

University of Texas at Austin

Fall 2023

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

Unique #: 38390

TTH, 3:30-5pm

BEN 1.122

Instructors:

Professor Sean M. Theriault
seant@mail.utexas.edu
OH (Zoom):
W 2-5

Professor Derek Epp
depp@austin.utexas.edu
OH (Zoom):
TTH 10:30am - 12pm

Teaching Assistant:

Miranda Sullivan
mirandasullivan@utexas.edu
OH (Zoom):
W 9am - 12pm
<https://calendly.com/mirandasullivan/officehours>

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.

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 pluses 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 22 and 24): Introduction to Pickle Research Program

- Due August 22: *The Great Broadening*, Part I
- August 24: First day of coding training

Week 2 (August 29 and 31): Introduction to Research, *The Great Broadening*, Parts II and III

- Due August 28: Submit three potential research projects from *The Great Broadening* to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).
- August 31: Second day of coding training

Week 3 (September 5 and 7): Introduction to Research, Part II

- Due September 4th: A half-page going into more depth about your favorite research question
September 7th: Third day of coding training

Week 4 (September 12 and 14): Hypothesis Building and Hypothesis Testing*

- Due September 11: Turn in one paragraph of a revised description of your best research question to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).
- September 14: Fourth day of coding training

Week 5 (September 19 and 21): One-on-One Meetings

- Due September 18: Draft of URF applications and letter of recommendations to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).
· September 21: Fifth day of coding training

Week 6 (September 26 and 28): Wrapping up the URF Applications and Research Assignments

- Due September 25: Submit a draft of your **URA** application to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).
- September 28: Last day of coding training
- **URF Applications Due September 25 (by 5PM)**

Week 7 (October 3 and 5): Presenting Your Research Questions

- **URA Applications Due October 2 (by 5PM)**

Week 8 (October 10 and 12): Finding (or Building!) Data

Week 9 (October 17 and 19): One-on-One Meetings

Week 10 (October 24 and 26): Data Manipulation Tutorial*

- Due October 23: Submit a final-ish research question and your accompanying hypotheses to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).

Week 11 (October 31 and November 2): Data Presentations

- Due October 30: Submit a figure or table of the data that will be used in your project to Canvas (by 10:00 pm).

Week 12 (November 7 and 9): Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

- Due November 6: 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 13 (November 14 and 16): Composing a Research Proposal

- Due November 13: 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 14 (November 28 and 30): 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 13.

Due December 4th: Final copy of your research proposal