

**Research Methods
PSC 302 - 1002**

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Office Hours: W 1-3PM, Th 2:30-3:30PM, and by appointment	
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Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce you to the fundamentals of, and theoretical framework behind, the empirical research process in political science. You will learn the steps required to complete an empirical political science research project: what questions to ask, how to design and implement a project, how to operationalize theoretical concepts, and how to collect and analyze data. Students will also learn the basics of statistical software and how to present and discuss statistical results in a substantively informative, comprehensible, and scientifically accurate manner.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Ask questions and identify claims that are empirically testable
- Determine what data or other evidence would be useful to necessary to answer a question or assess a claim
- Employ statistical techniques to evaluate that evidence
- Perform basic statistical tests using statistical computer software
- Present and discuss statistical evidence in a way that is informative, comprehensible, and scientifically accurate
- Assess the quality of political science research

Required Materials:

The following book is available for purchase at the campus bookstore:

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, H.T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. 2016. *Political Science Research Methods*. 8th Edition. CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1-5063-0782-4

You will also read several academic journal articles. These will be posted on the webcampus site for this course.

Throughout the course, we will also use the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to open and analyze data sets. SPSS can be found around UNLV's campus, including the Libraries. Lied Library has SPSS installed on all regular public PC workstations and circulating laptops. Students may also purchase a 6 or 12-month license of SPSS at a discounted rate through Kivuto. To purchase, go to <http://unlv.e-academy.com> and register with your Rebelmail address. You are NOT required to purchase SPSS, but be aware that several assignments will ask you to use SPSS, so plan accordingly.

Requirements & Evaluation:

Your grade will be determined by three in-class exams, regular homework assignments, an "analyzing political science research" paper, and participation in in-class discussion. If you believe that any

assignment has been unfairly graded, you may submit a brief written statement (no more than 250 words) outlining why you believe you deserve a higher grade. This statement must be submitted within one week of having received your grade. If your protest is reasonable, I will re-grade your assignment. However, be aware that your grade may go down as well as up. I reserve the right to offer extra credit assignments to the class at my discretion.

Assignments will be weighted as follows:

Exam 1 – 15%
Exam 2 – 15%
Exam 3 – 20%
Homework – 30%
Critical Research Analysis Paper – 5%
Participation/Attendance – 15%

Exams

Exams will be in-class and will consist of a variety of question types including multiple choice, short answer, and essay. The exams will ask you to explain the concepts from class and readings and will ask you to apply these concepts. Reading carefully and taking good notes will help you prepare for these exams. Exams will be cumulative, although they will focus most strongly on the information from the most recent module. There will be more information later in the semester.

Homework Assignments

There will be six take-home homework assignments. Homework assignments will be posted on webcampus and are due to webcampus by midnight on the day they are due.

Working through the assignments is essential to understanding the concepts and acquiring the skills being taught in this class. Collaboration in small groups of two or three students is permitted, but students must turn in individual problem sets and are responsible for learning and reproducing the material on their own. If students collaborate on the homework assignments, they should list the names of the students they worked with at the bottom of the assignment when they turn it in.

Critical Research Analysis Paper

One of the major goals of this course is that, by the end, students can understand and critically analyze political science research. In this paper, you will be asked to review and analyze an academic journal article that uses the methods covered in this course. In the paper, you will be asked to identify the major components of the research design, explain the study's methodology and findings, and to critically analyze the article. You will be given a choice of 3 different articles to choose from.

The final paper will be roughly 3-5 pages long. Length will not be as important as quality and thoroughness. A more specific prompt will be circulated later in the semester.

Participation in Class Discussion

Class discussions and attendance are a central part of this course and will account for 15% of your grade. The discussions will be based on the assigned readings as well as content brought up

in lecture. Assessment will be based on the quantity and quality of your participation throughout the semester.

Productive class discussion requires that you come to class prepared. This means reading all assigned materials before class and are ready to talk about the arguments from the week's readings. (Or be ready with questions you have about the reading. Chances are, if you have a question, you're not the only one.)

Your attendance record will also be used as a way to assess your participation. Good attendance is necessary but not sufficient for getting a good participation grade. You are expected to attend every class.

Pop Quizzes

Pop quizzes will be administered if it becomes apparent that students are not doing course readings. These quizzes will count towards your daily participation grade. There are no make-ups for pop quizzes.

Final grades will be given as follows:

A	93.0-100	C	73.0-76.9
A-	90.0-92.9	C-	70.0-72.9
B+	87.0-89.9	D+	67.0-69.9
B	83.0-86.9	D	63.0-66.9
B-	80.0-82.9	D-	60.0-62.9
C+	77.0-79.9	F	0-59.9

Missed Exams and Late Work:

Homework assignments turned in late without a valid excuse will lose 5 points for each calendar day they are late. Missed exams will receive no credit unless either (a) the student coordinates with me to take the exam at a different time and can present evidence of a legitimate conflict with the exam time or (b) unforeseen catastrophe unfolds on the day of the exam and you are able to present evidence of said catastrophe within two days of missed exam.

Collaboration:

Collaboration in small groups of two or three students for homework is permitted, but students must turn in individual problem sets and are responsible for learning and reproducing the material on their own. If students collaborate on the homework assignments, they should list the names of the students they worked with at the bottom of the assignment when they turn it in.

Plagiarism in any form is not tolerated, so be sure that you cite all of your sources in exams and papers.

Disabilities or Language Concerns:

If you have a learning disability or language concern that may impact your success in this class, please let me know at the beginning of the semester.

Contacting Me:

Email: I check my email frequently, and you can expect me to respond within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours over the weekend or holiday. If I haven't responded to you within those time frames, please send me another email as I may have overlooked your initial email.

Office Hours: My office hours and office location are listed above. If these hours do not work with your schedule and you would like to meet, email me to arrange an alternate time to meet. Please try to email me in advance so I know to expect you.

Schedule (The schedule is subject to change based on the needs of the class):

JRM = Johnson, Reynolds and Mycoff Textbook

MODULE 1: LAYING THE FOUNDATION		
<i>Week 1:</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>
1/22	Introduction	
1/24	Empirical Research	JRM Ch. 2
<i>Week 2:</i>		
1/29	Research Questions and Building Theories	JRM Ch. 3
1/31	Hypotheses	JRM Ch. 4 SKIM: JRM Ch. 12, pages 388-390
	Homework 1 Given	Due Thursday, February 7
<i>Week 3:</i>		
2/5	Concepts, Measures, and Variables	JRM Ch. 5
2/7	Measurement Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gunitsky, Seva. 2015. "How do you measure 'democracy'?" <i>The Washington Post</i> • Sambanis, Nicholas. 2004. "What Is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition." <i>Journal of Conflict Resolution</i> 48 (6). READ PAGES 814 – 831 • Saperstein, Aliya, Jessica M. Kizer, and Andrew M. Penner. 2016. "Making the Most of Multiple Measures: Disentangling the Effects of Different Dimensions of Race in Survey Research." <i>American Behavioral Scientist</i>. 60 (4). READ PAGES 519-524.
<i>Week 4:</i>		
2/12	Data Sources	JRM Ch. 8
	Homework 2 Given	Due Tuesday, February 19
2/14	SPSS Introduction	
<i>Week 5:</i>		
2/19	SPSS Introduction Continued and Exam Review	
2/21	EXAM 1	

MODULE 2: DESIGNING A STUDY		
<i>Week 6:</i>		
2/26	Causation, Randomness, and Experiments	JRM Ch. 6 Guess the Correlation http://guessthecorrelation.com/
2/28	Experiments Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iyengar, Shanto, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder. 1982. "Experimental Demonstrations of the "Not-So-Minimal" Consequences of Television News Programs." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 76 (4): 848-858. Gerber, Alan S. and Donald P. Green. 2000. "The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 94 (3): 653-663.
<i>Week 7:</i>		
3/5	Sampling	JRM Ch. 7
3/7	Surveys and Interviews	JRM Ch. 10
	Homework 3 Given	Due Thursday, March 14
<i>Week 8:</i>		
3/12	Surveys Continued	JRM Ch. 10, continued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philpot, Tasha S. 2018. "Race, Gender, and the 2016 Presidential Election." <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i> 51 (4): 755-761.
3/14	Using Survey Data	SKIM: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ANES 2016 Time Series Study. User Guide. ANES 2016 Time Series Study Questionnaire
<i>Week 9: Spring Break No Class</i>		
<i>Week 10:</i>		
3/26	Descriptive Statistics & Data Visualization	JRM Ch. 11
	Homework 4 Given	Due Tuesday, April 2
3/28	Descriptive Statistics & Data Visualization + SPSS	JRM Ch. 11, continued
<i>Week 11:</i>		
4/2	Review for Exam 2	
4/4	EXAM 2	
MODULE 3: ANALYZING DATA AND INTERPRETING RESULTS		
<i>Week 12:</i>		
4/9	Significance Tests and Confidence Intervals	JRM Ch. 12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Count Bayesie. 2015. "How Big is the Difference Between Being 90% and 99% Certain?" https://www.countbayesie.com/blog/2015/7/6/how-big-is-the-difference-between-being-90-and-99-certain

4/11	Significance Tests and Confidence Intervals + SPSS	JRM Ch. 12, continued
	Homework 5 Given	Due Thursday, 4/18
<i>Week 13:</i>		
4/16	Difference of Means Tests	JRM Ch. 13, 416-466
4/18	NO CLASS – Lab time for homework	
<i>Week 14:</i>		
4/23	ANOVA	JRM Ch. 13, 467-483
4/25	ANOVA + SPSS	TBD
	Critical Research Analysis Paper Assignment Given	Due Thursday, May 16
<i>Week 15:</i>		
4/30	Bivariate Regression	JRM Ch. 13, 483-514
5/2	Bivariate Regression + SPSS	TBD
	Homework 6 Given	Due Thursday, April 9
<i>Week 16:</i>		
5/7	Multivariate Regression	JRM Ch. 14 (Pages TBD)
5/9	Exam 3 Review	
<i>Week 17</i>		
	EXAM 3	

University Policies:

Academic Misconduct—Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility, and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling at UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

Copyright—The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you, nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)—The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what

options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

Final Examinations—The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

Incomplete Grades—The grade of I—Incomplete—can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student's control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving "I" grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

Library Resources—Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. Subject librarians for various classes can be found here: https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject. UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students' access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu/>.

Rebelmail—By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. **Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.**

Religious Holidays Policy—Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

Transparency in Learning and Teaching—The University encourages application of the transparency method of constructing assignments for student success. Please see these two links for further information: <https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>
<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>

Tutoring and Coaching—The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call [702-895-3177](tel:702-895-3177). The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex

(SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of SSC **A** (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TBE second floor.

UNLV Writing Center—One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.