

Research Design for Political Science
POLS 3031
Fall 2019

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Office Hours
Wednesday 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM and 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM
Thursday 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM

by appointment and walk-in

Class Time
Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 AM - 10:45 AM
CRN 83269
Bate 1013

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the methods political scientists use to answer questions empirically. The goals of the course are to (1) provide students with analytic tools to critically evaluate both social science research and causal arguments found in everyday life, and, (2) improve students' abilities to pose research questions of their own and design strategies to answer those questions.

Course Goals

The goal of this course is to familiarize students with the strategies for crafting hypotheses and testing these hypotheses. Students will become more employable as a byproduct of taking this course. Understanding how to think about how to frame research questions will translate readily to the work environment outside the classroom. Jobs in politics, marketing, public relations, business, etc. often require analytical skills such as the ones taught in this course. Research design teaches one how to think about political phenomena and how to explain phenomena. Learning research design encourages us to think beyond simplistic explanations. We are encouraged to think about confounding factors. Moreover, we think about how to set up rigorous tests of our hypotheses of how the world works.

Learning Objectives

This course will prepare students to:

- Formulate research questions
- Craft hypotheses
- Design a research plan to test hypotheses
- Determine appropriate methodologies for inquiry

Readings

Toshkov, Dimitar. 2016. *Research Design in Political Science*. London: Red Globe Press.

Grading

Homework Assignments	20%	
Quizzes	15%	
Exam I	20%	October 1, 2019
Exam II	20%	December 12, 2019 (8:00 AM – 10:30 AM)
Final Project	25%	December 3, 2019

Grading System

93 – 100	A
90 – 92	A-
88 – 89	B+
83 – 87	B
80 – 82	B-
78 – 79	C+
73 – 77	C
70 – 72	C-
68 – 69	D+
63 – 67	D
60 – 62	D-
Less than 60	F

Homework Assignments

There will be frequent assignments. These will involve problems and writing assignments. If there are multiple pages, please staple the pages together. All homework assignments are due at the beginning of class. You should be prepared to discuss the homework assignments during class. You may want to make a copy of the assignment, so that you will have it to refer to in class. I will feel comfortable calling upon you, regardless of whether you have your hand raised.

Quizzes

Quizzes will be in-class and unannounced. They may be given at the beginning, the middle, or the end of class. If you are not there for the start of a quiz, it will count as a missed quiz. The highest 75% of the quizzes (however many there will be is to be determined) will count. So, if there are four quizzes, the highest three will count. If there are eight, the highest 6 will count.

Examinations

There will be two examinations over the course of the term. These are designed to test your comprehension of material covered in readings, lectures, and homework assignments. These examinations will be closed-note and closed-book.

Final Project

Each student is expected to produce a final project. Students will be required to generate a hypothesis. I expect that you will be able to provide me with a listing of your hypotheses and the variables available to test the hypothesis.

You will turn in a document that specifically details your hypothesis statements. Attached to each hypothesis statement will be a listing of the variables used, coding, and frequencies. You are to also provide me the full name of the dataset and the source of the data. If you any recodes are appropriate, you must tell me how the variables should be recoded. Also for each variable you will identify the level of measurement. This must be typed (or, of course, word processed). You must detail the relationship you hypothesize there to be between the dependent and independent variables.

Aside from writing the final project up, you will make a presentation to me during the last full week of the semester. Prepare for this like you are making a report to an employer who will be evaluating the overall quality of the presentation. You are trying to convince this employer that you are worth your salary.

Every effort will be made to get graded material back to you by the next class session. All students are expected to attend class. I expect all students to have completed the assigned reading by class. As this is a hands-on class, much of class time will be devoted to working on the material, as opposed to simply lecturing about it.

Students with Disabilities

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138. Phone number: 252-737-1016.

Class Decorum

I expect all students to exhibit a high level of courtesy toward each other. Please arrive on time and stay for the entire class. While I endorse the reading of newspapers and the listening to music, please refrain from doing either in class. If you make use of a computer in class, either a laptop or a tablet, please make certain that it is only for class material. In fact, you would probably be better served to take your notes by hand rather than typing them during class. Also, there is NO excuse for texting, Facebooking, and the like during class time. Please be respectful while other students are asking or answering a question. Treat those individuals as you would wish to be treated. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Academic Integrity: The standard plagiarism and academic integrity rules apply, i.e. all the materials you submit must be the result of your own individual work. Any signs of plagiarism will be taken very seriously. The university code of academic integrity will be strictly enforced in this course. According to the East Carolina University Honor Code, violations of academic integrity include the following:

- *Cheating.* Unauthorized aid or assistance or the giving or receiving of unfair advantage on any form of academic work.
- *Plagiarism.* Copying the language, structure, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and adopting same as one's own original work. DO NOT submit someone else's homework.
- *Falsification.* Statement of any untruth, either spoken or written, regarding any circumstances relative to academic work.
- *Attempts.* Attempting any act that if completed would constitute an academic integrity violation as defined herein.

For more information about university policies concerning academic integrity, please visit the web at <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/currentfacultymanual/part6section2.pdf>. If you violate the Honor Code you will be reported to the Academic Integrity Board for disciplinary action. The penalties for violating the university code of academic integrity *range* from having assigned an F for that assignment to more stringent measures such as failure, assigned grade of XF on the transcript, in the course and/or expulsion from the university.

Campus Emergencies and Severe Weather: In case of campus wide emergencies, you may obtain information about changes in the University class schedule by calling 252 328-0062.

ECU Alert: In addition, in case of adverse weather or other campus emergencies you may consult <http://www.ecu.edu/alert/> for information.

If and when face-to-face classes are suspended, you will receive an email from me that details how we will communicate, where you can locate course information, and what you can expect during this time period.

Course Schedule

Week 1 Introduction and Review of the Nature of Scientific Inquiry	● Chapter 1
Week 2 Studying Politics Scientifically	● Chapter 2
Weeks 3 and 4 Theory in the Research Process	● Chapter 3
Weeks 5 and 6 Concepts and Operationalization	● Chapter 4
Weeks 7 and 8 Measurement and Description	● Chapter 5
Week 9 Explanation and Causality	● Chapter 6
Weeks 10 and 11 Experimental Designs	● Chapter 7
Week 12 Large-N	● Chapter 8
Week 13 Comparative Designs	● Chapter 9
Week 14 Communicating Research	● Chapter 12
Week 15 Review	