POLS 3314: Introduction to Political Analysis

Spring 2024

Faculty Information

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Office Hours: Mondays, 4PM to 6PM or by appointment. | Location: Zoom or in MAC 227.
Sign up during or outside of office hours here: https://calendly.com/rebecca-larsen/meet-with-larsen

Course Description

Class Meeting Time: Monday 6PM to 8:50PM via Zoom
This course will introduce you to research methods and the use of statistics in political research. You will learn to understand, interpret, conduct, and analyze political science research. You will gain the skills necessary to design an original research project and test a hypothesis. The first section of the course will focus on the foundations of research methods, including research design and literature review. The remainder of the course will focus on the use of statistics including descriptive, inferential, and bivariate analysis.

Learning Outcomes

1. Understand and explain descriptive statistics.
   Evaluated by: Lab #2, Homework #4, Research Paper
2. Formulate research questions and testable hypotheses.
   Evaluated by: Homework #1 & #3, Research Paper
3. Create a literature review that shows an understanding of APA citations, identifying academic literature, and assessing key findings in your area of exploration.
   Evaluated by: Lab #1, Homework #2, Research Paper
4. Execute and interpret linear bivariate statistical tests. *Evaluated by*: Lab #3, Research Paper
5. Design a political science research project and investigate a hypothesis with the use of statistics. *Evaluated by*: Research Paper

Learning Outcomes for the Communication Literacy Plan
This course is also a communication literacy class. Communication literacy outcome for the department:

6. "Students graduating with an undergraduate degree in Political Science will be able to communicate graphical information and mathematical results."
   Evaluated by: Lab Assignment, Homework Assignment, Research Paper

Course Materials

1. Text:

You may use <u>ANY</u> version of the text. There are some very inexpensive older copies. I will be using this version, but again use any version:

Political Science Research Methods
Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff
8th Edition, 2015
ISBN: 1506307825

2. Excel & Data Analysis Toolpak:

- If you do not have a copy of Microsoft Excel, you can download the full Microsoft Suite for free (for Mac or PC) at eraider.ttu.edu.
- To load the free Analysis Toolpak, follow these instructions:
  https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Load-the-Analysis-ToolPak-in-Excel-6a63e598-cd6d-42e3-9317-6b40ba1a66b4

3. Technology for joining as a distance student:

Distance students will join the class from their computers via Zoom. The link for our Zoom classroom is on the Blackboard homepage. You will need to be able to both observe and engage in class, which requires a working microphone and camera. If technology is a concern, please reach out. IT support is always available to troubleshoot issues, and support to obtain technology may be available.

Course Assignments

IRB Training	8%
Lab Assignments	24%
Homework Assignments	38%
Research Paper	30%

IRB Training (8% Total):

We will not be working with human subjects in this course. Instead, we will work with found data. However, the IRB training is an excellent way to get introduced to research ethics and the development of the review board. In addition, some universities and industries require IRB approval on any project that uses human subjects even if the data was already collected from someone else. The details for accessing this free through TTU training are in Blackboard. You will submit your certificate and receive full credit. This is also something that is beneficial to put on your resume. The basic training takes approximately 2.5 hours, and you can do it in stages at your own pace.

Lab Assignments (24% Total):

Lab assignments will be worked on during the second part of the class period. They will give you the opportunity to apply and practice concepts presented in class and needed for your research paper. There are three lab assignments, worth 8% each.

Homework Assignments (38% Total):

These assignments will assist you in getting started and working through the components of your research project. Each homework assignment is information that can be incorporated into or support your research paper.

- Homework #1: Preliminary Research Proposal (8%).
- Homework #2: Literature Review (10%).
- Homework #3: More Developed Research Proposal (10%).
- Homework #4: Making Sense of Your Data (10%).

Research Paper (30%):

This paper will examine a political science phenomenon with data. It will incorporate components of your homework assignments along with quantitative analysis that is appropriate for your data and hypothesis. When completed, you will have designed and executed a research project that tests a hypothesis.

Grading Scale

A = 90 – 100
B = 80 – 89
C = 70 – 79
D = 60 – 69
F = 0 – 59

Course Plan

Any changes to the course plan will be communicated in class and via email. Please note that assignments are due by the beginning of the class period unless otherwise noted.

Week	Date	Read	Topic	Due
Week 1	1/15 NO CLASS - MLK Day		Between TTU's first day of class and our first official class that meets on 1/22: Review and respond to the introduction materials on Blackboard and complete the basic IRB training. If you are not comfortable with Excel, watch the Excel Tutorials for Data Analysis.	
Week 2	1/22 **Meeting in Zoom Begins**	Johnson, Chapter 1, 2, 3	Empirical Approach & Research Questions	**Blackboard Intro & IRB Training**
Week 3	1/29	Johnson, Chapter 3	Literature Review	**Lab #1 Due by Following Day**
Week 4	2/5	Johnson, Chapter 4 & 5	Building Blocks of Research	
Week 5	2/12	Johnson, Chapter 6	Research Design & Errors	**Homework #1 Due – Preliminary Research Proposal**
Week 6	2/19	Johnson, Chapter 7	Sampling & Data Collection	
Week 7	2/26	Johnson, Chapter 11	Descriptive Statistics I: Central Tendency & Variance	

Week 8	3/4	Johnson, Chapter 11	Descriptive Statistics II: Data Visualizations & Putting Descriptive Statistics Together	**Homework #2 Due – Literature Review** **Lab #2 Due by Following Day**
Week 9	NO CLASS – Spring Break			
Week 10	3/18	Johnson 12	Univariate Analysis	
Week 11	3/25	Johnson, Chapter 13	Bivariate Analysis	**Homework #3 Due – More Developed Research Proposal**
Week 12	4/1 NO CLASS – Holiday			
Week 13	4/8	Johnson, Chapter 13	Bivariate Analysis II	**Homework #4 Due – Making Sense of Your Data**
Week 14	4/15	Johnson, Chapter 13	Regression Analysis	**Lab #3 Due by Following Day**
Week 15	4/22		Regression Analysis Cont. & Research Report	
Week 16	4/29		Final class activities & lab time for paper	
Finals Week				**Final Research Paper Due by 5/3**

Late Work

Late work may be submitted at any time before the last day of class for a 20% penalty. This applies to homework and lab assignments.

Use of AI

This course sets you up to understand, critique, and conduct your own research. It is an important foundation for the remainder of your studies and develops skills that can serve you in a future career. AI tools are a reality that can serve to support learning, but in this class, all work must be your own. Feel free to use tools like Grammarly to help improve your writing, but all homework, labs, and the final paper must be in your own writing and must be your own analysis.

TTU Policies

Texas Tech Policies on Religious Holy Days, ADA Support, Academic Integrity: https://www.depts.ttu.edu/tlpdc/RequiredSyllabusStatements.php

Texas Tech resources and guidelines for Title IX, recovery services, plagiarism, & student support: https://www.depts.ttu.edu/tlpdc/RecommendedSyllabusStatements.php

Basic Needs

If at any time during the semester, you face challenges accessing regular food and housing, you are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students for support, http://www.depts.ttu.edu/dos/. If you are located at the Waco campus you also have access to MCC's food pantry. If you are located at the Lubbock campus, you have access to the TTU Food Pantry. In addition, if you feel comfortable, please feel open to notifying me so that I can assist in connecting you with university and community resources specific to your area of needed support and geographic location.