

Bowie State University
Department of History and Government
Govt 145 Scope and Methods
Fall 2010
W 4:55-7:25

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Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of the basic concepts, principles, and research methods employed in social science.

Course Overview

Scope and Methods is designed to expose students to some of the common theories and methods employed in political science. Theoretically, the course briefly explores the key conceptual positions within political science, such as behavioralism, rational choice theory, interpretive theory, and critical theory. From a methodological perspective, the class examines the basic components of research design as well as introductory level quantitative and qualitative techniques. Because quantitative techniques hold a dominant position within mainstream political science, there is also an emphasis on exposing students to basic (descriptive) statistical procedures.

*******Special Needs:** Students who have a disability and who would like accommodations should report immediately to Disability Support Services (DSS), located in Room 1328 in the Business and Graduate Studies Building or call Dr. Michael S. Hughes, DSS Coordinator at 301-860-4067.

A: General Education Competencies

- 1) Written and Oral Communication
 - Write a research proposal
 - Write a research paper
- 2) Critical Thinking and Reasoning
 - Carefully interpret, analyze, and evaluate evidence statements, graphics, and questions
 - Construct well-supported (evidence based), clearly articulated, and sustained arguments
- 3) Scientific Analysis Using Quantitative and Qualitative Sources
 - Apply descriptive statistics (such as US census data and public opinion data) to evaluate claims and current literature
 - Use decision-maker and policy documents to assess the accuracy of claims made by politicians
- 4) Technology Competence
 - Use word processor to create a text document
 - Use Graphics program (such as Excel) to create tables and graphs for data analysis

5) Information Literacy

- Use a Library Database (such as EBSCO Academic Search Premier), the internet, or “MyPoliSciKit” to conduct research for class
- Use traditional (hard copy books or journals) to conduct research for class

B: Student Learning Objectives

- 1) Define the basic theories and paradigms of political science, such as: behavioralism, rational choice theory, interpretive theory, ethnic and feminist theories, the structure agency debate, and historical institutionalism.
- 2) Learn the main components of a research paper, including: research questions, hypotheses, literature reviews, theoretical and methodological frameworks.
- 3) Understand basic quantitative concepts, such as: mean, mode, median, standard deviation, quartile and interquartile ranges, and standard scores
- 4) Understand the differences between qualitative and quantitative methods, and different research sources.
- 5) Use the requisite skills for research in political science;
- 6) Demonstrate this knowledge in the use of technology and library resources.

C: Expected Outcomes: Students will be required to complete the following:

- 1) Two Tests to evaluate their mastery of key concepts, theories, and paradigms (learning objectives 1-4). Tests will be composed of multiple choice, short answers, and essays.
- 2) Write a research proposal (learning objective 1-6).
- 3) Write short research paper (approx 12 pages) using qualitative and quantitative sources to examine a preselected topic..

Course Requirements

1. Class Readings: Students will be responsible for weekly readings and assignments taken from the following texts:

Required:

W. Lawrence Neuman, *Understanding Research* (Boston: Pearson, 2009).

Zealure Holcomb, *Fundamentals of Descriptive Research* (Los Angeles: Pryczak Pub., 1998).

Additional readings (both required and supplemental) will be posted on Angel or provided by the instructor. The student's grade for participation will be partially derived from class discussions of the readings.

2.) Paper: Students will responsible one research paper, divided into two main parts, based on one of the pre-selected areas (see below). The first part of the project requires the student to turn in a research proposal (approximately six pages long) for the paper due at the end of the course. For the second part of the project, students will convert their research proposal into a longer paper (approximately 12 pages long). The paper should include the main components of research design (see below).

Research Areas

World Politics

1)Comparative Politics: Compare and contrast the political-economic performance of three countries in Asia, Africa, or Latin America;

2)International Relations: Examine the performance of an international organization (such as the UN) in peace keeping during ethnic conflicts

US Domestic Politics

1)Voting Behavior: Examine the voting behavior or political participation of one historically under-represented group (minorities or women for example) over the past twenty years;

2)Public Policy: Examine whether the education policy enacted by city, county, or state administration has had a positive or negative impact in the target group;

3)Political Economy: Explore income inequality in the US between ethnic, gender, or socio-economic groupings.

Main Components of a Research Paper

Introduction (½ to 1 page)

--Each paper's introduction should (a) introduce the reader to the topic area.

Statement of the Problem (½ Page)

--Tell the reader specifically what the topic of your investigation is, and why research is needed in this area.

Divide Problem into Research Questions and Hypotheses (½ to 1 Page)

--Students must conceptualize 2 to 4 clear research questions and hypotheses that will frame their discussion.

Literature Review (Approximately 4 Pages)

--Using *at least five* academic or professional sources (two books and three journal articles /book chapters), the student must summarize the work of each author. Each summary should indicate what the author(s) is studying, how she or he studied the topic, and what were the author's findings (½ to 1 page for each author).

Methodology Section(Approx. ½ page): The student should indicate the following: whether the paper is quantitative or qualitative; identify the data sources employed in the paper; and list what the scope or range of the paper is (for example, the years or region that paper covers).

Analysis Section (approx. 4 pages): Based on your primary source, what were your findings? Were your hypotheses confirmed or rejected?

Conclusion (½ to 1 page)

--Your conclusion should summarize the major findings of your research, and discuss any prospects for future research

Bibliography --Government Majors must use Chicago/Turabian Citation Format.

Note: All Papers Must Have a Statistical Component

Research Paper Key Dates

Week 6: Oct. 6th: Research Topics Due: Students must submit a brief description of their topic.

Week 8: Oct. 20th: Res. Quest & Preliminary Bibliographies Due: The student must formulate at least two research questions pertaining to their chosen topic, and they must identify at least three sources dealing with that topic.

Week 11: Nov. 10th: Proposals Due: Students must submit a formal research proposal (at least 6 pgs) that includes all the following components:

Introduction (½ -1 pg)

Research Questions & Hypotheses (1pg)

Literature Review (at least 4 pgs)

Week 12: Nov. 17th Data/Primary Source Due: Students must bring a “hard” or “digital” copy of the primary source(s) or data set (s) that the study will be based on.

Week 14: Dec. 1st : Data Analysis Due: The student must submit their analysis section.

Paper Due on University Scheduled Exam Date

3.) Tests: Students will take two tests as a part of the evaluation process. The tests will be composed of short answers, data analysis, and essays covering material reviewed in the prior weeks. The grading scale for the course is weighted toward the end of the semester with the last test and paper constituting more weight than the first two (see below).

4: Class Attendance/Participation: Attendance is a mandatory component of this course. Moreover, the participation element of the course will be partially derived from class discussions of the readings. While quizzes are not formally part of the course requirements, if students fail to keep up with the weekly reading assignments the instructor reserves the right to conduct pop quizzes. If any student misses more than two classes, the instructor reserves the right to automatically fail the student. *University professors are not obligated to honor any excuse or explanation for an absence, regardless if the absence is due to illness, family issues, or athletic events. If any student misses an assignment, she or he must submit the appropriate documentation (outlining specific details) for the professor to determine if the absence can or will be excused. Students are solely responsible for any materials that are covered or assigned (for example, if a test or quiz date is altered) during their absence.*

******Communications:** The professor reserves the right to make changes to the schedule or course requirements. Any alterations to the course will be announced in advance in class and via Angel. Announcements on Angel are sent to the student's BSU email address. Unless there is a technical problem with the system, students must communicate via their BSU email address.

Grading Scale

First Test:	20%
Second Test	20%
Proposal	10%
Paper:	20%
Assignments	20%
Attendance and Participation:	10%

Course Schedule

Week 1: Aug. 30-Sept. 3

Political Science: "Art or Science"

Required Reading: Monroe et al. "Nature of Political Science,"

Suggested Reading: Wysocki, "Why Do I Need to Understand Research Methods,"

Week 2: Sept. 6-10

Theories, Causality, and Political Science

Required Reading: Neuman, Ch. 1, Marsh, "Behavioralism"

Assignment: Holecomb, "Introduction to Statistics"

Suggested Reading:

Week 3: Sept. 13-17

Theories and Causality Part II.

Required Reading: Marsh, "Rational Choice," and Marsh "Interpretive Theory"

Suggested Reading:

Assignment: Holcomb, "Percentages and Bar Graphs"

Week 4: Sept. 20-24

Theories Cont. and Review

Required Reading: McAnulla, "Structure and Agency;" "Historical Analysis"

Assignment: Holcomb, "Shapes of Distributions"

Suggested Reading:

Week 5: : Sept. 27-Oct.1

1st Test

Week 6: Oct. 4-8

Research Design Part 1: Overview

Required Reading: Neuman Ch. 2, Baglione Chs. 1-3,

Research Topics Due

Assignment: Holcomb, "The Mean the Most Popular Average"

Suggested Reading: Wyoscki, "Research Design"

Week 7: Oct. 11-15

The Research Design Part II: Hypotheses

Required Reading: Neuman Ch. 2; Baglione, Ch. 4

Assignment: Holcomb, "The Median and the Mode"

Week 8: Oct. 18-22

Research Design Part III: Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement

Required Reading: Neuman Ch.5, Baglione, Chs. 5-6, Wyoscki "Conceptualization

Assignment: Holcomb, "The Standard Deviation"

Bibliographies Due

Week 9: . Oct. 25-29

Research Design and Measurement Cont.

Required Reading: Neuman Ch. 8

Assignment: Holcomb, "The Standard Deviation"

Week 10:Nov. 1-5

2nd Test

Week 11: Nov. 9-12

Quantitative Techniques

Required Reading: Neuman Ch. 9; Marsh, "Quantitative Methods"

Suggested Reading: Wyoscki, "Survey Research"

Research Proposals Due

Week 12: Nov. 15-19
Qualitative Techniques

Required Reading: Neuman Ch. 10
Data/Primary Sources Due

Week 13: Nov. 22-26(Thanksgiving Break?)
Qualitative Comparative Method

Required Reading: Marsh, "Comparative Methods," Neuman Ch. 11

Week 14: Nov. 29-Dec. 3
Mixed Methods

Required Reading: Neuman, Ch. 12
Data Analysis Section Due

Week 15: Dec. 6-11
Course Review

Week 16: Dec. 14-18
Research Paper Due

The Final Paper Is Due On The Exam Date and Time Scheduled By The University. I will not accept any papers or assignments after this date.

Listed below are easily accessible data resources (Note: All Papers Must Have a Statistical Component)

Political, Economic, and Cultural Statistics Resources:

US Bureau of Labor Statistics

website: <http://www.bls.gov/>

US Census Bureau

website: <http://www.census.gov/>

State of Maryland Statistics

website: <http://www.statestat.maryland.gov/>

Public Opinion Data

Pew Center

website: <http://pewresearch.org/>

Gallup Organization

website: <http://www.gallup.com/Home.aspx>

Pollster.com

website: <http://pollster.com/>

International Stats

United Nations

website: <http://data.un.org/>

World Bank

website:

<http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/0,,menuPK:476823~pagePK:64165236~piPK:64165141~theSitePK:469372,00.html>

Supplemental Readings and References

David Rochefort, ed., *Quantitative Methods in Practice: Readings From PS* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2006).

Diane Wysocki, ed., *Readings in Social Research Methods* (Belmont, CA: Thompson/Wadsworth, 2004).

W. Lawrence Neuman, *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Boston: Pearson, 2007).

Jarol Manheim, Richard Rich, and Lars Willnat, *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science* (New York: Longman, 2002).

Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 11th edit. (Belmont, Ca.: Wadsworth, 2007).

David Marsh and Gerry Stoker, eds., *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 2nd edit. (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

Lisa Baglione, *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science* (Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth, 2007)

John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Critical Framework* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001).

Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddie, *Mixed Methodology: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Pub., 1998).

William D. Berry and Mitchell Sanders, *Understanding Multivariate Research: A Primer for Beginning Social Scientists* (Boulder: Westview, 2000).

Craig Mertler and Rachel Vannatta, *Advanced and Multivariate Statistical Methods: Practical Application and Interpretation* (Glendale, CA: Pryczak Pub., 2005).

Rae Newton and Kjell Rudestam, *Your Statistical Consultant: Answers To Your Data Analysis Questions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Pub., 1999).

Lee Kirkpatrick and Brooke, *A Simple Guide to SPSS* (Belmont, CA: Thompson 2005).

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago: Univ. Of Chicago Press, 1996).