

POLI 301
Introduction to the Political Science Discipline

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Class Meetings:
TUTH 3:30 – 4:45 PM, 151 Gambrell

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to the research approaches and techniques employed by political scientists in the scientific study of politics. The focus of the course is thus not on the substantive questions that political scientists study, but rather, how political scientists examine and answer these questions. In investigating the scientific study of politics, we'll examine how political scientists develop theories, form hypotheses, measure political phenomena, and test hypotheses with data. Throughout the course, students will be encouraged to think creatively and analytically about politics. In the process, students will gain skills in critical thinking, become competent consumers of the political science literature, and become better equipped to conduct research in other courses.

The course will be taught in a mixed lecture/discussion format. As students will come to recognize during the semester, political science research is an iterative and interactive process. Scholars refine and reformulate questions, concepts, and measures during the research process. During this course we will bring this same type of critical thinking to the examination of the research process. Students will be encouraged and expected to participate in class as a means of sharpening their analytical skills. Students are expected to read the assigned readings before class so that they can come to class prepared to participate in these discussions. Students are encouraged to come see me if they have any questions regarding the class material.

Required Texts:

There are two required texts, both of which are available at the campus bookstores:

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, and H.T. Reynolds. 2005. *Political Science Research Methods*, 5th Ed. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Hoover, Kenneth, and Todd Donovan. 2001. *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking*, 8th Ed. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's Press.

In addition, we will be reading several articles from political science journals during the semester. These articles can be accessed at the course's Blackboard website. The Blackboard website will also serve as a useful resource for course information during the semester, so you will want to check it frequently.

Course Grades and Grading:

Course grades will be determined by student performance on three non-cumulative exams during the semester. There will be two non-cumulative midterm exams and one non-cumulative final exam (dates of each exam are noted on the syllabus). The two midterm exams will each count for 30% of the student's grade in the course, while the final exam will count for 40%. Makeup exams will only be offered in extreme circumstances (e.g., a documented death in the family or medical emergency). Documentation of the circumstances will be required. In all cases, I reserve the right to reject requests for makeup exams.

There will be one extra credit assignment allowed during the course. This extra credit assignment will be a critique (maximum of five pages) of the research design employed in a political science article. Students must receive instructor approval of the political science article before doing the extra credit assignment. The maximum number of points awarded for the extra credit assignment will be two percentage points on the student's overall course grade. The extra credit assignments are due at the beginning of class on April 13, no exceptions.

Course grades will be based on the following grading scale:

A = 90 – 100	C+ = 76 – 79	D = 60 – 65
B+ = 86 – 89	C = 70 – 75	F = 59 and below
B = 80 – 85	D + = 66 – 69	

Course grades at the end of the semester will be rounded up a half point if they are at .5 or higher. Thus, an 89.5 will become a 90. There will be no other adjusting of grades or curving of grades. If you cannot accept this, you should not take this course.

Academic Honesty and Integrity:

Students' work in this course is expected to be their own. The University's commitment to academic integrity is enshrined in the *Carolinian Creed* and is detailed in the *Rule of Academic Responsibility*. Information on violations of academic honesty and integrity and the University's punishments for these violations can be found in the *Carolina Community Student Handbook* (Student Affairs Policy STAF 6.25). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to the *Rule of Academic Responsibility*, which can be found online at <http://www.sa.sc.edu/carolinacommunity/housing.htm>.

Disabilities Issues:

Students with disabilities should contact me during the first week of the semester about their needs and any assistance or arrangements that may be necessary. Students with disabilities should also contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 777-6742 to learn about the many programs and services that the University provides.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1 (Week of January 10): Course Introduction

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 1

Week 2 (Week of January 17): The Scope of Political Science

Readings:

Hoover and Donovan, Chapter 1

Week 3 (Week of January 24): The Science of Politics and Government

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 2

Hoover and Donovan, Chapter 2

Weeks 4 and 5 (Weeks of January 31 and February 7): Research Design

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapters 3 & 5

Hoover and Donovan, Chapter 3

Green, Donald P., and Alan S. Gerber. 2003. "The Underprovision of Experiments in Political Science." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 589(1): 94-112.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14: EXAM 1

Weeks 6 and 7 (Weeks of February 14 and 21): Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 4

Hoover and Donovan, Chapter 4

Fearon, James D. 1991. "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science." *World Politics* 43(2): 169-195.

Putnam, Robert. "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America." Reprinted as Appendix A in Hoover and Donovan, pp. 161-190.

Week 8 (Week of February 28): Measurement

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 6

Hoover and Donovan, Chapter 5, pp. 93-99

Mondak, Jeffrey J. 2001. "Developing Valid Knowledge Scales." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(1): 224-238.

WEEK OF MARCH 7: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES

Week 9 (Week of March 14): Empirical Observation

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapters 7 and 8

THURSDAY, MARCH 16: EXAM 2

Week 10 (Week of March 21): Sampling

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 9

Hoover and Donovan, Chapter 5, pp. 100-109

Week 11 (Week of March 28): Survey Research

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 10

Brady, Henry E. 2000. "Contributions of Survey Research to Political Science." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33(1): 47-57.

Week 12 (Week of April 4): Descriptive Analysis of Quantitative Data

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 11

Weeks 13 and 14 (Weeks of April 11 and 18): Interpreting the Inferential Analysis of Quantitative Data

THURSDAY, APRIL 13: EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENTS DUE

Readings:

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapters 12 and 13

Hoover and Donovan, Chapter 5, pp. 109-136

**Final Exam
Thursday, April 27, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.
151 Gambrell Hall**