

Introduction to Political Science Research Methods

Political Science 209 (906)

Dr. Nehemia Geva

Fall 2007 (T R 6:15 – 7:30; 1016 Allen)

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Course Description:

The course is designed to introduce students to the philosophy and practice of social science and to the modes of research in major sub-fields of political science.

Students will be exposed to:

- a. The philosophical and conceptual basis of research;
- b. Research "technology" - measurement and data collection techniques;
- c. Hypothesis testing;
- d. Exemplifying research concerns in major sub-fields of political science.

Learning outcomes to Social and Behavior Sciences:

Students can expect to learn the following by the end of this course:

- (1) to define, understand, and use concepts and terms relevant to the empirical study of contemporary political science;
- (2) to analyze empirical evidence relevant to evaluating different points of view on political phenomena.

Course Policies, Requirements and Grading

General: This is a writing-intensive, or University-designated W course. Thus the course is also intended to improve your ability to write various kinds of papers that are appropriate to this discipline as well as to improve generally your writing skills as they might be of use in a range of professional settings. *Regardless of how well a paper you write addresses the substantive material for the assignment, it will not earn a passing grade unless your writing in the paper is also graded to be at a passing level.* Since one of the goals of the class is to assist you in learning how to write well in your upper-division classes and after graduation, I will provide considerable advice and feedback on outlines and drafts of the papers for the class.

Policies: Regular class attendance is expected (not required). Most of our class sessions will be lectures, though I always encourage questions and class participation. I also strongly encourage you to meet with me during my office hours or by appointment if you have questions about the course material, the papers, or your progress in the course.

Papers turned in late without a University-approved absence will be automatically penalized 5 points and then 5 points per each class day the paper is late. All of the papers will be graded, as appropriate to the assignment, on the substantive content, writing, and the degree to which they reflect class material.

The final grade will reflect the following components:

Papers:

- A paper reviewing defined issues in a research article [referred as PR] 30%
- A paper reporting a modest *data collection exercise* [referred as DC] 15%
- Tables, numbers and figures - two brief reports of basic statistical exercises [referred as RS1 RS2] 10%

Exams:

- Exam 1 (Multiple Choice Format) – covering the first 2 sections of the class (date below) 20%
- Exam 2 (Multiple Choice Format) - covering the last 3 sections of the class (date below) 20%

Participation: Includes taking part in approved experiments 5%

Required Text:

Johnson, J.B., R.A., & Reynolds H.T. 2005. *Political Science Research Methods* (5th Edition), Washington D.C., CQ Press. (noted below as JR)

Research Articles: (Electronically Reserved – see instructions at the end)

Chin M, Bond J., & Geva N. 2000. A Foot in the Door: An Experimental Study of PAC and Constituency Effects on Access *Journal of Politics* 2000, 62(2): 534-549.

Edwards, G.C. 1976. Presidential Influence in the House: Presidential Prestige as a Source of Presidential Power. *American Political Science Review*, 70, 101-113.

Mintz, A. & Geva, N. 1993. Why Don't Democracies Fight Each Other?: An Experimental Assessment of the Political Incentive Explanation *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37(3):484-503.

Rosenberg, S.W., Bohan, L., McCafferty, P., & Harris, K. 1986. The Image and the Vote: The Effect of Candidate Presentation on Voter Preference. *American Journal of Political Science*, 30, 108-27.

Suedfeld, P., & Bluck, S. 1988. Changes in Integrative Complexity Prior to Surprise Attacks. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 32, 626-635.

Points to consider:

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement: The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room 126 of the Koldus Building, or call 845-1637.

Copyright Statement: The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By "handouts," I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

Plagiarism Statement: As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the Aggie Honor System Office website (<http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor>) or the latest version of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, under the section "Scholastic Dishonesty."

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS (TENTATIVE)

(1) The Conceptual Basis

- 8-28 Introduction
- 8-30 Role of methodology in political science research. J.R.: 1, 2
[handout of PR]
- 9-4 The scientific language: concepts, variables & hypotheses J.R.: 4
9-6 - - - Scientific language - continued.
- 9-11 Measurement, validity & reliability J.R.: 6; Edwards
9-13 No Class
9-18 - - - Measurement – continued

(2) The Sources of Evidence - Data Collection

- 9-20 Observations *[turn in first draft of PR]* J.R.: 7
- 9-25 Questionnaires and surveys J.R.: 10
9-27 - - - Continued *[handout of DC]*
- 10-2 Documents and Secondary Sources J.R.: 8
- 10-4 **Exam 1**

(3) Research Design

- 10-9 Experimental Designs J.R.: 3 (49-74)
- 10-11 Natural Variations J.R.: 5 (74-99)
(time-series; cross sections; panels; case studies)
- 10-16 - - - Continued *[turn in draft of PR]*
- 10-18 Sampling J.R.: 9

(4) Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing: Statistical Inference

- 10-23 The Basics: descriptive statistics J.R.: 11
[handout of RS1] [turn in second draft of PR]
- 10-25 - - - continued
- 10-30 Tests for associations *[turn in RS1]* J.R.: 12
[handout of RS2]

11-1 - - - continued

11-6 Testing for differences [**turn in RS2**]

J.R.: 12

11-8 Hypotheses Testing

11-13 - - - continued [**turn in DC**]

(5) Research Examples and Summary

11-15 Examples of Domestic Politics Chin et al; Edwards; Rosenberg et al

11-20 Examples of IR Research Mintz & Geva; Suedfeld & Bluck [**PR due**]

11-22 *No Class: Thanksgiving*

11-27 Class demonstration

11-29 **Exam 2**

12-4 Review and reflections

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2. On the next page that comes up, click on *Electronic Reserves and Course Materials*.
3. On the next page, select my name in the "Select an Instructor" menu and click *Go*.
4. Click on any link that comes up associated with POLS 209.
5. Click on the title of the reading that you wish to access and it will open in a PDF file.
6. Read the item on the screen or, better, print a copy to read and save.
7. Exit the reserves and library links.