

University of Texas at Austin

Fall 2021

Gov 370M: Research on the U.S. Congress

Unique #: 39105

MW, 4-5:30

MEZ 2.124

Instructors:

Professor Sean M. Theriault

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OH (Zoom):

Professor Derek Epp

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Teaching Assistant:

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OH (Zoom):

Course Description

This research course is the first half of a year-long research program under the direction of Professors Theriault and Epp. Throughout the year, we have two major goals. First, and less important, we aim to familiarize the students with our own research agendas (past and present). Second, and more important, we will introduce the students to the entire research experience. The class attempts to replicate the “laboratory” of the hard sciences. In those laboratories, students are engaged in independent, though related projects. Their work is coordinated and synthesized by a principal investigator who uses the independent projects to form a greater whole. This course is a social science laboratory. To that end, the students’ work is synthesized by two principal investigators in the construction of major books on the legislative and policy processes.

Covid-19 Requirements

Our course is scheduled as an “in-person” course. Covid-19 is continuing to affect our community, so please keep in mind the following items:

- The university recommends members of our community follow the CDC guidance and wear masks inside classrooms and indoor public settings regardless of their vaccination status.
- Common courtesy (always important) is extra important this semester. That means that under no circumstances should you come to class if you’re feeling “under the weather” or anyone you have been near is feeling “under the weather.”
- Communication with us is also extra important this semester. If you are experiencing adverse circumstances, then we can potentially be flexible in terms of due dates and assignments. But the sooner we know about it, the smoother everything will go.
- Office hours will be exclusively virtual, meaning no in-person meetings. During our office hours, we will be available to meet over Zoom. Email us to schedule a meeting within those times.

Special Needs

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To determine if you qualify, please contact the Dean of Students at 471-6259; 471-4641 TTY. If they certify your needs, I will work with you to make appropriate arrangements.

Course Format

The class will meet regularly to discuss the two major course objectives. It is the student’s responsibility to come to class with all of the assigned work – both research and reading – completed. Rarely will the class stray from a seminar format.

Grades

In these classes, we will give plusses and minuses, using cutoffs at x3 and x7. We will not “round up” for students who are close to a cutoff. Grades are determined according to the following formula:

- 10% In-class participation. We will take attendance every class meeting.
- 35% Homework. Each of your homework assignments will be graded.
- 35% Research Assignments. These assignments will be the bulk of your work for us this semester. You will be graded on your timeliness and thoroughness of completion.
- 20% Research Proposal. Toward the end of the semester, we will transition to you doing your own research. This exercise will culminate with your proposal at the end of the semester.

We frown on issues of academic dishonesty and will severely punish any student caught plagiarizing, cheating, fabricating data, or engaged in unethical classroom practices. Furthermore, because of the number of deadlines and the building of your posters and papers, it is important that deadlines are adhered to; if not, even assignments that are 1-minute late could lose up to half credit. All grade disputes must be type written and turned in within 1 week of receiving the grade.

Course Readings

Various course readings will be posted to Canvas throughout the semester.

Course Outline

Week 1 (August 25): Introduction to Pickle Research Program

- Due August 25: *The Great Broadening*, Part I

Week 2 (August 30 and September 1): Introduction to Research

- Due August 30: *The Great Broadening*, Parts II and III
- September 1: First day of coding training

Week 3 (September 8): How to Choose a Research Question/Research Assignments

- Due September 7: Submit three potential research projects from *The Great Broadening* to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).
- Due September 10: Turn in one paragraph of a revised description of your best research question to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).

Week 4 (September 13 and 15): Drafting a Research Proposal/Applying for the URF

- September 13: One-on-one meetings with Derek, Sean, and Connor
- September 15: Second day of coding training

Week 5 (September 20 and 22): Hypothesis Building and Hypothesis Testing

- September 22: Third day of coding training
- Due September 24: Turn in a draft of your URF application to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).

Week 6 (September 27 and 29): Wrapping up the URF Applications

- September 29: Fourth day of coding training
- URF Applications Due (TBD)!

Week 7 (October 4 and 6): Finding (or Building!) Data

- October 6: Fifth day of coding training
- Due October 6: Submit a draft of your URA application to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).

Week 8 (October 11 and 13): One-on-One Meetings

- URA Applications Due (TBD)!
- October 13: Last day of coding training

Week 9 (October 18 and 20): Data Manipulation Tutorial

- Due October 17: Submit a final-ish research question and your accompanying hypotheses to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).

Week 10 (October 25 and 27): Data Presentations

- Due October 26: Submit a figure or table of the data that will be used in your project to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).

Week 11 (November 1 and 3): Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

- Due October 31: Submit the link to two peer reviewed research papers with a paragraph describing how each research paper relates to your own research to Canvas (by 10:00 pm). Be prepared to discuss your chosen research papers in class.

Week 12 (November 8 and 10): Composing a Research Proposal

- Due November 12: Submit an outline of your research proposal to Canvas (by 10:00 pm). This proposal should include your research question (grounded in the literature), hypotheses, proposed data sources, and methods for analysis. Your outline should be between 3 and 5 pages.

Week 13 (November 15 and 17): One-on-One Meetings

Week 14 (November 22): Research Proposals Check-in

Week 15 (November 29 and December 1): Research Proposal Presentations

- Due this week: 3-minute presentation on your research proposal to the class (slides optional). We'll assign time slots in Week 14.

Week 16 (December 6): Research Proposals Due

- Due December 6: Turn in your final research proposal to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).