

PS 3000: Introduction to Political Research

University of Missouri

Spring 2024

M W, 11:00 - 11:50 AM, Tucker Hall 18

Laron K. Williams, Ph.D.

Office location: Locust Street Building #319

Phone: 573-882-2820

Email: williamslaro@missouri.edu

Office hours: M W 12:00 - 1:00 PM

Labs (Friday): 9-9:50 (A), 10-10:50 (B), 11-11:50 (C) and 12-12:50 (D)

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.

Semester Plan

We are a traditional class with lectures and discussions on Monday and Wednesday and a lab on 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 (Arts & Science Building #101)

B Friday 10-10:50am (Middlebush Hall #304)

C Friday 11-11:50am (Hill Hall #305)

D Friday 12-12:50pm (Middlebush Hall #206)

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%

These checks and quizzes should be completed in-person during the class time as a way to demonstrate in-person attendance. Any efforts to circumvent this process – including sharing the access codes to those not in attendance – will result in being reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

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.

Academic Integrity

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. Examples include – but are not limited to – using online sources or other students for assessments, providing “access codes” to those who are not attending for participation reasons, false attribution of sources, use of other students' assignments or assessments (including notes or work), unauthorized use of artificially generated content, etc. Work must be done independently, unless explicitly described in the requirements.

The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Any actions violating the principles of academic integrity – including the unauthorized use of artificially generated content (see below) – will not be tolerated. Consequences will range from an automatic 0 for that assignment to reporting the student to the Office of Academic Integrity (which may result in probation or expulsion).

Students are expected to adhere to this honor pledge on all graded work whether or not they are explicitly asked in advance to do so: “I strive to uphold the University values of respect, responsibility, discovery, and excellence. On my honor, I pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this work.”

Every assignment that you submit is checked against plagiarism and AI software, so it has become quite easy for instructors to see violations of academic integrity. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor.

Artificially Generated Content

The following was added to the Student Code of Conduct for the UM System on August 1, 2023 (approved by the Board of Curators, June 29, 2023):

The term **unauthorized use of artificially generated content**, includes, but is not limited to:

1. use of artificial intelligence tools or other tools that generate artificial content in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or other assessments without permission from the instructor;
2. submitting work for evaluation as ones own that was produced in material or substantial part through use of artificial intelligence tools or other tools that generate artificial content without permission from the instructor;
3. using artificial intelligence tools or other tools that generate artificial content in a manner contrary to instructions from the instructor; or
4. using artificial intelligence tools or other tools that generate artificial content in a manner that violates any other provision of these rules concerning academic dishonesty.

Use of commonly available tools such as spelling or grammar checking software or features of software that propose anticipated words or phrases while text is being written **will not be considered unauthorized use of artificially generated content.**

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 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.
- 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 is a free and confidential service available for your entire career at the University. Writing tutors are available to help all writers at MU with any stage of their writing process, on any writing task, including course-based assignments and application materials. Writing Center tutors will ask great questions and provide feedback and considerations for revision but will never discuss grades with or edit/write for students. Writing support is available year-round via the Online Writery and synchronously via video or on-campus sites during fall, spring, and summer semesters.

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.

- The goal of the University of Missouri is to ensure an inclusive learning environment for all students. The University of Missouri Disability Center provides services and accommodations for students to participate fully in the learning experience and to experience equitable evaluation of their performance. Students (including online students) with a documented disability can contact the Disability Center to establish an Accommodation Plan. Documented disabilities include hearing, vision, mobility, learning and attention, psychological health, and physical health. Students' accommodations are implemented with the input of students to maximize the learning experiences. The MU Disability Center keeps

information about a student's disability confidential.

Please notify me of your eligibility for accommodations as soon as possible. Additionally, if there are aspects of the course that present as barriers, such as inaccessible course content (e.g., learning assessments, PowerPoints, non-captioned videos, images, tables, PDFs) or if you need an immediate accommodation due to an injury, please contact me or the Disability Center as soon as possible.

- 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, or the MU Equity Office. All students will have the opportunity to submit an anonymous evaluation of the instructor(s) at the end of the course.
- When students record something that happens in a course (a lecture, class discussions, meetings, etc.) it has an impact on the rights of the people captured in that recording. For example, the instructor and the University may have rights to the intellectual property contained in that recording. At the same time, another student who may have been recorded has the right to privacy. **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. Students who violate 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

Attendance is a large part of your grade and success depends on actively engaging with the discussions and labs. Missed classes/labs and late assignments may be excused if the proper documentation (doctor notes, university-excused absences, etc) is provided. If you want the opportunity to make-up or excuse absences without penalty, documentation should be provided to me within a week of the absence/missed deadline. Keep in touch with your TA to stay on top of course materials and assessments.

Teaching Assistants

The labs 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 two excellent TAs for the course.

John Bonilla

Labs: A and B

Email: jkbonilla@mail.missouri.edu

Zoom Office Hours: Meeting ID: 491 507 7360; Password: polsci3000; T R (2:00-3:30pm)

Michael Powell

Labs: C and D

Email: m.a.powell@mail.missouri.edu

In-Person Office Hours: Locust Street Building E004; M W (2:00-3:00pm), F (1:00-2:00)

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 17-19: Course Overview & Scientific Study of Politics I

- Read Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 1

January 22-26: Scientific Study of Politics II

- Read Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapters 2 (page 25-41) and Chapter 3
- **Due:** Topic Selection Homework (Sunday, January 28 at midnight)

January 29-February 2: Scientific Study of Politics III

- Read Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 4
- **Due:** Literature Review Assignment (First Draft) (Sunday, February 4 at midnight)

February 5-9: Measurement

- Read Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 5
- **Due:** Political Preferences Survey (Sunday, February 11 at midnight)

February 12-16: Descriptive Statistics

- Read Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 6
- **Due:** Literature Review Assignment (Revised Draft) (Sunday, February 18 at midnight)

February 19-23: Survey Methods

- No readings
- **Due:** Operationalization Assignment (Sunday, February 25 at midnight)

February 26-March 1: Logic of Statistical Hypothesis Testing

- Read Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 8
- **Due:** Survey Evaluation Assignment (Sunday, March 3 at midnight)

March 4-8: Bivariate Hypothesis Testing

- Read Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 8

March 11-15: Bivariate Regression

- **Read** Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 9 (pages 188-195)
- **Due:** Bivariate Interpretation Assignment (Sunday, March 17 at midnight)

March 18-22: Bivariate Regression (Continued)

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

March 25-29: Spring Break!

April 1-5: Multivariate Regression

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

April 8-12: Multivariate Regression (Continued)

- **Read** Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 10 (pages 215-225) and Chapter 11 (pages 246-263)
- **Due:** Regression Interpretation Assignment (First Draft) (Sunday, April 14 at midnight)

April 15-19: Formal Theories of Politics

- **Read** Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 2 (pages 42-55)
- **Due:** Group Project Proposals (Sunday, April 21 at midnight)

April 22-26: Clean Up

- No classes or lab
- **Due:** Regression Interpretation Assignment (Revised Draft) (Sunday, April 28 at midnight)

April 29-March 3: Dead Week

- No classes or lab

Thursday, May 9 3:00-5:00pm: Finals Week

- Group Project Presentations
- **Due:** Upload Presentation and Group Project (Wednesday, May 8 at midnight)
- **Due:** Group Project Evaluation (Thursday, May 9 at midnight)