building 22; M (4:00-5:00pm), T (11:00-12:00pm), W (9-10:00am): Zoom Meeting
ID: 959 0088 2129, Passcode: 3000

Omer Sen

Labs: C and D

Email: os8rk@mail.missouri.edu

Office Hours: Professional Building 220; M (1:00-2:00pm), W (1:00-2:00pm), F (1:00-2:00): Zoom Meeting
ID: 441 135 7886, Passcode: 3000

Course Schedule

Class Schedule: We will spend as much time as necessary on each topic for this course. Because I am unable to predict in advance how long each topic will take, the schedule below is only a rough guideline. *I expect that you will have read the assigned readings **before** the class period for which they are assigned. I will announce additional required readings during class meetings.*

January 19-21: Course Overview & Scientific Study of Politics I

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 1

January 24-28: Scientific Study of Politics II

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapters 2 (page 25-41) and Chapter 3
- **Topic Selection Homework is due Sunday, January 30 at midnight**

January 31-February 4: Scientific Study of Politics III

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 4
- **Literature Review Assignment (First Draft) is due Sunday, February 6 at midnight**

February 7-11: Measurement

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 5
- **Political Preferences Survey is due Sunday, February 13 at midnight**

February 14-18: Descriptive Statistics

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 6
- **Literature Review Assignment (Revised Draft) is due Sunday, February 20 at midnight**

February 21-25: Survey Methods

- No readings
- **Operationalization Assignment is due Sunday, February 27 at midnight**

February 28-March 4: Logic of Statistical Hypothesis Testing

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 8
- **Survey Evaluation Assignment is due Sunday, March 6 at midnight**

March 7-11: Bivariate Hypothesis Testing

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 8

March 14-18: Bivariate Regression

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 9 (pages 188-195)
- **Bivariate Interpretation Assignment is due Sunday, March 20 at midnight**

March 21-25: Bivariate Regression (Continued)

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 9 (pages 195-205)
- No labs

March 28-April 1: Spring Break!

April 4-8: Multivariate Regression

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 10 (pages 215-225) and Chapter 11 (pages 246-263)

April 11-15: Multivariate Regression (Continued)

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 10 (pages 215-225) and Chapter 11 (pages 246-263)
- **Regression Interpretation Assignment (First Draft) due Sunday, April 17 at midnight**

April 18-22: Formal Theories of Politics

- Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 2 (pages 42-55)
- **Group Project Proposals due Sunday, April 24 at midnight**

April 25-29: Clean Up

- No classes or lab
- **Regression Interpretation Assignment (Revised Draft) due Sunday, May 1 at midnight**

May 2-6: Dead Week

- No classes or lab

Tuesday, May 10 10:00-12:00pm: Finals Week

- Group Project Presentations
- **Upload Presentation and Project by Monday, May 9 at midnight**
- **Group Project Evaluation due Tuesday, May 10 at midnight**