

Spring 2014
PO 300 Research Methods & PO 300L
TTh 9:30-10:45, lab Th 12:30-1:45 (SB 118)
Ofc hrs TTh 10:45-12:15 and 1:45 if needed (also by appt)
W 12-12:50

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Class Goals and Objectives:

1. Understand the scientific method and the utility of applying the scientific method to the study of political science.
2. Be able to conduct basic political science research and write up the results in a manner appropriate to the discipline.
3. Be able to understand and evaluate political science research, policy reports and newspaper articles that use statistics as evidence.

Required Readings:

- *The Essentials of Political Analysis, 4th edition. Philip H. Pollock III
- *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, 4th edition. Philip H. Pollock III

“W” Designation:

This class fulfills the W designation required for graduation. As W stands for writing, there is a significant writing component to this class. Students will be required to submit three iterations of a paper to fulfill course requirements and to peer evaluate the writings of others. Each iteration must address the Professor’s comments on the previous draft as well as significantly improve the quality of the paper (narrowly responding to the Professor’s comments is not sufficient).

Grading:

1 midterm exam	15
1 cumulative final exam	20
1 paper	
iteration 1	10
iteration 2	10
iteration 3	15
10 lab exercises (@2% each)	20
Participation including presentation	10

Important note: You will receive the same grade for PO 300L as you receive for PO 300 as the lab exercises are included in the above grading for both courses. All work must be completed to pass the course.

Grading Scale:

93-100	A	78-79	C+
		73-77	C
		70-72	C-
90-92	A-	60-69	D
87-89	B+	Below 60	F
83-86	B		
80-82	B-		

Grading Policies:

Midterm is take home. **Iteration 1** of the paper includes **literature review, paper proposal** and **data analysis** points. A grade of zero will be given for all work not turned in. A **paper proposal** consists of a) a typed statement of your research question, including an explanation of why the research question is interesting; b) 3-5 hypotheses, including a clear explanation of the logic behind each; and (c) a bibliography of at least four scholarly sources (not newspaper, magazine or most internet sources). Examples of scholarly sources include journal articles and books from academic presses. If you are unsure as to what constitutes a scholarly source, contact either the professor or a librarian. The presentation is a ten minute explanation to the class of your research question in your paper, why it is important, your hypotheses (as well as a sense of how/why you derived them), results and interpretation. **Lab exercises** will be due on the Friday following the lab for that chapter. **Late Penalties:** *Exercises:* full letter grade first day, 1/3 letter grade thereafter. *Paper Proposal/Lit Review:* 1/3 letter grade off first iteration per day. *Final Paper:* Full letter grade first day, 1/3 letter grade thereafter.

Missing Exams

Students must take all exams during the scheduled class or exam period except under extraordinary circumstances (examples include personal or family illness or serious injury) and only when arranged, if at all possible, in advance with the instructor. Failure to take an exam when circumstances are not extraordinary will result in a grade of zero for the exam. No make-up exams will be given for students who miss the exam for no reason or for reasons that are less than extraordinary (for more on what constitutes extraordinary, consult the Undergraduate Bulletin).

Attendance Policy:

Excused absences should be arranged with the Professor in advance whenever possible. Students with three unexcused absences will lose ten percent (10%) of their attendance and participation grade (see pp. 99-101 in the JCU undergraduate bulletin for what constitutes an excused and an unexcused absence). Since attendance and participation constitute 10% of the student's total grade, losing ten percent of a participation grade equals losing 1 point on a student's final grade. The fourth and every subsequent unexcused absence will result in a loss of an additional 10% of the attendance and participation grade.

An attendance sheet may be distributed on any class day. Students are responsible for making sure that they have signed the attendance sheet on that day. Students who are not on the attendance sheet for that day are considered to be absent whether or not they actually attended class.

Students with Disabilities

John Carroll University recognizes its responsibility for creating an institutional climate in which students with disabilities can succeed. In accordance with University policy, if you have a documented disability, you may be eligible to request accommodations from the office of Services for Students with Disabilities. Students with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations and should have equal access to learning. Please contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities at (216) 397-4967 if you have any questions or to set up an appointment to meet with the coordinator, Allison West. After your eligibility for accommodations is determined, you will be given a letter which, when presented to instructors,

will help us know best how to assist you. Please keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive so it is best to register with Student Disability Services at your earliest convenience.

Plagiarism

“Plagiarism, defined as representing the work of others as your own, is the most serious academic offense there is. It ranges from the improper use of quotation marks, to copying the work of others in whole or in part, to hiring someone else to do one’s work. Please note that intent is not required to be guilty of plagiarism. The penalty for this ranges from the loss of points to F for the course, to expulsion from the university” (cited from Dr. Sobisch’s Research Methods syllabus). Taking pity on or being nice to your class mates by doing their exercises for them is also plagiarism. Students who plagiarize and students who aid in plagiarism will be given a 0 on the plagiarized assignments and their cases will be remanded to the Dean for further disciplinary action.

Schedule of Readings and Exams (approximate and subject to change)

Intro and Theoretical Considerations Jan 14-16

Political Analysis, Introduction
SPSS Companion, Getting Started and chapter 1

Scientific Method and Politics as a Science—Jan 21-23

Dryzek, John S. 2006. Revolutions without Enemies: Key Transformations in Political Science. American Political Science Review <http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/APSRNov06Dryzek.pdf>

David Wearing. How Political is Political Science?

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/mar/08/political-science-moral-ethical/print>

Definition and Measurement of Concepts—Jan 28-30

Political Analysis chapter 1

Measuring and Describing Variables-Feb 4-6

Both books chapter 2

Explanations, Hypotheses and Comparisons—Feb 11-13

Both books chapter 3

Research Design and the Logic of Control—Feb 18-20

Both books chapter 4

Your Own Research Project—Feb 25-27

SPSS companion chapter 11

Literature Review

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/literature-reviews/>

<http://www.indstate.edu/polisci/grad/appendix1.htm>

RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE Feb 27

March 4-6 Spring Break!

Controlled Comparisons—March 11-13

Both books chapter 5

MIDTERM handed out March 11 due back March 18

Foundations of Statistical Inference—March 18-20

Both books chapter 6

Tests of Significance and Measures of Association—March 25-27

Both books chapter 7

LITERATURE REVIEW due 3/27

Correlation and Linear Regression—April 1-3

Both books chapter 8

PAPER Iteration 1 due April 3

Paper feedback session I—April 8

Paper feedback session II—April 10

**PAPER Iteration 2 due 4/15—peer review. Email me a copy of your iteration 2.
Then bring two hard copies of your paper to class.**

Dummy Variables and Interaction Effects—April 24

SPSS Companion, chapter 9

Easter Break—we meet on April 15 and not again until April 24

Logistic Regression— April 24

Political Analysis chapter 9

SPSS Companion chapter 10

Thinking Empirically, Thinking Probabilistically

Political Analysis Chapter 10

Paper Iteration 3 due 4/24

Presentations—April 29-May 1

◆ **Final Exam** In class during the scheduled exam period Tuesday May 6 10 am

Components of a PO 300 Research Paper (writing intensive)

Abstract

Paragraph-length explanation of the research question and findings and anything else remarkable about the paper (e.g. some new methodological technique)—10 point font indented on both sides. Only due on drafts 2 and 3

Introduction

Includes the research question, why this question is interesting (theoretically and/or substantively) and any other information that may interest the reader (about a page)

Literature Review

How have other people answered this research question? Work your way from what others have done to what remains to be done on this topic. Is there a hole or puzzle in the literature that remains that your paper can address? How can you add to the literature with your paper? (4-6 pp, 10-15 sources)

Statement of Hypotheses

Given what you have said in the literature, what relationships are you testing empirically? Use formal statements of hypotheses that you learned in chapter 3.

Data and Methods

Explain how you will test your hypotheses. What data will you use (typically the data come from several variables in one or more datasets provided with the textbook. You can use other data and if you do I will help you. But it take more work)? What statistical techniques? Why are the techniques you are using appropriate to your data and question (we will work on this part a lot in the near future to the point where it may seem too obvious to put in your paper. But put it anyway)?

Data Analysis

Run the statistical techniques. Include your tables in the back of the paper. Write up the findings from the tables. In other words, for someone who cannot read these tables, what are they telling us? Point out the important findings related to your hypotheses. Label your tables (e.g. table 1, table 2, etc.) and refer to and explain the results of each table in the text. (5-8 pp, incl tables)

Interpretation

Compare what you expected to find (given the lit review and your hypotheses) with what you actually found (in your data analysis). If they differ, how do you account for that? If they are similar, what does that say and what remains to be addressed? If the results are mixed in terms of what you expected, how do you explain that? This is a very important part of the paper and should be taken most seriously. (2-3 pp)

Conclusion (1/2 page)

Also, you need 3 drafts. Draft 1 will simply be a compilation of your research proposal, lit review and data analysis/interpretation sections. Draft 2 will focus more on creating a whole paper out of the different pieces in draft 1 plus an abstract. Draft 3 will focus on smoothness and polish so that the paper is as eloquent and well-written as possible.