

POLS 3800: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL RESEARCH

FALL 2018

TR 9:30-10:45

Classroom South 210 CRN: 82296

Professor: Kristina LaPlant
Email: klaplant1@gsu.edu
www.kristinalaplant.com

Office: Langdale #852
Ph: (404) 413-6192
Office Hours: TR 1:00pm-
4:00pm; *or by appointment*

I. Course Description and Learning Objectives

How do political scientists predict election outcomes? What are the factors that influence party identification in the electorate? Do people live longer in countries with government-sponsored healthcare? This class will provide you with the proper skills to not only determine and analyze



the answers to these questions, but will also teach you how to correctly *ask* the right types of research questions. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to political science research, prepare students to evaluate research critically, interpret social scientific research, and provide students with the requisite skills to initiate and conduct research.

- (1.1) Students will examine both quantitative and qualitative approaches in political science.
- (1.2) Students will utilize statistical software packages to analyze and interpret data pertaining to voting behavior, public opinion, state/local government, and international politics.
- (1.3) Students will critique various articles in in political science journals.
- (1.4) Students will explore both traditional and web-based information resources for conducting research in political science.
- (1.5) Students will be required to write a research paper. In this assignment students will develop a research question, conduct a literature review, articulate hypotheses, build a dataset, and perform statistical analyses of the data.

II. Required Text

Janet Buttolph Johnson, HT Reynolds, & Jason Mycoff. 2016.
Political Science Research Methods. **Eighth Edition**. Washington,
D.C.: CQ Press/SAGE.



III. Student Responsibilities

By taking this class you are responsible for a variety of requirements, assignments, and etiquette. The following paragraphs outline your responsibilities as a student in this class.

(3.1) Announcements and Communication

Students are responsible for checking their university email accounts and the iCollege course site daily. Any announcements or communications related to the class will be made via email. Please send all of your emails to: klaplant1@gsu.edu. I also highly encourage you to enable text notifications from iCollege on your mobile device.

(3.2) Attendance Policy

Attending class regularly is imperative to both understanding the material *and* passing the course. Students are required to attend every class. **After more than 2 absences half a letter grade will be deducted from your final grade for each subsequent absence.** For exceptions to this rule see section 5.3.

(3.3) Graded Assignments

Over the course of the semester you will be graded on four major assignments, each accounting for one-quarter of your final grade. A description of these assignments, due dates, and percentage distributions are listed below.

(3.3.1) *Homework Journal* 25 percent of grade

All students will be asked to keep a homework journal during the course of the semester. The main component of the homework journal will be the assigned mathematical problem sets from class. You may also be asked to critique scholarly articles from political science journals, or other outside readings, which must be included in the homework journal. After completing the assignments and homework, students should file the materials in a three-ring binder. The organization and completion of this journal should be very professional—the problem set answers should be legibly written and neatly organized. Since this journal accounts for 25% of the grade, my expectation is that students will devote sufficient time to the completion of the required assignments. The journal will be collected on three separate dates: September 20th, October 25th, and November 29th at the beginning of class. Late work will not be accepted.

(3.3.2) *Midterm Exam* 25 percent of grade

The midterm examination will test your knowledge over the first six weeks of material including how to define a research question, the difference between independent and dependent variables, measurement, sampling, and other topics. The midterm exam will take place on October 4th during regular class and will account for 25% of your final grade.

(3.3.3) *Research Paper* 25 percent of grade

Each student will select a topic that incorporates quantitative political science research. Sample topics will be distributed on the first day of class.

The research paper involves the articulation of a research question, a scholarly literature review, formulation of hypotheses, construction of a dataset, and statistical analyses of the data. At the end of this process, each student should produce at least a 10-15 page research paper. The paper must be typed, double-spaced, stapled and include proper citations. A grading rubric will be distributed to the class which outlines my expectations for the paper's organization, format, and citation style.

In order to complete this paper over the next 16 weeks, you will be required to meet various milestone deadlines to help keep you on track. **Failure to submit the required materials for each milestone will result in an automatic letter grade deduction from the final research paper grade.** Requirements for these assignments will be uploaded to the *Research Paper Guidelines* folder on the iCollege course site. Please see the table below for milestone due dates.

<i>Milestone</i>	Due Date
Paper Topic Due	September 4 th 11:59 PM (via iCollege)
Literature Review & Hypotheses	October 11 th 11:59 PM (via iCollege)
Dataset Due	November 8 th 11:59 PM (via iCollege)
Final Paper Due	December 2 nd 11:59 PM (via iCollege)

(3.3.4) *Final Exam*

25 percent of grade

The final exam will cover the lecture materials and readings after the midterm. The exam will be the same general format as the midterm, but it will emphasize the in-class calculation work since the midterm. The final exam will be held on **Thursday, December 6th from 8:00AM-10:30 AM**

IV. Assignment/Exam Schedule and Grading

In this class you will be graded on four major assignments: a) Homework Journal, b) midterm exam, c) final examination, and d) research paper. The final exam will be cumulative as a firm understanding of data analytics relies upon understanding the fundamentals of the methodological process.

Grade Component	Date	Time	Percentage of Grade
Homework Journal	September 20 October 25 November 29	Beginning of Class	25%
Midterm	October 4 th	9:30AM-10:45AM	25%
Research Paper	December 2 nd	11:59 PM	25%
Final Exam	December 6th	8:00AM-10:30AM	25%

(4.1) Grading Scale

You must earn a grade of at least C (73-76) to pass this course. This class will use plus-minus grading. Grades will conform to the following scale:

A+ 98-100, A 93-97, A- 90-92, B+ 87-89, B 83-86, B- 80-82, C+ 77-79, C 73-76, C- 70-72, D 60-69, F<60

V. Classroom Policies

(5.1) Makeup Exams

There will be no make-up exams. If you miss an exam you will receive a zero. If you are late to an exam you will only have the time that remains to complete your exam. See section 5.3.

“Problems and Emergencies” for the only exception to this rule. In the case of a documented emergency or problem you will be given the chance to make-up your exam which will be much more difficult and analytical than the regular exams distributed in class.

(5.2) Cheating and Academic Misconduct

Violations of the academic dishonesty rules are grounds for receiving an “F” in this course. If you have any questions about what constitutes as cheating, academic misconduct, or plagiarism, examine the university policy and/or ask the professor. Please see the University’s Policy on Academic Dishonesty (Section 409) for details.

(5.3) Problems and Emergencies

If a problem or emergency arises that prevents you from attending class or an exam you should contact Professor LaPlant as soon as possible (klaplant1@gsu.edu).

(5.4) Disability Policy

Georgia State University complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who seek academic accommodations must first take appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services located in Suite 230 of the Student Center. Please advise the professor if you have a documented disability that requires accommodation.

(5.5) Policy on Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to, receiving phone calls during class hours, texting, or frequently leaving the classroom during lecture. **All cell phones and other communication devices must be turned off.** Students who disrupt the learning environment will be asked to leave the classroom without warning.

(5.5.1.) Electronic Devices

Laptops are provisionally allowed for this course. If, throughout the semester, I see anyone abusing this privilege by interacting with social media, playing online games, or any other disruptive activity I reserve the right to ban the use of laptop computers for the remainder of the semester.

(5.6) University Policy on Incompletes and Withdrawals

For GSU policy on Incompletes please see <http://www.cas.gsu.edu/incompletes.html>, and for

GSU Policy on hardship withdrawals, please see: <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwdos/hardship.html>. The last day to withdraw from courses and receive a “W” on your transcript is Tuesday, October 9. It is your responsibility to manage your classes.

(5.7) Course Evaluations

Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation.

VI. Tentative Course Schedule

Below is an outline of the course schedule and assigned readings for each week. The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.

August 21/23: Introduction to Political Research and the Empirical Approach

- Syllabus Review (Tuesday)
- Johnson *et al.* Ch. 2 (read by Thursday)

August 28/30: Beginning the Research Process

- Johnson *et al.* Ch. 3 (read by Tuesday)
- Developing a Research Question (Thursday)

Sept 4/6: The Cornerstones of Research: Hypotheses and Variables

- Johnson *et al.* Ch. 4 (read by Tuesday)
- Research Paper Topic Due (Tuesday, September 4th 11:59PM via iCollege)

Sept 11/13: Basics of Research Design: Measurement and Operationalization

- Johnson *et al.* Ch. 5 (read by Tuesday)
- Collecting Data and Measuring Variables (Thursday)

Sept 18/20: Research Design: Making Causal Inferences

- Johnson *et al.* Ch. 6 (read by Tuesday)
- First Homework Journal Due (Thursday, Sept. 20th beginning of class)

Sept 25/27: Sampling & Survey Methods

- Johnson *et al.* Ch. 7 (read by Tuesday)

Oct 2/4: Midterm Prep Week

- Johnson *et al.* Ch 10 (read by Tuesday) & Midterm Exam Review
- Midterm Exam (Thursday, all-class Oct 4th)

Oct 9/11: Descriptive Statistics

- Last day to withdraw (Oct 9th)
- Johnson *et al.* Ch. 11 (read by Tuesday)
- Research Paper Literature Review Due (Thursday, Oct 11th 11:59PM via iCollege)

Oct 16/18: Statistical Inferences

- Johnson *et al.* Ch. 12 (read by Tuesday)

Oct 23/25: Statistical Inferences (cont'd)

- Collecting and Analyzing Data

Oct 30/Nov 1: Examining the Relationship Between Two Variables: Bivariate Analysis

- Johnson *et al.* Ch. 13 (read 412-449 by Tuesday)
- Second Homework Journal Due (Thursday Oct 25)

Nov 6/8: Bivariate Analysis (cont'd)

- Johnson *et al.* Ch. 13 (read 449-515 by Tuesday)
- Dataset Due (Thursday, November 8th 11:59 PM via iCollege)

Nov 13/15: Research Paper Workshop

- STATA LAB: Langdale 505 (Tuesday & Thursday)

WEEK 14: Thanksgiving Break No Class (Nov 19-24)

Nov 27/29: Final Research Paper Workshop and Final Exam Review

- STATA Lab Workshop: Langdale 505 (Tuesday)
- Final Homework Journal Collection (**Nov. 29th beginning of class**)
- Final STATA Lab Workshop/Final Exam Review: Langdale 505 (Thursday)

*****FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DEADLINE AND FINAL EXAM*****

- Research Paper Due: **Sunday, December 2nd 11:59 PM via iCollege.**
- **Final Exam: Thursday, December 6th from 8:00AM-10:30 AM, CLSO 210**