

# Final paper: grading rubric and guidelines

## Research Methods for Political Science A

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Research Methods for Political Science is graded in part on the basis of a research project paper due at the end of the term (max 2,000 words). The idea is to develop and execute a small research proposal, including a theory, data analysis and presentation of the results (see guidelines below). This assignment will be done in groups of three (your TA will assign you to a group).

Below, you will find: - A grading rubric to help you better understand what is expected in the paper. - Paper guidelines (previously circulated in a separate document, included here for convenience).

## Marking Guidelines

Please note that the subrubric are often indicative of the type of expectation; they are not an exhaustive list of all relevant factors.

### Theory (25pts)

1. Motivation (7pts) Does the paper clearly motivate why this question is interesting and important:
  - *theoretically* and
  - *substantively* (does it address an important real-world problem?)
2. Relation to existing literature (13 pts as follows):
  - Does the paper address an original question? I.e., does the paper address an important gap in the literature? (8pts)
  - Is the gap adequately discussed and there is an adequate discussion of how the paper fits in the existing literature? (5pts)
3. Coherence (5pts)
  - Is the theory compelling?
  - Is the theory clearly presented and easily understandable?

### Research Design (30pts)

1. Variables
  - Are the variables clearly described?
  - Is it clear what the dependent and independent variables are?
1. Hypothesis.
  - Are the hypothesis correctly and clearly formulated?
  - Is it clear what findings would support/not support the hypothesis?
2. Causality
  - Does the paper make a clear causal claim?

- Does the paper address issues that may challenge the ability to make a causal claim?
- Are there important confounding variables that are not discussed?
- Is reverse causality addressed, if relevant?
- Are there issues of selection bias, and are they addressed?

## **Statistics (30pts)**

### 1. Statistical analysis (15pts)

- Does the paper use the right statistical tools for the question?
- Are the statistics correctly estimated?

### 2. Reporting of results (15pts)

- Are the statistics correctly interpreted?
- Tables (if applicable)
  - Are the adequate tables reported?
  - Are the tables clearly presented and explained?
- Plots (if applicable)
  - Are the adequate plot reported?
  - Are the plots clearly presented and explained?

## **Presentation (15pts)**

### 1. Clarity of writing (7.5pts)

- Syntax, grammar, style, use of paragraphs, etc.
- Structure
- Conciseness

### 2. Quality of presentation (7.5pts)

- Tables (if applicable): Are the tables properly and professionally formatted?
- Plots (if applicable): Are the plots properly and professionally formatted?
- Formatting etc.
- Citations and references are properly formatted and include the relevant material (and only the relevant material).

## Guidelines

Your project should consist of at least the following elements:

- An abstract of the paper which includes a very concise summary of the paper. Be sure to effectively convey the research question, methodology, theoretical contribution and results in the abstract (No more than 200 words. The abstract is not included in the overall word count).
- An introduction in which you present the research question, make clear why this should be studied and discuss the scientific and practical relevance of such a study. Your research question should aim to fill a gap in the literature, challenge existing findings or provide a replication of existing findings based on new data (see below). Within the context of this assignment you have to pose an explanatory research question; you should clearly state the dependent variable and the main independent variable(s) (+/- 250 words)
- A short discussion of the relevant literature. You should refer to at least five academic publications, but ONLY discuss works that are directly relevant for your study and research question. (+/-200 words)
- An outline of your theoretical argument. Discuss the main concepts in your study. The theory section should include at least one hypothesis (+/- 300 words)
- A short methodology section, including the overall design of the study, data sources, operationalization and strategy for analysis (+/- 450 words)
- The results of the study, presented in properly formatted tables and graphs (or in-text when appropriate), following the suggestions of Field (2013). Of course, you should not just present the results but also explain what you found. (+/- 500 words)
- A short discussion/conclusion in which you reflect on your findings: are they according to your expectations? If not, can you explain? What further research is necessary? Are there variables that you would need to control for in your research design? (+/- 300 words)
- In a short appendix, indicate how each of you has contributed to the final paper (not included in word count).

Take the following into account:

- There are limitations on what you will be able to do, so your research question should be feasible for a short research project. Moreover, you should be able to answer your question based on existing data. This data should be freely accessible.
- At the same time, you would want to try to be creative and insightful. Research questions that build upon the literature to find an aspect of the political world that has not yet been studied in the way you propose to do, will receive a higher grade. This does not necessarily mean that you have to do something entirely new; it is also very valuable to replicate an existing study using new cases, better measurements or different analysis techniques. That would also be a good contribution to the scientific literature.
- The proposed study should be an empirical study, not just a literature study.
- Observe standard requirements for the presentation of your paper, as stated in the Undergraduate Handbook.
- The word count for this paper is low (2000 words), so make sure that your writing style is very concise.
- Your statistics training will be limited, but it should be possible to study bivariate relationships using contingency tables, chi square, phi, correlation, t-tests or proportion tests. Take the limitations in terms of the statistical analysis into account when deciding about your research question and design.
- If you are unsure whether a certain research question or design would be feasible, visit Dr. Chadeaux' office hours. Do not wait too long with this, as it is very hard to change a research proposal at the last minute. There is, however, little point in coming to the office hours if you have not already done a literature search yourself. All assignment should be handed in via turnitin. Do not forget to include your names, details and the name of the course. Please only submit one paper for each group.