

**POLS 3314-003**  
**Intro to Political Analysis**  
FALL 2021

**Time and location** M W F 1300 – 1350, Holden Hall (HH) 152

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### **Overview and Objectives**

#### *Course Description*

Political science research is very different from popular discussions about politics. Instead of partisan, philosophical, or ideological arguments, political scientists are interested in conducting research that seeks to explain the mechanics of how politics works. This course provides an introduction to research design and quantitative data analysis, key components of scientific research on political phenomena. Research design involves posing proper research questions, theory construction, hypothesis formulation, and issues of causality. The course will also introduce the machinery by which social science research is typically conducted: statistics. The material covered in this course is about making compelling, systematic arguments with empirical evidence and data. Statistical analysis has become an essential skill in business, campaigns, policy analysis, journalism, and academia. In this respect, the course can also provide a skillset that is quite valuable in the real world.

#### *Learning Objectives*

- Describe the purpose of research design and its role in political science research methods. (assessment: assignments, lab, exam)
- Demonstrate the ability to manually calculate and interpret descriptive statistics. (assessment: lab, exam)
- Demonstrate the ability to calculate and interpret bivariate statistics. (assessment: lab, assignments, exam)
- Design an appropriate political science research project, and investigate a hypothesis with the use of statistics. (assessment: research paper)
- Execute advanced multivariate statistics using statistical software. (assessment: lab, research paper)

#### *Format*

The primary method of instruction will be lecture, the secondary mode being guided labs and homework assignments. I thrive with an engaged, inquisitive, vocal class. I encourage questions, verbal processing, and feedback during class, during office hours, and via email.

My past students will attest that I invest significant time and energy upfront, but that I also flex to student engagement and needs.

The course does involve statistics and computing, but it does not assume any math skills beyond high school or any computing experience. Nonetheless, this course requires significant work ethic and resolve to succeed. Of all classes in the program, it is the most rigorous and has the highest attrition and failure rates. I will give you my best to effectively teach course content, help you overcome challenges, and promote your success. Keep in mind that the material is cumulative. If you miss classes or assignments, if you are not grasping concepts as we move through them, you will quickly reach a point where you are too far behind to catch up. Communicate with me at your earliest struggle. Come to my office hours. Form study groups. I want *all* of you to pass, and I commit to supporting you if you will jump in with both feet.

This course will make use of Blackboard. On the course site you will be able to access an electronic copy of this syllabus, access to lecture slides on a rolling basis, resources relevant to the writing assignments, detailed instructions and submission portals for all assignments and labs, exam reviews, grades, and course announcements. Students are responsible for checking Blackboard and staying up-to-date with all class announcements and assignments. If there is a problem with accessing Blackboard, students should first check their web browser functionality and pop-up blocking software, then contact IT as necessary.

## Required Materials

Pollock, Phillip H. 2016. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, fifth edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1506305837<sup>1</sup>

We will use Stata in this course. You will need to purchase a six month student license for Stata/BE, which you can do here: <https://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/student-pricing/>. The license costs \$48. It is possible that you will have to send Stata an image of your student ID to get that price. Once you have paid, you should be able to download the program. Get it immediately. We will begin using Stata in the second week of class.

## Assignments and Evaluation

### Assessments

#### Exams – 36%

Three (3) exams (two during the regular semester and one during the university-scheduled final examination period) will constitute just over a third of the overall grade. Each exam will be in-class, closed book, and closed-note. They will feature multiple choice and definition recall questions. Some will require mathematical computation. The specific format of each exam will be discussed in class prior to it being administered. For exams involving math, you may not use a phone, watch, or graphic calculator.

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<sup>1</sup> This is not the newest edition, making it significantly cheaper. You can buy it online (new or used), through the bookstore, or you can rent it from a number of venues.

Missed exams will be excused and made up in cases of considerable illness, personal emergency, university-sponsored events, or religious observances *only with proper documentation and advance notification*. Exams missed due to university-sponsored events or religious holidays require that a student informs me of the absence at least two weeks in advance. The documentation must explicitly state that the student was unable to attend class on the exact date and time in question. Contact me as soon as possible if an illness or emergency arises that prevents you from taking the exam. Students must make up the missed exam within two weeks of the originally scheduled date. Failure to do so will result in a zero.

**Writing Assignments – 26%**

This course requires students to complete three written assignments, each of which builds on the previous paper. The topics of each paper are as follows:

1. Research question and literature review (7%) – due Sep 26<sup>th</sup> before midnight
2. Theory, hypothesis, and research design (7%) – due Oct 30<sup>th</sup> before midnight
3. Data analysis (12%) – due Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> before midnight

Each paper should be no longer than five double spaced pages of text. Further instructions on content, format, and rubric requirements will be provided early in the semester. In addition, students will have access to several guides on Blackboard on how to properly execute this assignment and will be exposed to additional resources to facilitate success such as texts, library aides, and the Writing Center. Late submissions will be docked by 10 points for every 24 hour interval that passes after the due date.

**Homework – 20%**

You will be assigned four (4) homework assignments throughout the semester. They are designed to help you apply and practice concepts learned from readings and lecture. Ultimately, they will help you to cultivate data management and analysis skills and to become proficient with valuable analytical tools. Assignments will be released on Blackboard once students have learned all relevant concepts and competencies to complete them. Due dates for each assignment are listed in the course schedule on Blackboard.

**Labs – 18%**

Six (6) labs will be administered throughout the semester. Like homework assignments, they are designed to provide a venue for students to apply and practice skills learned that week. They will be more intensive than homework assignments, however, since a teaching assistant will be onsite to resolve questions. All labs will populate on Blackboard when class begins on the days they are scheduled. It is encouraged that students bring personal laptops to download, complete, and submit them electronically.

**Attendance and Participation**

Students who attend class regularly exit courses with better performance metrics and, more importantly, a better grasp on concepts and their applications. This is especially true for this course. Although I do not have an attendance policy, I highly, strongly, urgently recommend regular attendance. I will accommodate absences for illnesses, religious or university-

excused events, or personal emergencies of significant gravity but you must communicate with me for these accommodations to be activated.

## Grading

Final course grades will be based on the following weights:

Assessment	Percentage
Exams	36%
Writing assignment 1	7%
Writing assignment 2	7%
Writing assignment 3	12%
Homework	20%
Labs	18%

The grading scale used for this course is listed below.

A	90-100
B	80-89.9
C	70-79.9
D	60-69.9
F	59.9 and below

In order to contest a grade, you must first meet with me. During this meeting, you may ask questions about the grading of the assignment / exam and will receive an explanation. If you are not satisfied with this explanation, you may submit the assignment for re-grading by presenting the original assignment bearing the score / feedback along with a written document explaining how your work meets the criteria of the assignment and why you feel the grade is inaccurate. Upon submission of these materials, I will regrade the assignment. All assignments for regrading must be submitted within one week of the original grade being delivered (notwithstanding religious or scheduled secular holidays). Come the end of the semester, I will not negotiate final grades.

## Expectations and Policies

Please read this section carefully. A university education and taking this section are voluntary. If these policies do not suit you, you are encouraged to select another class.

### *Expectations*

My expectations for students are simple—be engaged, responsible, and diligent.

Read, understand, and abide by the syllabus.

Do reading assignments carefully before class and take notes.

Attend class.

Participate in class discussions and activities.

Do not plagiarize or cheat.

Be willing to ask questions and seek help when needed and in a timely manner.

### *Communication*

The best way to contact me or your TA is through email or office hours. In the event that you cannot make office hours, please request an appointment. I will respond to most emails within 48 hours of receipt. I will not respond to emails that pose questions that could be answered by reading the syllabus or the course website. I will not respond to emails that do not use proper salutations, sentence structure, and grammar and signal a relevant subject.

### *Etiquette*

In order to create a classroom environment that is conducive to learning, you are expected to adhere to basic classroom etiquette. Do not disrupt class. This includes arriving late, packing up or leaving early, interrupting or holding side conversations, and using electronic devices in a distracting manner. In addition, students are encouraged to discuss and express opinions on many issues, some controversial, that are covered in class. Although differing perspectives are encouraged, I will not tolerate derogatory, disrespectful, or disruptive comments. I reserve the right to ask you to leave the classroom if you are disrupting or obstructing normal class functions.

### *Electronic Devices*

Distractions in the classroom adversely affect everyone's learning and my performance as an instructor. The use of electronic devices in this class is limited to laptops for academic purposes only. I will confront any uses of a phone or any instances when a computer is observed on social media, email, or non-class related sites.

### *Academic Integrity*

According to the Texas Tech Student Handbook, academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor) or the attempt to commit such an act. Any such act will not be tolerated in this class. Any student caught plagiarizing work will be given a failing grade for the course and reported to University officials for possible expulsion from the University. Additional information on TTU's policy concerning academic dishonesty can be found at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/studentjudicialprograms/AcademicIntegrity.htm>.

### *Accommodations for Disabilities*

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Official university documentation regarding disabilities will be required. For additional information, please consult the Student Disability Services office at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/studentaffairs/sds/>.

### *Religious Observances*

Texas law requires institutions of higher education to excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious

holy day. The student shall also be excused for time necessary to travel. An institution may not penalize the student for the absence and allows for the student to take an exam or complete an assignment from which the student is excused. OP 34.19 indicates that a student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known to the instructor well prior to the absence.

### *Title IX*

Texas Tech University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from gender and/or sex discrimination of any kind. Sexual assault, discrimination, harassment, and other Title IX violations are not tolerated by the University. Report any incidents to the Office for Student Rights and Resolution, (806)-742-SAFE (7233) or file a report online at [titleix.ttu.edu/students](http://titleix.ttu.edu/students). Faculty and staff members at TTU are committed to connecting you to resources on campus. Some of these available resources are:

TTU Student Counseling Center, 806-742-3674, <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/scc/> (Provides confidential support on campus.)

TTU Student Counseling Center 24-hour Helpline, 806-742-5555, (Assists students who are experiencing a mental health or interpersonal violence crisis. If you call the helpline, you will speak with a mental health counselor.)

Voice of Hope Lubbock Rape Crisis Center, 806-763-7273, [www.voiceofhopelubbock.org](http://www.voiceofhopelubbock.org) (24-hour hotline that provides support for survivors of sexual violence.)

The Risk, Intervention, Safety and Education (RISE) Office, 806-742-2110, [rise.ttu.edu](http://rise.ttu.edu) (Provides a range of resources and support options focused on prevention education and student wellness.)

Texas Tech Police Department, 806-742-3931, <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/tttd/> (To report criminal activity that occurs on or near Texas Tech campus.)