

**Political Methods**  
**Fall 2008**  
**POL 30001-002 (call #12470)**  
**Bowman 317, TR 11:00-12:15**

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Office Hours: Tues. & Thur.: 12:30-2:00 & 3:30-4:30, and by appointment

**Course Description:**

Students typically have an abundant supply of academic interests. However, translating academic interests into academic research requires a unique set of skills. This course is designed to introduce students to the process of designing social scientific research. You will develop your academic interests into questions; you will develop theories to explain the phenomenon of interest (e.g. a story about how you believe the world works that suggests a possible answer to your question); you will derive testable hypotheses from your theories; and you will learn about several ways to test hypotheses empirically. In short, you will learn how to bring the scientific method to bear on your academic interests.

**Required Reading**

Johnson, Janet Buttolph and H.T. Reynolds. (2008). *Political Science Research Methods*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Pollock, Philip H. (2008). *An SPSS COMPANION to Political Analysis*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Huff, Darrell. ([1954]1993). *How to Lie with Statistics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

In addition, there will be several primary-source articles. These are assigned to introduce you to the foremost political science journals and to provide examples of elegant research. The articles are referenced along with the reading assignments listed in the schedule. All are available online at <http://www.jstor.org>.

Finally, read the newspaper! As political scientists you will be expected to hold up your end of dinner conversations on current events, and as students you will find the news an important

resource for developing topical interests. One of our frequent exercises in this course will involve picking apart a news story that has grabbed national attention with an eye toward distinguishing good journalism from good social, scientific research.

## **Grading**

**Readings:** Do the assigned readings before coming to the class for which they are assigned. Experience shows that there is a strong relationship between preparedness and grades. The lectures are designed to help internalize some of the concepts covered in the readings. Students who have not done the readings will get less from the lectures. Moreover, you will be responsible for all assigned materials, including topics not covered in lectures. Attendance is required.

**Participation (5%):** Miss a day, miss a lot. I need to have everyone in class every day, so attendance will be taken.

**Homework (30%):** Most weeks there will be an assignment and many of the assignments will include exercises from *An SPSS COMPANION*. Late homework will not be accepted except in cases of excused emergencies.

There will not be a research paper for this class, but several homework assignments will include some portion of research on a question you find interesting. For example, in an early homework assignment you will compose a research question and conduct a literature review (pertaining to your question) consisting of two books, two articles from JSTOR, and one additional source that can be a book, article, or some other type of media. And in Homework 7 you will actually conduct research into your own question and present your results to the class. To help with research projects, you will notice that two class sessions will be conducted in individualized tutorials. These meetings are designed to ensure that you each have some time with me to help with your research project prior to your in-class presentation. You will also notice that presentations will be graded as Homework 8. The research project is graded twice (Homework 7 and Homework 8) to recognize that it is a more involved homework than the typical assignment.

**Midterm (30%):** In class. Bring a bluebook.

**Final (35%):** In class. Bring a bluebook.

## **Disability Policy**

University policy 3342-3-18 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Accessibility Services (contact 330-672-3391 or visit [www.kent.edu/sas](http://www.kent.edu/sas) for more information on registration procedures).

## Schedule

August 26—Welcome and overview

August 28—Class canceled. I will be giving a paper at the American Political Science Association meeting in Boston.

- Johnson and Reynolds (JR), Chapter 1
- Huff, Introduction and Chapter 1-2

September 2—Philosophy of Science

- JR, Chapter 2
- Huff, Chapters 3-6

September 4—How [not] to Lie With Statistics

- Huff, Chapters 7-10
- Handout Homework 1

September 9—Research Design

- Homework 1 Due
- JR, Chapter 5, pg. 122-146 only

September 11—Research Design (continued)

- JR, Chapter 5, pg. 147-181 only
- Handout Homework 2

September 16—Questions, Theories, Hypotheses, Variables, and the Literature

- Homework 2 Due
- JR, Chapter 3

September 18—Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

- JR, Chapter 6
- Handout Homework 3

September 23—Measurement

- Homework 3 Due
- JR, Chapter 4 & 9

September 25—Univariate Data Analysis

- JR, Chapter 11 (351-392)
- Handout Homework 4

September 30—Univariate Data Analysis (continued)

- JR, Chapter 11 (392-425)
- Homework 4 Due

October 2—Experiments and Ethical Considerations

- JR Chapter 8
- Midterm Review
- No Homework, Study for the Midterm!

October 7— Midterm Exam (Bring a bluebook)

October 9—In class Video

October 14—Sampling

- JR, Chapter 7

October 16—Sampling (continued)

- Handout Homework 5

October 21—Bivariate Data Analysis

- Homework 5 Due
- JR, Chapter 12 (426-473 only)

October 23—Bivariate Data Analysis (continued)

- JR, Chapter 12 (473-502)
- Handout Homework 6

October 28— Introduction to Multivariate Analysis

- JR, Chapter 13 (503-525)
- Homework 6 Due
- Handout Homework 7 (this is a special assignment and will involve in-class presentations).
- In-class Tutorial on Using Statistical Programs

October 30— Catch-up

- Sign-up for a 20 minute tutorial to discuss your research project (Homework 7)
- Sign-up for your in-class presentation

November 4— No class Meeting (tutorials instead)

- Vote early, vote often!!!

November 6— No class Meeting (tutorials instead)

November 11— Holiday

November 13—Student Presentations

- Homework 7 Due (your paper is due on the day you present)
- Presentations will be graded as Homework 8

November 18— Student Presentations

November 20— Student Presentations

November 25—Survey Research (continued)

➤ JR, Chapter 10

➤ Frankel, Marin R. and Lester R Frankel. (1987). “Fifty Years of Survey Sampling in the United States.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 51:2. (Supplement: 50th Anniversary Issue). S127-S138.

November 27— No Class. Happy Thanksgiving.

December 2—Putting it All Together

➤ JR, Chapter 14

December 4—Review

December 8, 12:45-3:00, Monday—Final Exam