

POLITICAL SCIENCE 209: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL  
SCIENCE RESEARCH METHODS –  
A Writing Intensive, or W, Class

Section 904, MW 1:30 - 2:45 PM

Spring, 2008

ALLN 1005

Dr. Kim Hill

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Hours: TR 9:30 - 10:00 and 2:45- 3:30 PM or by appointment.

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the fundamentals of scientific research in the discipline of political science. It is required of all political science majors. They are further required to take it early in their curricula so that they can employ the knowledge gained in this class in their more advanced political science courses.

Science offers a particularly rigorous way to satisfy our curiosity about the natural world. *Political science* helps us answer such questions as why some Americans vote in elections and some do not, why nations go to war and under what conditions they do so, why members of Congress vote as they do on legislation – and a host of similar questions. Thus science provides a way to satisfy our curiosity about the political world just as it does about the physical world.

Science also has a particular logic, set of procedures, and terminology. Some of that logic, those procedures, and the terminology is shared by all sciences. But each scientific discipline creates some of its own standard procedures and terminology. Thus we must learn these “tools” so that we can use scientific methods appropriately and so that other political scientists can understand our work.

This course will focus to a considerable degree on the real-world political puzzles that engage the curiosity of political scientists. Thus we will discuss a number of the questions they are curious about and seek to answer. But we must also understand the nature of scientific research generally and the nature of *social science* research. Thus these will be topics considered in the course, as well. One of the common aims of science, besides simply satisfying our individual curiosity about the world is the creation of *theory* -- which is a distinctive form of explanation for natural phenomena. Thus we will also discuss theory construction and theory testing, and how they are carried out in political science. Finally, we will consider the fundamental procedures and tools of scientific research, including ones that determine how we define our subject matter scientifically, how we pose research questions scientifically, and how we seek answers to those questions using the scientific method.

### REQUIRED READINGS

There is one required text:

Janet Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, *Political Science Research Methods*, (CQ Press, **sixth** edition 2008). (referred to as "JR" in the reading assignments.)

There are also several readings on electronic reserve in the TAMU library. These readings are designated LR (library reserve) in the assignment list below. For instructions about how to access these readings, see the information at the end of this syllabus.

A few other readings are available, as noted below, from sites on the World Wide Web.

Finally, several readings in the syllabus from scholarly journals are available for downloading at [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org), from any TAMU computer and are so designated in the list below. For instructions about how to access these readings, see the information at the end of this syllabus.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The bulk of your final grade in this course will be based on four **papers** for the class that will vary in their length, character, and difficulty. **The grades on these separate papers will contribute the following percentages toward your final grade: First Paper – 10%, Second paper – 10%, Third Paper – 30%, Fourth Paper – 30%. Collectively, the grades on these papers will then be worth 80% of your final class grade.** Papers turned in late without *appropriate, written documentation of a University excused absence* will be automatically penalized 5 points and then 3 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, the quality of the writing, and the degree to which they reflect lecture material and information, as appropriate, from assigned readings.

What counts as a university excused absence?

The following reasons are considered excused by Texas A&M University (Section 7.1 from student rules <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule7.htm> )

1. Participation in an activity appearing on the university authorized activity list. You must notify your professor prior to the absence.
2. Death or major illness in a student's immediate family.
3. Illness of a dependent family member.
4. Participation in legal proceedings or administrative procedures that require a student's presence.
5. Religious holy day.
6. Illness that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class (to be determined by Health Center or off-campus physician).
7. Required participation in military duties.
8. Mandatory admission interviews for professional or graduate school which cannot be rescheduled.

Students who miss graded work for excused absence have a very limited amount of time to notify the professor that the absence was excused and provide documentation. For specific information, go to: <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/> and search for excused absence.

The command of the course material from the lectures and readings that you demonstrate in these papers is the most important determinant of your grades on them. **However, this 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, to learn how political science scholars and others who write professionally about politics do so most effectively, and to improve generally your writing skills as they might be of use in a range of professional settings. For the latter reasons your writing performance on these papers will be especially important. **Regardless of how well a paper 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.** But a principal goal of the class is to assist

you in learning how to write well in your upper-division classes and after graduation. Therefore, I will provide extensive instruction in writing throughout the course. Further, I will give you considerable advice on outlines and drafts of the papers for the class. Some of the required reading for the class also addresses appropriate writing skills and the organization of written material for different kinds of writing objectives.

In addition to the papers you will take a number of short **in-class quizzes**, either over the material you are assigned to read for a given class or on the material presented in the lecture on that day. (Class days on which I *anticipate* there will be quizzes are noted in the Schedule of Lecture and Discussion Topics below.) Further, we have several class sessions in the department computer lab, and attendance at these sessions will be graded as quiz grades. That is, if you are in attendance for any such session, you get a 100 for one quiz grade. If you do not attend, you get a zero. **These quizzes will count equally toward the total quiz grade for the semester, which will itself account for 20% of your final grade.**

If you miss a class and thus a quiz, you must have a valid *university excused absence that is appropriately documented* for the relevant class day to be able to take a make-up version of the quiz. Without a University-excused absence, you will earn a zero for the quiz. I will drop your lowest quiz grade, however, before calculating your final, overall quiz grade.

Participation in class discussion, especially when informed by thoughtful consideration of the relevant reading material, will be taken into account as a positive factor for students whose final course average based on the grades on the papers and the quizzes is on the margin between two letter grades.

## COURSE POLICIES

Regular class attendance is expected but not required, except of course I will be giving quiz grades for attendance at computer lab sessions. Most of our other class sessions will be lectures; a few will be entirely class discussion. I will always encourage questions and class participation, however, even during lectures. Further, the lectures and discussions provide the most important material in the class. Thus I cannot urge you too strongly to attend class without fail.

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 quizzes, or your progress in the course.

Students in this class may also be eligible for accommodation under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA 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, contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities, in Cain Hall, or call 845-1637.

The handouts used in this class are copyrighted. The handouts include but are not limited to the syllabus, literal handouts in class, and instructions for the class papers. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy them unless I expressly grant permission for you to do so.

The Aggie Honor Code states, "An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do." For more information and details on Honor Council Rules and Procedures refer to the web-site of the Aggie Honor System Office at <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor>. Among other possible violations explained in Honor Council Rules and Procedures, academic misconduct that is prohibited includes

*cheating*, as on an exam or quiz; *fabrication of data or results* or otherwise submitting fabricated materials for a grade; the *falsification of research materials or findings*; submitting the same work, as for grades in more than one class; and *plagiarism*, which is presenting another person's ideas, written words, or the like as your own work. If you have any concerns or questions about how these honor code rules apply to the work in this class, do not hesitate to discuss them with me.

## SCHEDULE OF LECTURE AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

1/15 Introduction to the class.

Read: JR, ch. 1.

Introductory lecture.

Reading and discussion assignment for the class on 1/24.

Assignment for the **First Paper** handed out.

1/17 What is Science?

Read: (1) Isaac Asimov, "What is Science?" Chapter 1 of *Asimov's New Guide to Science* (Basic Books, 1984). LR

(2) Fred Kerlinger and Howard Lee, "Science and the Scientific Approach,"

Chapter 1 of *Foundations of Behavioral Research* (Wadsworth, 2000, fourth edition). LR

Lecture and discussion.

1/22 The Scientific Study of Political Phenomena: A Positive Perspective Based on the History of Science

Read: (1) Alan S. Zuckerman, "What We Mean When We Call Political Science a Science," Chapter 6 of *Doing Political Science* (Westview, 1991). LR, and (2), JR, ch. 2 but only pp. 27-49; and (3) Kim Quaile Hill, "Myths about the Physical Sciences and Their Implications for Teaching Political Science," *PS: Political Science and Politics* (July 2004), 467-471 – to access this last publication go to the Evans Library home page, click on E-Journals in the Search box in the middle of the page, type in PS for "exact journal title," and click on the first link that comes up. Then click on the link for Cambridge University Press, then click on the small link for "back volumes" down in the middle of the page, then click on the link for 2000's, then click on 2004, then click on issue three for July, which should open a table of contents for this issue of the journal – from which you can locate my paper and open it in a PDF file.

**First Paper is due at the beginning of class.**

Lecture and discussion

1/24 Class Discussion of First Paper Topic

Read: (1) "Down for the Count," *American Demographics* vol 21, issue 11 (November, 1999), pages 46-47. [Access this paper by going to the home page of the Evans Library, Click on "E-

Journals” in the dialogue box at the center of the page, enter the name of the magazine, *American Demographics*, and then follow the links to get to a copy of the article], and  
(2) “Young Voters and the 2004 Election.” [Access this paper by going on the World Wide Web to [www.ksg.harvard.edu/presspol/vanishvoter/2004\\_Releases.shtml](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/presspol/vanishvoter/2004_Releases.shtml), then click on “Final Report: Young Voters and the 2004 Election.”].

*Class discussion* of the voting turnout of young Americans.

First paper also returned and discussed – for content, content goals for future papers, writing, and writing goals for future papers.

1/29 The Political Behavior of Members of the Mass Public

Read: Lynne M. Casper and Loretta E. Bass, “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2000.” U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC. Available at: [www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p20-542.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p20-542.pdf)

QUIZ on Casper and Bass.

*Class discussion* of Casper and Bass: both for the substantive findings of this particular government report and the organization and writing style of such reports.

1/31 An Introduction to Statistical and Computational Methods for Political Science Research

**Meet in the department computer lab, Allen Bldg. 2003.**

Lecture and discussion: [creating data on a research problem, creating a computer-readable data set, simple data analysis, and univariate analysis].  
Reading and discussion assignment for the next class.

2/5 More Statistical and Computational Methods

**Meet in the department computer lab, Allen 2003.**

A political puzzle for discussion and analysis: Did voter turnout in the 2004 presidential election follow conventional patterns?

**Second Paper** handed out.

Read for preparing the paper: Mark Twain, "Cooper's Prose Style," pp. 117-124 in *Letters from the Earth*, edited by Bernard DeVoto (Harper and Row, 1974.) LR

The **Second Paper** is due on **February 19**. You are encouraged to discuss a polished draft of your paper with me in person during my office hours or at another mutually agreed time or with Ashley Johnston also at a mutually agreeable time after today and before it is due. If you wish to have such a discussion of your paper, you are responsible for scheduling this meeting.

2/7 No class; work on the second paper. Hill out of town on University business.

2/12 The Political Behavior of Members of the Political Elite and Observations about Individual Political Behavior Generally

Read: Jeffrey A. Segal and Albert D. Cover, “Ideological Values and the Votes of U.S. Supreme Court Judges,” *American Political Science Review* 83(June, 1989), 557-566.

(In [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org))

QUIZ on Segal and Cover.  
*Class discussion* of Segal and Cover.

2/14 The Procedures of Scientific Research: Research Questions, Concepts,  
and Hypotheses

Read: JR, ch. 3.

Lecture and discussion.  
QUIZ over lecture content (that is also addressed in the reading for today).

2/19 The Procedures of Scientific Research: Our QUIZ Hypotheses Assessed

Read: Fred Kerlinger and Howard Lee, "Problems and Hypotheses," chapter 2 of  
*Foundations of Behavioral Research* (Wadsworth, fourth edition 2000), pp. 23-34. LR

**Second paper** due at the beginning of class.  
Concept definition and hypothesis construction revisited – in lecture and discussion.

2/21 The Logic of Hypothesis Testing

Re-read in light of our discussions in class: Kerlinger and Lee, "Problems and  
Hypotheses."

Lecture and discussion.

2/26 Causal Inference

Read: JR, pages 123-126.

Lecture and discussion.  
**Second paper** returned and discussed.

2/28 The Reliability and Validity of Measurement

Read: JR, ch. 6, pages 88-104.

QUIZ  
Lecture and discussion.

3/4 More Statistical and Computational Methods

**Meet in the department computer lab, Allen Bldg. 2003.** (Continued)  
Read JR, pages 105-110, skim pages 110-118, and read pages 360-368.

Lecture, discussion, and active lab work in calculating and interpreting  
descriptive statistics.

3/6 Theory Construction in Science and Political Science

Read: Angus Campbell, *et al.*, *The American Voter*, ch. 17, "The Electoral Effects of Other Social Variables," pp. 473-483 ONLY, (University Of Chicago Press, 1960), LR, on the SES model of political participation.

Lecture and discussion.

3/11 &

3/13 Spring Break

3/18 Constructing Theory about Voter Turnout Among Young Americans

Read: Benjamin Highton and Raymond Wolfinger, "The First Seven Years of the Political Life Cycle," *American Journal of Political Science* 45(January, 2001), pp. 202-209, JSTOR.

Quiz on Highton and Wolfinger.

Lecture, discussion, and conceptualization of the research question for the **Third Paper**. Discussion of appropriate written format for the paper.

**Third Paper** assignment handed out.

You are **required** to discuss a draft of the **Third Paper** with me in person at a mutually agreed time before **3:00 PM on the day before it is due**. You are responsible for scheduling this meeting. A failure to schedule this meeting will result in a grade penalty on the paper. You are encouraged to discuss a draft of the paper, or of even some parts of the paper, with Ashley Johnston, as well.

Read for preparing the Fourth Paper: JR, ch. 14, "The Research Report: An Annotated Example."

3/20 Research Design and Data Collection

Read: JR, pages 297-344.

Lecture and discussion.

3/25 More Statistical and Computational Methods

**Meet in the department computer lab, Allen 2003.**

Read: JR pages 427-439.

Lecture, discussion, and active statistical work on testing hypotheses with bivariate data in cross-tabular analyses.

3/27 More Statistical and Computational Methods

**Meet in the department computer lab, Allen 2003.**

Individual research for the Third Paper – with me consulting as necessary.

- 4/1 Applied Research in Political Science and an Applied Research Topic for the Fourth Paper
- Read: TO BE ANNOUNCED.
- Lecture and discussion.
- 4/3 No class; work on the Third Paper. Hill out of town on University business.
- 4/8 More Statistical and Computational Methods
- Meet in the department computer lab, Allen 2003.**
- Read: JR pages 477-498.
- Lecture and exposition of simple linear regression.
- 4/10 No regular class session – Consult with me individually, *but by appointment*, on the Third Paper
- 4/15 More Statistical and Computational Methods
- Meet in the department computer lab, Allen 2003.**
- Third Paper due at the beginning of class.**
- Read: JR pages 503-504 and 514-526.
- Lecture and exposition of multiple regression.
- 4/17 Research Design and Data Collection, and Other Odds and Ends for the Fourth Paper
- Read: TO BE ANNOUNCED.
- Lecture and discussion.
- Paper Four assignment handed out.
- Read for preparing the Fourth Paper: (1) George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," from *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell*, volume IV (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), but accessible on the World Wide Web via: <http://scholar.google.com> where you should search on "George Orwell politics and the English language" and then open the first link in the list that appears, and (2) JR, ch. 14, "The Research Report: An Annotated Example."
- 4/22 More Statistical and Computational Methods
- Meet in the department computer lab, Allen 2003.**
- Computer lab session to work on the **Fourth Paper**.
- 4/24 More Statistical and Computational Methods

### **Meet in the department computer lab, Allen 2003.**

*Optional attendance* computer lab session to work on the Fourth Paper.

#### Post-Class Meetings

You are encouraged to discuss a draft of the **Fourth Paper** with me in person at a mutually agreed time before **3:00 PM on the day before it is due**. You are responsible for scheduling such meetings. I will be available to consult with you individually on the **Fourth Paper** on some part of every business day until the day the paper is due. Appointments for in-person consultation can be made by telephone or email. Simple, direct questions can be answered by email.

- 5/1 **Fourth Paper** due to my office or my mailbox in the Department of Political Science by **noon**. If you deliver the paper to the Department office and my mailbox there, have it “time-stamped” by the receptionist. You are also required to provide with the paper a mailing address to which I can send you the graded paper.

#### HOW TO ACCESS ELECTRONIC RESERVES FROM THE TAMU LIBRARY

1. Go to the home page of the TAMU library at <http://library.tamu.edu> and click on the link for *Course Reserves* on the left of the page.
2. On the next page that comes up, click on *Search Course Reserves*.
3. On the next page, select my name in the “Instructor” drop-down list. Then click on Search.
5. Then follow the links to POLS 209 reserves and click on the reading that you wish to access.
6. Read the item on the screen or, better, print a copy to read and save.
7. Exit the reserves and library links.

#### HOW TO ACCESS READINGS IN JSTOR

1. Go to the JSTOR homepage at [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org) from any TAMU computer and click on the *Search* option. (You can also access JSTOR from a non-A&M computer if you go on the Evans Library homepage, initiate a search for an Index/Database in the search box in the center of the homepage, and then log on via your Neo password when prompted.) Then click on *Advanced Search* on the next page that appears. (Continued)
2. On the next page that appears list the author of the article you are seeking, e.g. Segal, Jeffrey A., in the “All of these words” line. Then “check” the boxes for *Author* and *Articles*. Then “check” the box associated with *Political Science* journals from the list of scholarly disciplines that follows. Then click on *Search*.
3. Scroll through the list of publications by the author you have selected until you come to the article you are seeking. Click on the highlighted title of the article and it will open as in a PDF file.
4. Click on the *Print* option at the top of the page. Then click on *Proceed with Printing* on the next page

that appears. The article will open in a new window (usually this takes a few moments to open). Click on the print icon to print the article.

5. Close out of JSTOR.

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