PSC 202 – Introduction to Political Analysis   Syllabus: Spring 2018

Instructor

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Office Hours: Th 4:30 - 6:00 pm
                or by appointment

Class Information

Days: Tu/Th   Time: 3:30 - 4:25 pm   Classroom: Hall of Languages 207

Teaching Assistants

Tae Hyun Lim   talim@syr.edu
Sections: 101 (10:35-11:30) and 104 (12:45-1:40)

Raza Raja   rhraja@syr.edu
Sections: 102 (10:35-11:30) and 103 (12:45-1:40)

Course Description

The purpose of this course, required for political science majors, is to build skills for conducting, interpreting, and presenting political science research. These skills include: basic research and data collection practices, techniques for measuring political science concepts quantitatively, hypothesis testing, interpretation of statistical evidence, and the presentation of findings in a clear and compelling manner. Tying these components together is a thematic focus on important political science concepts such as democracy, power, or representation.

Course Philosophy

This course is very valuable for your future trajectory as a political science major or minor. You will learn and practice a set of skills that can be applied widely both inside and outside of political science. While politics is not science, you will learn how the scientific method can be applied to the study of politics.

The course is designed first to help you learn how to analyze information. The frenetic advancement of technology has produced an expansion of information and data about the political world. This course will help you consume logical arguments, data, and statistics.

How do you evaluate a theory? A hypothesis? A claim about an observable relationship between X and Y? How do you know when someone is lying with statistics? You will be a better critic of other people's work, especially work that uses basic statistics. You should also leave this course thinking more systematically and critically about the truth claims made by the media, policymakers, and professors.

Next, this course will help you learn critical empirical methods for conducting your own re-

search. You will examine the logic behind conceptualizing and analyzing ideas. Ideas about politics are often abstract such as democracy, power, and values. This course will help you evaluate these concepts with more precision.

This course will also help you develop and test your own ideas. This includes recognizing the steps to creating sound theories and testable hypotheses. You will also learn the comparative method and become familiar with case studies. Finally, you will learn basic statistical analysis. Statistics provide strategies and tools for using data to gain insight into real problems. This class will help you become a better political science student and a democratic citizen.

Course Objectives

1. The primary purpose of this course is to prepare students, especially political science majors and minors, to read and understand original research in political science, especially quantitative research.

2. The course will also increase students' understanding of the following topics: concepts, variables, and hypotheses; literature reviews and research design strategies; quantitative analysis of data; and making effective arguments.

3. This course should prove useful in other ways as well. In nearly every area of life you are presented with claims and evidence in support of these claims. This course will help you develop skills that will enable you to evaluate these claims more rigorously, and to make better-grounded claims of your own.

Course Materials
Required Text: Pollock, Philip H. 2016. *The Essentials of Political Analysis. 5th Edition*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
MAKE SURE you have the correct edition (5th) of the textbook. It is available for purchase at the SU Bookstore and online outlets. Additional readings will be posted to Blackboard.

Assignments and Grading
Your grade in this class will be based on class participation, three in-class exams, three problem sets, and your grade from the discussion section.

- *Class Participation (10%):* It is important to attend class, and we will take attendance. Of course, there are good reasons why you might miss class sometimes, so you have two "free" unexcused absences. Anything beyond that will affect your grade negatively. In addition, you are expected to follow the lecture and participate in it. To do so effectively, it is important that you do the assigned readings **before** class. The reading load for this course is light in order to enable a close reading of each text. Before each class, I recommend that you take notes on the readings. This will also help you prepare for the

problem sets and the exams. Some of the readings, especially the one's that introduce various statistical concept, are fairly difficult, so you may have to read them several times. I reserve the right to give in-class quizzes on the readings.

- *Three Exams (15% each):* Exams take place on **February 20**, **April 3**, and **May 1**. They are closed book/closed notes. Makeup exams will only be given in truly exceptional circumstances, such as illness (with appropriate documentation). If you know you will miss an exam, notify us as soon as possible.

- *Three Problem Sets (25% total):* You will receive three problem sets throughout the semester (see Course Schedule below for dates when they are handed out and when they are due). All assignments must be typed in their entirety and submitted via Turnitin. Late submissions will be penalized by 10 points (out of 100) for every 24 hours past the due date. Any homework extension requests must be made to me personally and at the time of the homework being passed out in lecture or sooner. There will be some assignments that require you use EXCEL for simple data analysis.

- *Discussion Section (20%):* You will receive a syllabus for your section that explains grading for the section. The discussion section is designed for small group discussion and activities that are integral in a course like this that requires you master a specific skill set.

Your final grade will be assigned based on the following scale: A (93-100), A-(90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B-(80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C-(70-72), D (60-69), and F (0-59). There are no +/-grades in the D or F range.

We will post grades to Blackboard. You are expected to keep track of your own grade using the raw scores from Blackboard and the weights above. Do not request your grade from your teaching assistant without working out the grade yourself using the scores from Blackboard.

Electronic Devices Policy

Electronic devices can be distracting to people around the user as well as to the users themselves. There is mounting evidence that allowing students to use electronic devices in class leads to worse learning outcomes overall (read: lower grades). However, I realize that for a variety of reasons, some students do better when taking notes electronically. I therefore do not ban electronic devices outright, but I do have an opt-in policy. That is, if you want to use a laptop or tablet in class, you must talk to me in office hours, lay out your reasons why you need an electronic device, and obtain my permission.

Communication

If you have questions about the material, chances are that you are not the only one. Therefore the best way to ask questions is in class. If your question is not related to class material or relevant to other students, feel free to approach me after class. I also encourage you to visit my

office hours to talk about questions, difficulties with the class material or with homework, and so on. If you cannot make office hours, feel free to send me an email to set up an appointment.

I will usually respond to email within 24 hours during the week. I will not respond to emails during weekends, except for urgent matters. As with all business-related correspondence, please include an appropriate salutation, identify yourself, and write in complete sentences. Students are expected to check their email accounts regularly, as I will be using email to provide announcements and updates about the course. See Syracuse's email policy at `http://supolicies.syr.edu/it/email.htm`.

Religious Observances
SU's religious observances policy, at `http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm`, is intended to recognize the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protect the rights of students (as well as faculty and staff) to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance - provided they notify their instructors no later than the end of the second week of classes.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
I am committed to supporting Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This means that in general no individual who is otherwise qualified shall be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity, solely by reason of having a disability.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) located at 804 University Avenue, third floor or go to the ODS website at `http://disabilityservices.syr.edu` and click current students tab to register on-line. You may also call 315.443.4498 to speak to someone regarding specific access needs. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue 'Accommodation Letters' to students as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity
Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same work

in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. SU students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.

The Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric establishes recommended guidelines for the determination of grade penalties by faculty and instructors, while also giving them discretion to select the grade penalty they believe most suitable, including course failure, regardless of violation level. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level. For more information and the complete policy, see `http://class.syr.edu/academic-integrity/policy`.

Privacy and Student Records
The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) sets forth requirements regarding the privacy of student records. FERPA governs both the access to and release of those records, known as education records, and the information they contain. Under FERPA, faculty have a legal responsibility to protect the confidentiality of student records. For additional information about FERPA and SU's FERPA policy, see: `http://www.syr.edu/registrar/staff/ferpa`.

Course Schedule

- Jan 16 – Introduction to the Course

I. Developing a Research Question

- Jan 18 – Studying Politics Scientifically

  – Shepsle, Kenneth A. (2010): "It Isn't Rocket Science, but..." In: *Analyzing Politics, 2nd. ed.* W.W. Norton & Company. pp. 3-6. (Blackboard)

  – Monroe, Alan D. (2000) "The Scientific Study of Research Questions." In: *Essentials of Political Research.* Westview Press. pp. 1-12 (Blackboard).

- Jan 23 – Research Questions in Political Science

  – Barakso, Maryann, Daniel M. Sabet, and Brian F. Schaffner (2014): "The Research Question." In: *Understanding Political Science Research Methods. The Challenge of Inference.* Routledge. (Blackboard)

- Jan 25 – Literature Review and Theory Development

    – McMenamin, Iain (2006) "Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39(1): 133-135.

    – Knopf, Jeffrey W. (2006) "Doing a Literature Review." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39(1): 127-132.

II. Measuring What We Need to Answer the Research Question

- Jan 30 – Concepts and Measurement

    – Pollock, Ch. 1.

    Problem Set #1 distributed in lecture

- Feb 1 – Variables

    – Pollock, Ch. 2.

- Feb 6 – Graphical Presentation of Variables

    – Evergreen, Stephanie D. H. (2017): *Effective Data Visualization. The Right Chart for the Right Data*. Sage. Excerpts from Ch. 2 and 7. (Blackboard)

    – Yau, Nathan (2017): "10 Best Data Visualization Projects of 2017" Online: `https://goo.gl/P6KPYZ`

- Feb 8 – Hypotheses

    – Pollock, Ch. 3.

    Feb 9 – Problem Set #1 due via Turnitin by 10:30 am

III. Answering the Research Question

- Feb 13 – Quantitative and Qualitative Research

    – Hancké, Bob (2009). "Constructing a Research Design." In: *Intelligent Research Design. A Guide for Beginning Researchers in the Social Sciences*. Oxford University Press. (Blackboard)

- Feb 15 – Review Session

- Feb 20 – EXAM # 1

III.a. Qualitative Research Designs

- Feb 22 – The Comparative Method

    - He, Kai (2013): "Case Study and the Comparative Method." In: *Political Science Research in Practice* New York: Routledge. Read pp. 25-32 (Blackboard)

    - Gerring, John (2001): "Methods." In: *Social Science Methodology. A Criterial Framework.* Cambridge University Press. Read pp. 206-214. (Blackboard)

- Feb 27 – Case Studies and Process Tracing

    - Gerring, John (2001): "Methods." In: *Social Science Methodology. A Criterial Framework.* Cambridge University Press. Read pp. 215-222. (Blackboard)

    - Van Evera, Stephen (1997): "What Are Case Studies? How Should They Be Performed?" In: *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Cornell University Press. (Blackboard)

    Problem Set #2 distributed in lecture

III.b. Quantitative Research Designs

- Mar 1 – Comparisons and Cross-Tabulations, Part 1

    - Pollock, Ch. 4 (pp. 84-97).

- Mar 6 – Comparisons and Cross-Tabulations, Part 2

    - Pollock, Ch. 5.

- Mar 8 – Sampling and Surveys, Part 1

    - Monroe, Alan C. 2000. "Survey Research." In: *Essentials of Political Research*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press. (Blackboard)

    - Pollock, Ch. 6. (pp. 123-141)

    Mar 9 – Problem Set #2 due via Turnitin by 10:30 am

- Mar 13 & Mar 15 – No Class: Spring Break

- Mar 20 – Sampling and Surveys, Part 2

    - Pollock, Ch. 6. (re-read pp. 136-141, then read pp. 141-145)

- Mar 22 – Significance Testing, Part 1

- – Pollock, Ch. 7. You do **not** have to read the section on "Measures of Association" (pp. 169-176).

- Apr 27 – Significance Testing, Part 2

  - – Pollock, Ch. 7. You do **not** have to read the section on "Measures of Association" (pp. 169-176).

- Mar 29 – Review Session

- Apr 3 – EXAM # 2

- Apr 5 – Correlation

  - – Pollock, Ch. 8 (pp. 183-188)

- Apr 10 – Linear Regression, Part 1

  - – Pollock, Ch. 8 (pp. 188-194)

  Problem Set #3 distributed in lecture

- Apr 12 – Linear Regression, Part 2

  - – Pollock, Ch. 8 (pp. 194-201)

- Apr 17 – Linear Regression, Part 3

  - – Pollock, Ch. 8 (pp. 201-209)

- Apr 19 – Linear Regression, Part 4

  - – Brunetti, Aymo and Beatrice Weder (2003): "A Free Press is Bad News for Corruption." *Journal of Public Economics* 87(7): 1801-1824.

  Apr 20 – Problem Set #3 due via Turnitin by 10:30 am

III.c. Experimental Research Designs

- Apr 24 – Experiments and Quasi-Experiments

  - – Pollock, Ch. 4 (pp. 78-84).

- Apr 26 – Review Session

- May 1 – EXAM # 3