Political Science 3300: Introduction to Political Research

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Office hours:
On campus W 12:00-1:30
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Pedagogical Goals

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to basic approaches to studying political science. The course will provide students with an understanding of the means by which politics can be studied in a scientific manner–social science. In this approach, political scientists do not presume to be able to derive laws in the same way that physical scientists do. Rather, political science looks to examine and understand regularities that influence people's political behavior and the behavior of political systems. The primary goals of this course are for students to think about politics scientifically, conduct basic data analysis, *and* be able to evaluate reading in their other social science courses through the scientific method.

Course Requirements:

Students are responsible for all the material in the readings and discussed in lectures. The two required texts for the course are:

- Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research Methods, 3rd ed.* ISBN 978-1-316-64267-2

- Monogan, James E. *Political Analysis Using R* (access through UNT library web-site).

All other assigned readings come from actual research articles on the the class Canvas site or the library web-site (`https://library.unt.edu`). It is *extremely* important that you read all materials before the assigned dates and attend class or view the lecture to understand how the readings from research articles complement material from the textbook. Additional materials may be posted to Canvas as circumstances arise. Grades for the course will be based upon assignments (30%), a research paper (20%), a midterm exam (20%), and a final exam (30%).

Assignments and Research Paper

The assignments and research paper in this class are geared toward introducing you to conducting quantitative political science research. Three of the assignments are conceptual in nature. The goal of these assignments is to think about the practical steps in developing a research project. The other three assignments involve learning statistical and computing tools to conduct political analysis. Your research paper will directly be a product of the conceptual assignments and will indirectly benefit from the computer assignments.

The research paper and several of the assignments involve data analysis using a statistical software program called R. Unlike many other commonly-used statistical packages, R is completely free, via the CRAN (Comprehensive R Archive Network) archive. This means you do not have to incur extra expense for a package to put on your computer or rely on campus resources. R is an extremely powerful program, but

understand that R is a language. As with any language, understanding how to use one will help you learn how to use others, but there is also some learning curve. It is not the most intuitive program to use–a silver lining of this is that many employers in political analysis and elsewhere want people who can program in R and are willing to pay them reasonably well. Fortunately, the Monogan book (also FREE!!!) via electronic resources on the UNT library web-site provides a very good introduction for how to use R to conduct political science research. Supplemental materials that you can download provide data and examples of source code that Monogan used to create the examples in his book will be necessary for completing assignments and are available on Canvas.

I cannot stress this enough, R is not easy. You will need to pay close attention to the presentation in Monogan's book and in class sessions where data analysis is covered. Assignments and the research paper will not require you to go beyond any of the methods that are described in the Monogan book. The TA and I will be glad to help you understand how to use R, but only after you have tried to solve problems on your own and can show us the code you've tried and your output.

- Students are required to submit their papers by the due date to Turnitin, a web-based plagiarism detection service through the class Canvas site. Before submitting your paper to Turnitin, please remove your title page and other personal information. Also, it is your responsibility to confirm that your papers and exams are uploaded correctly and in a readable form to Turnitin by the due date.

- On papers, you need to *cite readings* to support your arguments. Papers that do not refer to the readings will lose credit.

- Assignment are due by class time (11:00 am) on the date of the assignment. Assignments are considered late and immediately lose points (10%) starting at 11:01 am.

- Assignments that are not turned in on Canvas on time will lose 10 points per 24 hour period up to four days. After four days, assignments will not be accepted.

Exams

- Exams will be administered online at the time specified on the syllabus.

- Questions on the exams will be drawn from both the readings and the lectures. Answers should refer to the readings and arguments discussed in class.

- Makeup exams will be given only for **documented** absences, with the exception of extended medical problems or family emergencies (in these cases, it is likely you can take an incomplete and complete the course at such time as the medical problems or emergency allow).

Academic Integrity Policy and Plagiarism Certification

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Students should review the policy, which may be located at `https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003`. Faculty are required to submit reports of violations of academic dishonesty even in instances that do not result in sanctions. There will be no deviation from this policy.

Plagiarism is an ongoing concern. While some students deliberately misrepresent the work of others as their own work, others do so through ignorance and misunderstanding of what constitutes plagiarism. Ignorance, however, is not an acceptable excuse and can still place you under a cloud of suspicion. To insure that students are aware of proper citation practices to avoid plagiarism, I require that all students complete the convenient on-line tutorial and certification available at `https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/index.html`. Once you have completed the tutorial, you should take the certification test for undergraduate college students. Upon successful completion, you must send your certification to the TA through the class's Canvas messaging. **We will only accept certification documentation through a message to the TA via Canvas**. You must have received certification before the due date for your literature review paper. Failure to submit certification by that date will result in a 15-point deduction for that assignment. Failure to submit the certification by the due date for successive papers will also result in 15-point deductions for those assignments.

Extra Credit and Grades

You should *not* expect extra credit. If I do offer extra credit, it is only when I can make it available to everyone in the class and when it furthers some educational goal that complements the goals of the course curriculum. I will not offer it as a "do-over" to students who have not completed their work satisfactorily. If you need a particular grade to graduate, maintain a particular GPA, etc. make sure you are putting in the effort to get that grade. If problems arise, address them early before they become unresolvable.

Grades will be posted on Canvas in a timely fashion. In the event of discrepancies with those grade records, discrepancies must be resolved within two weeks of their posting. So be sure to check on your assignments and tests in a timely manner. If I do not have a record of your taking an exam or doing an assignment and you cannot produce the evidence that you did the work, your grade on that exam or assignment will be 0. Again, it is your responsibility to confirm that files are uploaded correctly to Canvas. Finally, keeping apprised of your standing with respect to your grades is your responsibility. Use the percentages above to calculate a rough estimate of your current grade. The TA and I will not calculate your overall grade during the semester.

Classroom Policies

With respect to classroom policies, I assume that you are adults who are either capable of making your own decisions regarding your best interests or at the time when you need to start learning how to make such decisions. I also assume that most, if not all, of you are in college to prepare yourself in some way for professional life beyond college. As such, you should ask yourself whether your actions in this class are preparing you to conduct yourself successfully in that life.

- COVID-19 Impact on Attendance

Given the pandemic, in-person attendance is not required. If you do attend, please do so only on the day that you are registered for in order to allow us to maintain social distance within the classroom. If you do not attend lecture in person, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of remote access. Zoom sessions will allow students to participate live remotely. All lectures will be recorded on Panopto and Zoom and will be available through Canvas.

Likewise, if you do attend, you are required to wear a mask–**NO EXCEPTIONS**. Face coverings are required in all UNT facilities. Students are expected to wear face coverings during this class. Since you have the option of receiving all content remotely, in-person attendance means that you agree to adhere to the mask requirement. Disposable masks are available for students at a number of locations on campus. Please

refer to `https://vpaa.unt.edu/return` for a list of locations. If you are unable to wear a face covering due to a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Access to request an accommodation. UNT face covering requirements are subject to change due to community health guidelines. Any changes will be communicated via the instructor.

It is important for all of us to be mindful of the health and safety of everyone in our community, especially given concerns about COVID-19. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 (`https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html`) please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Hotline at 844-366-5892 or COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure. While attendance is an important part of succeeding in this class, your own health, and those of others in the community, is more important.

- Class Recordings & Student Likenesses

Synchronous (live) sessions in this course will be recorded for students enrolled in this class section to refer to throughout the semester. Class recordings are the intellectual property of the university or instructor and are reserved for use only by students in this class and only for educational purposes. Students may not post or otherwise share the recordings outside the class, or outside the Canvas Learning Management System, in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

- Class Materials for Remote Instruction

Students will need access to a microphone to participate in fully remote portions of the class; although, without a microphone you can still listen to the lecture and post questions through the Chat feature in Zoom. Information on how to be successful in a remote learning environment can be found at `https://online.unt.edu/learn`.

Disabilities Accommodation

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking 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 an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of 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 accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at `http://disability.unt.edu`.

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004)

The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University

takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify you with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

1 Fundamentals of Political Science

1.1 Introduction (Jan. 11)

This lecture will cover basic course requirements and discuss the value of understanding how to analyze political behavior through the scientific method.

1.2 The Scientific and Ethical Study of Politics (Jan. 13-15)

These lectures makes the argument that human political behavior can be studied in a scientific manner and describes the process by which political behavior can be studied scientifically and ethically.

1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 1.

2. van Wolkenten, et al. 2007. Inequity Responses of Monkeys Modified by Effort. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science (PNAS)*, 104(47), pp.18854-18859.

3. Bond, Jon. 2007. The Scientification of the Study of Politics: Some Observations on the Behavioral Evolution in Political Science. *The Journal of Politics*, 69(4), pp.897-907.

4. The NIH Human Subjects Training Module (see Canvas) – **SKIM**

5. Fried, Brian J., Paul Lagunes, and Atheendar Venkataramani. 2010. Corruption and Inequality at the Crossroad: A Multimethod Study of Bribery and Discrimination in Latin America. *Latin American Research Review*, 46(1), pp.76-97.

$\implies$ No class for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day holiday (Jan. 18)

1.3 Research Questions, Literature Review, and Plagiarism (Jan. 20-25)

These lectures will cover how to generate a research question and review relevant literature that will help you hone your question. This section will also point you to a self-directed tutorial that will help you understand how to avoid plagiarism.

1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 2.

2. `https://guides.library.unt.edu/PSCI3300/PoliticalResearch`

3. Plagiarism review `https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/index.html`.

1.4   Theory and Causation (Jan. 27-Feb. 3)

These lectures describe the elements that are necessary for a valid scientific theory of political behavior.

1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 3.

2. Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Henry Brady, and Norman H. Nie. 1993. Race, Ethnicity, and Political Resources: Participation in the United States. *British Journal of Political Science*, 23(4), pp.453-497.

***Research question and literature review assignment due Feb. 3.

2   Exploring Political Data

2.1   Getting Started with R (Feb. 5-10)

This class will demonstrate how to set up and start using R for statistical analysis.

1. Monogan, Ch.1-2.

2.2   Univariate Description and Statistics (Feb. 24-Mar. 1)

These lectures will discuss the various ways to describe how single variables are distributed and how to use R to present univariate statistics.

1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 6.

2. Monogan, Ch. 3-4.

***Theory development assignment due Mar. 1

2.3   Conceptualization and Measurement (Mar. 3-8)

The conceptualization and measurement of key concepts is essential in any scientific endeavor. These lectures will discuss various issues involved in defining central concepts in theories of political behavior and when developing measures of those concepts.

1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 5.

2. Gurr, Ted Robert. 1974. Persistence and Change in Political Systems, 1800-1971. *The American Political Science Review*, 68(4), pp.1482-1504.

3. Munck, Gerardo L. and Jay Verkuilen. 2002. Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices. *Comparative Political Studies*, 35(1), pp.5-34.

3 Research Design and Analysis

3.1 Sampling and Case Selection (Mar. 10-12)

It is not practical–or necessary–to examine every possible case when testing scientific theories of politics. An important element of designing a research project involves identifying relevant cases for analysis. These lectures will discuss relevant factors that researchers need to consider when selecting cases to study.

1. Lijphart, Arend. 1971. Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method. *American Political Science Review*, 65(2), pp. 682-693.

2. Geddes, Barbara. 1990. How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis*, 2, pp.131–150.

***Univariate Stats assignment due Mar. 10.

3.2 Experiments (Mar. 15-17)

These lectures present experiments as a "gold standard" for isolating causal relations in the scientific investigation of political behavior and describe how the logic of an experimental design can be useful for developing research designs when experimental methods are either impractical or unethical.

1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 4.1-4.2.

2. Druckman, James, Donald Philip Green, James Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. 2006. The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science. *American Political Science Review*, 100(4), pp. 627-635.

3. Iyengar, Shanto, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder. 1982. Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs. *American Political Science Review*, 76(4), pp. 848-858.

4. Alvarez R. Michael, Ines Levin, Julia Pomares, and Marcelo Leiras. 2013. Voting Made Safe and Easy: the Impact of e-Voting on Citizen Perceptions. *Political Science Research Methods*, 1(1), pp.117-135.

*** Midterm exam (Mar. 19)

3.3 Bivariate Statistical Analysis (Mar. 22-26)

This lecture will discuss the various ways to describe how two variables covary with one another.

1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 8-9.

2. Monogan, Ch. 5.

***Conceptualization, Measurement, and Case Selection assignment due Mar. 24.

3.4 Inference (Mar. 29-31)

This lecture will discuss the proper ways to use statistical evidence to draw inferences regarding scientific theories of politics.

1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 7.

***No classes on April 2.

3.5 Quasi-Experiments (Apr. 5-9)

Quasi-experiments mimic the experimental method, but they do not provide the same degree of control as experiments. These lectures will describe different ways to isolate causal relations when experimental control is not available.

1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 4.3-4.5.

2. Lazarsfeld, et al. *The People's Choice*, Ch. 1 & 8 (Canvas).

3. Owsiak, Andrew P. 2013. Democratization and International Border Agreements. *The Journal of Politics*, 75(3), pp.717–729.

***Bivariate Statistics Assignment due Apr. 5.

3.6 Multivariate Statistical Analysis (Apr. 12-16)

When an outcome could be explained by several related variables, bivariate statistics may provide a misleading explanation of the relationship we are interested in. These lectures will discuss the various ways to describe how two variables covary with one another when there are other variables that could be influencing the relationship.

1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 10.

2. Monogan, Ch. 6.

4 Conclusion (Apr. 19-21)

This lecture will provide an overview and review of the topics covered during the semester to describe an integrated view of the scientific study of politics.

***Multivariate Statistics Assignment (optional) due Apr. 19.

***Research papers are due Apr. 23.

Final Exam (April 26 10:30-12:30)

(Check Registrar's web-site to confirm date and time:
`http://registrar.unt.edu/exams/final-exam-schedule/spring`)