Introduction to Political Research
PSCI 2300 | Spring 2020
Department of Political Science, University of North Texas
Dr. Melissa McKay

Instructor information:
Melissa McKay, Ph.D.
Office: Wooten Hall Room 154
Office Hours: T/Th 2:00-3:30pm, and by appointment
Political Science Main Office: Wooten 125
Email: melissa.mckay@unt.edu
(I will only email you on your university account)

Class Information:
Meeting times: 3:30-4:50pm Tuesday & Thursday
Meeting place: Wooten Hall 121
Online classroom: unt.instructure.com

Course Description:
This course introduces students to the strategies, techniques, and importance of thinking systematically about politics, policies, and behaviors. Students will learn skills to help them think critically and apply social science methods to create and execute a political science research project. Upon completion of this course students should be able to critically analyze arguments and claims, utilize and understand empirical data, formulate political questions to be answered systematically, and create testable methods to examine these questions.

Class Overview:
This class includes weekly lectures and class discussions and activities focused on the political science research methods. Students should plan to attend class, participate in all classroom discussions, and ensure familiarity with auxiliary resources as introduced in-class or via Canvas. Please recognize that in-class lectures are not opportunities for me to regurgitate assigned readings, and not all reading topics will be given equal time in class discussions. Come to class prepared to take notes and participate.

Class Communications:
I have listed my office hours above. If you have any questions about the course, or anything else you want to talk about, please feel free to stop by and chat during those hours. If those aren’t convenient times, send me an email and I’ll do my best to accommodate – even if that means an online meeting via Zoom. You can send me a note via Canvas, or email me directly at the address provided above. Please allow me around 24 hours to get back to you, but if it’s been longer and you haven’t heard back, don’t be shy about sending me a reminder. I have a handful of other classes, so my off-hours vary throughout the week. If you send a note on Friday-Sunday, please expect that I most likely will not write you back until Monday afternoon (I have classes Monday).


Consistent and reliable access to the internet, required Canvas add-on apps

Grading: Final grades are numerically based on the number of points achieved on the following weighted assignment types:

**Exams:** 20% each (40% of total grade)
2 exams will be online via Canvas, closed book/resources, consisting of a combination of questions, essays, and problems.

**Homework Assignments** – 20% of total grade
Throughout the semester we will construct the elements of a political science research project, each will be graded individually.

**Research Project** – 20% of total grade
The cumulative, final product of the student’s homework assignments. *(more discussion on this in class)*

**Dr. McKay’s Totally Mandatory Book Club** – 20% of total grade
Reading actual books seems to be a lost or at least dying concept, and success in college wholeheartedly depends on your ability to read, comprehend, and interpret your assigned readings. I like to try to incorporate reading relevant and topical books where I can. Throughout the semester we will be reading *The Signal and the Noise* together. In true book club fashion, we will all read the same chapters at a specified time and answer questions based on those chapters and discuss the book within our assigned group.

*Letter grades are assigned based on standard grade scales:*

- A – 90-100%
- B – 80-89%
- C – 70-79%
- D – 60-69%
- F – 59 - under

*Grading Notes:*
- Final grades will be based on the weighted outcomes of the assignments above. I use standard mathematical rounding if necessary.
- Please do not request extra credit. If there is an activity that I feel would be relevant I will offer it to the entire class. I cannot and definitely will not provide extra credit opportunities for individual students.
• If you feel like your grades are slipping or you are falling behind, please reach out to me immediately. Too many students wait until their semester progress is a lost cause, but if we catch it early enough we can most likely work together on a plan of action.

Misc. University and Department Policies

Technical Support
As much as I like to think I’m technically proficient, I am pretty much useless as a technical support resource so if you experience any kind of technical problem (especially during exams), please contact:
Student Helpdesk:
UIT Helpdesk
Sage Hall 130
940-565-2324
helpdesk@unt.edu

Please note: If you experience a loss of internet connection, WIFI signal, or your browser freezes up on you during an assignment or exam, you must contact the UNT resources first, then send me an email with the problem you experienced and how you’re addressing it. If you fail to complete an assignment or exam because of technical issues, there is nothing we can do if you do not tell us right away.

Academic Integrity: [https://vpaa.unt.edu/fs/resources/academic/integrity](https://vpaa.unt.edu/fs/resources/academic/integrity)

ADA Policy
The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at [https://disability.unt.edu](https://disability.unt.edu) You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

Federal Regulation
To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please go to the Electronic Code of Federal
Regulations website at [http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at "Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G)" and can be found buried within this document.
## Class Schedule Spring 2020

*Please note: this is our schedule outline, is it NOT the complete detailed list of all assignments, due dates, and readings.*

*Subject to change at instructor’s discretion*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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| 1    | Political Science?  
   - K&W Chapter 1 | No assignment due first week |
| 2    | Types of political science research approaches and strategies  
   - Canvas readings | Research problem statement due by 11:59pm Sunday 02/02/20 |
| 3    | **Theory and Theory Building**  
   - K&W Chapter 2  
   - Canvas readings and activities | Start working on your research project  
   Read Silver |
| 4    | Existing research, how to find and use literature resources, writing literature reviews  
   - Canvas readings and activities | Continue progress on research project  
   (annotated bib due next week)  
   Read Silver |
| 5    | Finding causality  
   - K&W Chapter 3  
   Book Club #1 | Annotated Bibliography Due by 11:59pm Sunday 02/16/2020  
   Book Club Chapters 1-3 discussion due by 11:59pm Sunday 2/16/2020 |
| 6    | **Exam 1**  
   Hypothesis Testing  
   - Canvas readings and activities | Continue progress on research project  
   Read Silver |
| 7    | **Measurement & Data**  
   - K&W Chapter 6  
   - Canvas reading | Continue progress on research project  
   (theory and hypotheses due next week)  
   Read Silver |
<p>| 8    | <strong>Book Club</strong> | Theory &amp; Testable Hypotheses Due 11:59pm Sunday 03/08/20 |</p>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book Club Chapters 4-7 Discussion Due by 11:59pm on Sunday 3/08/2020</td>
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<td><strong>-- SPRING BREAK --</strong></td>
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| 9 | **Research Designs**  
  - K&W Chapter 4  
  - Canvas readings | Continue progress on research project  
  (research designs due next week)  
  Read Silver |
| 10 | **Probability and Inference**  
  - K&W Chapter 7  
  - Canvas | Research Designs due 11:59pm Sunday 03/29/20  
  Read Silver |
| 11 | **Quantitative Research and Case Studies**  
  - Canvas readings and activities  
  Book Club | Continue progress on research project  
  Book Club Chapters 7-10 Discussion due by 11:59pm Sunday 4/05/2020 |
| 12 | **Introduction to models**  
  - K&W Chapters 8,9 | Continue progress on research project |
| 13 | **Putting it all together**  
  Book Club | Book Club Chapters 11-Conclusion due |
| 14 | **Critical Analysis of Contemporary Research and Policy**  
  Reading and comprehending research  
  - Canvas readings | |
| 15 | **In-class writing lab**  
  Review for exam | Final Research Project Due by noon (12:00pm) Friday May 1, 2020 |

*Make sure you are keeping up with the Canvas syllabus and modules, as that information is updated more frequently and contains all auxiliary reading and assignments*