

PLSC 3301.783: Research Methods for Political Science

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Semester: Spring A 2020
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Course Description

Political Science 3301 (PLSC 3301): Research Methods for Political Science is a required course for political science majors. It is the first of a two course methods sequence for those receiving a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. It does not have any prerequisites, but intellectual curiosity will be greatly rewarded in the course. The University of Texas of the Permian Basin's undergraduate catalog describes the course as,

“An introduction to the research process. Focus on formulating hypotheses, the process of data acquisition, basic methodology, literature reviews, and research proposals.”

More than that, this course focuses on the universalities of mainstream positivist political science research. For most students with a non-science background this course is challenging not because of the math concepts, but because scientific inference is largely not taught well at any level of secondary education.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course. However, this course is challenging for most political science majors because it introduces concepts that may be foreign. For example, this course covers some basic statistical concepts that require basic math skills. So, I want all students to keep an open mind regarding the mathematical concepts introduced in this course.

Course Materials

1. Johnson, Buttolph Janet, Reynolds, H.T., Mycoff, Jason, D. 2016. *Political Science Research Methods*. CQ Press.

Course Requirements

Students will be evaluated on the following assessments:

- 1 Research Paper (40% of the final course grade)
 - Submit your *Research Question* by January 26th (10%).
 - Submit your *Complete Research Paper Draft* by February 16th (15%).
 - Submit your *Research Paper Final Draft* by March 4th (15%).
- 2 Objective Examinations (40% of the final course grade)
 - *The Midterm Exam* is an objective exam comprising 20% of the final course grade which must be completed by February 9th. It covers Part 1: Research Design.
 - *The Final Exam* is an objective exam comprising 20% of the final course grade which must be completed by the March 6th. Part 2: Fundamentals of Statistics.
- 2 Discussion Assignments (20%) of the course grade
 - *Replicability and Political Science* which must be completed by February 9th (10% of final course grade).
 - *Statistical Inference in Political Science* which must be completed by March 6th (10% of final course grade).
- Letter Grade Assignment
 - A: 89.5-100
 - B 79.5-89.4
 - C 69.5-79.4
 - D 59.5-69.4
 - F 59.4 or lower
- Student Authentication
 - Additionally, students must satisfy a secondary authentication method as required by University of Texas of the Permian Basin policy:

- * The University of Texas of the Permian Basin (UTPB) maintains policies and procedures to ensure that each student who registers for a distance or correspondence course is the same student who participates in, completes, and receives credit for the course. UTPB's Distance Education Policy requires faculty members to authenticate student identity by employing at least two methods of verification. To access online courses students must login to the Canvas learning management system to establish their identity by using their unique personal identifying username login and a secure password. UTPB's Distance Education Policy allows faculty multiple options for satisfying the second method of validating student identity. This course satisfies the second method of student verification by requiring the following (non-graded but mandatory):
 - A clear image of yourself
 - * In color
 - * Well lit, and no shadows on your face or your ID that can obscure your image
 - * Must be taken on the day you submit the photo to reflect your current appearance
 - * Taken in full-face view directly facing the camera
 - * With a neutral facial expression and both eyes open
 - Then a picture of your ID (can be a UTPB ID or government issued ID) with only your name and picture showing (Picture ID card in which the ID number has been covered (tape over any numbers)).
 - Make sure to attach both image files in either JPEG or PNG format to the assignment BEFORE you submit it.

Course Objectives

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand and explain empiricism.
2. Describe the empirical research process.
3. Construct APSA style citations for a books and journal articles.
4. Contrast normative, hypothetical, procedural and empirical research questions.
5. Develop an empirical research question.

6. Understand and explain the difference between dependent and independent variables.
7. Differentiate and explain the four different types of probabilistic hypotheses.
8. Understand, state and explain the six characteristics of good hypotheses.
9. Understand and explain ecological inference and the ecological fallacy.
10. Understand and explain operational definitions.
11. Identify, differentiate and explain the five different levels of measurement.
12. Understand and explain the purpose of a literature review.
13. Understand and explain the basics of sampling including populations and sample statistics.
14. Explain the concept of expected values.
15. Understand, explain and calculate relative frequencies, proportions, and percentages.
16. Calculate mean, median and mode.
17. Understand and explain the three properties of measures of dispersion.
18. Calculate range, inter-quartile range, variance and standard deviation.
19. Understand the properties of the normal distribution.
20. Conduct hypothesis testing.
21. Calculate Z and T scores, confidence intervals and statistical significance

University Policies

1. Students with Disabilities: The University of Texas of the Permian Basin in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provides “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities. Any student with a disability who is requesting an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter from the ADA Officer for Students. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored.

ADA Officer for Students: Mr. Paul Leverington
Address: Mesa Building 4243
Voice Telephone: 432-552-3702
Email: Leverington_P@utpb.edu

2. Office of the Registrar (Course Incomplete/Withdrawal/Grade Appeal)

- (a) All students are required to complete the course within the semester they are signed up. Incomplete grades for the course are rarely given, will only be granted if the student provides a valid, documented excuse for not being able to complete the course on time, and has contacted the instructor prior to the scheduled last class to request an extension. The student signs a contract that includes the incomplete course activities and the new due dates.
- (b) Find information and dates regarding drops and withdrawals at
 - i. <http://www.utpb.edu/services/academic-affairs/office-of-the-registrar/adds-drops>
- (c) For grade appeal process go to
 - i. <http://www.utpb.edu/campus-life/dean-of-students/grievances>

Course and Instructor Policies

1. Professionalism

- (a) This is an upper-division course in political science, as such professionalism is required. This includes completing all work by the due date. If you do not, a score of 0 will be given for the requirement.

2. Etiquette Expectations

- (a) This course will require discourse between students and the instructor. As the course deals with multiple competing views of how empirical research is conducted, spirited disagreements may persist. These are naturally welcome and expected, however make sure to be civil and criticize the weaknesses in argument, not the other person.

3. Technical Skills Required

- (a) I do not require many technical skills in the course. However, you must have a computer, connection to the internet, Adobe Reader.

4. Complete Honesty in Assessment

- (a) Because this is an upper-division course, I will give you an honest assessment of your performance. When I say honest, I mean I am not going to sugarcoat it for you. As a result, I don't say things like, "well, at least you gave it your best shot." It is nothing against you as a person, it comes from my (and our department's) desire to train majors and minors to the utmost quality so that you are prepared for whatever profession you may choose.

5. Writing Aids in the Course

- (a) Write well. This is not a suggestion, but a rule. If you are uncomfortable with your writing abilities, you have several options.
 - i. First, you may go see the University Writing Center. However, they normally hold an English background, which does not lend itself to technical and specific writing. But, if you are having fundamental writing problems, this is not a bad place to start.
 - ii. Second, you may allow a student to read your paper and ask for comments. Now, this doesn't mean they can crib your arguments and use them as their own. This is by far the most successful way to get better. Academics and other non-fiction writers who write for a living often ask their friends and colleagues to read what they write. For example, before I submit a paper, I normally ask former colleagues from graduate school to read my papers to see if they make sense. They see things that you will not pick up and see large holes in your logic that you may not see.
 - iii. Third, you may submit your paper to me a week before the due date and I will read it for you. I will give you comments and you may resubmit your paper. However, you must email me your paper 1 week before the due date.

6. Communications Plan

- (a) Office Hours
 - i. Per university requirements, I hold regular office hours and normally, I keep my door open. This is your chance to ask more specific questions regarding material or to visit. Feel free to stop by. Even if you don't have course related concerns, this is a good time to come by and chat about topics that may interest you. If for some reason, you

are not available during my office hours, feel free to send me an email
I can work around your schedule if we need to meet.

(b) Email

- i. Email is the best method for contacting me. My email is mcmichael_t@utpb.edu. I respond to all emails within 48 hours excepting weekends and university holidays.

(c) Phone

- i. You may call my office. My office phone number is (432) 552 2340. I will get back to you as soon as possible.

7. Academic Dishonesty

(a) Academic Dishonesty is not permitted in this course. According to the Handbook of Student Conduct:

- i. "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses (without the prior permission of the instructor) or the attempt to commit such acts."
- ii. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. For complete information on UTPB student conduct and discipline procedures consult the university's handbook at: <http://ss.utpb.edu/dean-of-students/scholastic-dishonesty/>
- iii. Any student suspected of academic dishonesty will receive notification through secure communication either verbally or via email. The student may exercise the right to explain themselves or explain how the instructor made an error in judgment regarding the suspicion. If I agree, I will acknowledge it and no sanctions will be assessed. However, if not, I will file a disposition of academic dishonesty and depending on the severity I will assess one of the following sanctions:
 - A. Official Written Warning
 - B. No credit given on the assignment
 - C. Penalty on the final letter grade
 - D. Automatic F for the course

8. Extra Credit

- (a) There is no extra credit in this course for any reason.
 - i. This is very important. If I grant extra credit to a student, I must extend that offer to all students. As a result, this requires substantial more work and effort on my part and cheapens the work done by other students who completed the assigned work at a high level.

9. Late Work

- (a) I do not accept late work.
 - i. I give a 8 hour grace period from the due date (normally 11:59 P.M. on the day a unit is due) to allow for slowness in internet connections or submission issues. If you are having trouble submitting an assignment, send me an email with the material so that I know the materials were completed on time.
 - ii. Additionally, I may allow an extension on an assignment if you explain why you cannot complete the unit or assignment at least 24 prior to the due date.

10. Submitting your Research Paper

- (a) All documents in the course may be submitted in two acceptable formats: word or pdf.
 - i. Word documents may either come in .doc or .docx format.
 - ii. If you are technically inclined, you may use \TeX or any other derivative (\LaTeX , \PDF\TeX , or \Xe\TeX) to compile a pdf. I don't need your source, I just need your PDF.

11. Feedback

- (a) I provide extensive feedback when I return written work. Many students that have taken my upper-level classes before know this, but it bears repeating. I will usually write a couple of paragraphs about your work. To do this, I have to read very carefully, so be aware that I read pretty carefully.

12. Evaluations

- (a) At the end of the semester, you will be given an opportunity to evaluate both myself and the course. The evaluation is not mandatory or required and I will not know what you write, but it will help make the course better in the future.

13. Attendance and Class Participation

- (a) Regular and active participation is an essential, unmistakably important aspect of this online course. All students are expected to do the work assigned, notify the instructor when emergencies arise.

14. Tracking

- (a) The learning management systems contains tracking features. Statistics are collected that quantifies how often and when students are active in the course and provides information if the student has accessed different pages of the course.

15. Absenteeism

- (a) All the course activities have set dates to be completed and submitted. After the due dates the activities will not be available for the students. Not logging into an online course is considered absenteeism. Contact instructor immediately in case of emergency medical situation.

University Services

The university provides a number of services to students. Make sure you take advantage of these services:

1. <http://www.utpb.edu/academics/undergraduate-success/TSAAD> ADA Accommodation/Support: (432) 552 2630
2. <http://cas.utpb.edu/academic-advising-center/e-advisor/> Advising UTPB E-Advisor
3. <http://www.bkstr.com/texas-permianbasinstore/home>: Bookstore: (432) 552-0220
4. <http://www.utpb.edu/services/ird> Email, Outlook 365, my.utpb.edu Information Resources Service
5. <http://www.utpb.edu/campus-life/financial-aid>: Financial Aid and Scholarship (432) 552-2620
6. Library (432) 552-2370
 - (a) <http://library.utpb.edu/>
7. Registrar: (432) 552-2635

- (a) <http://www.utpb.edu/services/academic-affairs/office-of-the-registrar>:
- 8. Student Services
 - (a) <http://www.utpb.edu/campus-life/dean-of-students>
- 9. Technical Support Canvas 1-866-437-0867
 - (a) <https://guides.instructure.com/>
- 10. Smarthinking
 - (a) <http://www.utpb.edu/online/reach/smarthinking-online-tutoring>¹

Technical Requirements

1. Technical Requirements as stipulated by REACH:
 - (a) <http://www.utpb.edu/online/reach/technical-requirements>
2. Students can use cloud version of Word, PowerPoint and other Microsoft products through use of their UTPB Outlook 365 and UTPB email address. For more information refer to Student Services below or visit:
 - (a) <http://www.utpb.edu/services/ird/information-on-computer-accounts-e-mail/office-365>
3. To obtain software licensing and media for selected Microsoft titles at very low cost through a software agreement visit:
 - (a) <http://www.utpb.edu/services/ird/information-for-students/software-distribution/microsoft-select>

Preparation for Emergencies

1. Computer Crash:
 - (a) Not having a working computer or a crashed computer during the semester will NOT be considered as an acceptable reason for not completing course activities at a scheduled time. NOTE: Identify a second computer before the semester begins, that you can use when/if your personal computer crashes.

¹This source will not help you in any way shape or form with this course. It is only in the syllabus at REACH's behest.

2. Complete Loss of Contact:

- (a) If you lose contact with course connectivity completely (i.e. you cannot contact me via Canvas or email), you need to call instructor, and leave message regarding connectivity loss and contact information.

3. Lost/Corrupt/Missing Files:

- (a) You must keep/save a copy of every project/assignment on an external drive, UTPB Outlook 365 OneDrive, or personal computer. In the event of any kind of failure (e.g. virus infection, student's own computer crashes, loss of files in cyberspace, etc) or any contradictions/problems, you may be required to resubmit the files.

End-of-Course Evaluation & Instructor Evaluation

1. Every student is encouraged to complete an end-of-course evaluation/survey provided by UTPB. During the last few weeks of class, you will receive an announcement through email notifying you that the Course/Instructor Survey is available. You may follow the link in the email to complete the survey using the same credentials to access your courses here. When entering the emailed Survey link you will see a list of surveys for you to complete.
2. The survey is anonymous and your responses are confidential. Your feedback is critical to us and to your instructor as we strive to improve our offerings, and our support of you, the students.

Important Academic Dates

1. UTPB Academic Calendar: <http://www.utpb.edu/services/academic-affairs/office-of-the-registrar/academic-calendar>

Disclaimer & Rights

1. Information contained in this syllabus was to the best knowledge of the instructor considered correct and complete when distributed for use in the beginning of the semester. However, the instructor reserves the right, acting within the policies and procedures of UTPB to make changes in the course content or instructional techniques without notice or obligation. The students will be informed about the changes, if any.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1: January 13-19

1. Course Readings
 - (a) Syllabus
 - (b) Section 1: Introduction to Political Science
2. Outside Readings
 - (a) Johnson, Buttolph Janet, Reynolds, H.T., Mycoff, Jason, D. 2016. Political Science Research Methods. CQ Press. Chapter 2.

Week 2: January 20-26

1. Course Readings
 - (a) Section 02: Research Questions, Theories, and Hypotheses
2. Outside Readings
 - (a) Read Johnson, Buttolph Janet, Reynolds, H.T., Mycoff, Jason, D. 2016. Political Science Research Methods. CQ Press. Chapter 3: 74-80.
 - (b) Johnson, Buttolph Janet, Reynolds, H.T., Mycoff, Jason, D. 2016. Political Science Research Methods. CQ Press. Chapter 4.
3. Written Work
 - (a) **Research Proposal due by Sunday, January 26, 11:59 P.M.**

Week 3: January 27-February 2

1. Course Readings
 - (a) Section 03: Measurement
2. Outside Readings
 - (a) Johnson, Buttolph Janet, Reynolds, H.T., Mycoff, Jason, D. 2016. Political Science Research Methods. CQ Press. Chapter 5.

Week 4: February 3-9

1. Course Readings
 - (a) Section 04: Literature Reviews
2. Outside Readings
 - (a) Johnson, Buttolph Janet, Reynolds, H.T., Mycoff, Jason, D. 2016. Political Science Research Methods.CQ Press. Chapter 3: 82-101.
3. Written Work
 - (a) **Midterm Exam due by Sunday, February 9**
 - (b) **Replicability and Political Science Discussion Assignment due by Sunday February 9 with the first post due by Friday, February 7, 11:59 P.M.**

Week 5: February 10-16

1. Course Readings
 - (a) Section 05: Sampling
2. Readings
 - (a) Johnson, Buttolph Janet, Reynolds, H.T., Mycoff, Jason, D. 2016. Political Science Research Methods.CQ Press. Chapter 7.
3. Written Work
 - (a) **Research Paper Rough Draft due by Sunday, February 16th, 11:59 P.M.**

Week 6: February 17-23

1. Course Readings
 - (a) Section 06: Central Tendency and Dispersion
2. Outside Readings
 - (a) Read Johnson, Buttolph Janet, Reynolds, H.T., Mycoff, Jason, D. 2016. Political Science Research Methods.CQ Press. Chapter 8: 348-360.
 - (b) Johnson, Buttolph Janet, Reynolds, H.T., Mycoff, Jason, D. 2016. Political Science Research Methods.CQ Press. Chapter 11: 361-385.

Week 7: February 24-March 1

1. Outside Readings

- (a) Johnson, Buttolph Janet, Reynolds, H.T., Mycoff, Jason, D. 2016. Political Science Research Methods.CQ Press. Chapter 12.

2. Written Work

Week 8: March 2-6

1. Written Work

- (a) **Final Research Paper w/ Revisions Memo due by Wednesday, March 4, 11:59 P.M.**
- (b) **Replicability and Political Science Discussion Assignment due by Friday, March 6th with the first post due by Wednesday, March 4th 11:59 P.M.**
- (c) **Midterm Exam due by Friday, March 6th, 11:59 P.M.**