

Research Methods

POLS 270

Meeting Times: T & TR 3:30 - 4:45 P.M. CST

Instructor

Professor Ali Masood

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Office: 308 Buckman Hall

Office Hours: Thursday 10 A.M. - 1 P.M. or by Appointment

Course Overview

This course provides the tools necessary to evaluate what causes what. We will cover the scientific method, the nature of causality, research design, and some basic statistical methods. Collectively, these elements provide an understanding of how research is conducted by those who study politics and other topics in the social sciences. In summary, this class provides an understanding of how real people apply real techniques to real data, in order to answer really important questions about the real world.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this course, students will:

1. Be able to understand and identify basic concepts and terms within research methods.
2. Have a thorough understanding of the fundamentals of political inquiry.
3. Be able to critically evaluate the seminal literature within one's discipline.
4. Understand hypothesis testing, p-values, standard deviations, confidence intervals, and statistical bias.
5. Conduct original research starting with an original question, designing the study, and collecting data.
6. Be able to present data through tables and graphical techniques.
7. Improve critical thinking and analytic abilities.

Required Textbook

The textbook listed below is available for purchase online and at the campus bookstore:

- ★ Johnson, Janet, Reynolds, H.T., and Jason Mycoff. 2016. *Political Science Methods*. 8th Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Required Slack Account

This class will use Slack for class-related communication. All students are required to join the course using their college email address. Students enrolled in this class understand that Slack, and not email, is the primary communication platform. Please download the app or login daily for updates. The Slack channel for the course is: research-methods-fall-2020. You will receive an email prompt to join.

Course Structure and Evaluation

In this course, we will engage in a variety of activities, including lecture-based discussion, critical evaluation of the readings, and application of statistical techniques. Over the course of the semester, students in this course will be evaluated on the following: attendance and participation, Slack discussion posts, one midterm exam, a research design, and a final empirical research paper.

Attendance and Participation & Discussion Posts

Regular on-time attendance to class is expected from each student. Attendance includes reading the assigned material for the session as well as adequately preparing for the discussion of the material in class. All students are required to pose a question or a thought that comes from the readings on Slack once a week.

Midterm Exam

There will be one midterm exam in this course. The exam is designed to test the student's knowledge and comprehension of assigned readings and the discussion in class. Thus, it is worth reiterating the importance of completing your reading and attending class. The exams will consist of short essay questions. Make-up examinations are only offered when there is documented proof of a medical emergency that is excused by the professor. In the event of such a medical emergency, a student may be given an alternative make-up exam. This decision is at the discretion of the instructor. If a student misses an exam due to a medical emergency, the student must contact the instructor as soon as it is practical to do so. If a student fails to appear or submit an exam on time for any other reason, a grade of zero will be recorded.

Research Design

Students are required to complete an original research design in the course. The research design can explore any aspect of Political Science from a quantitative perspective. The scope of the paper is purposely broad so that the student can produce a quality research design on a topic that is of interest to the student. Each research design should identify a research question, discuss related previous research, offer at least one hypothesis, and discuss an appropriate sources to obtain data to test the hypotheses. Early in the semester, students are required to submit a short one-page proposal that will form the basis of their research design. Students are encouraged to schedule appointments early in the semester to discuss potential research topics. The research design should be approximately 12-15 pages in length.

Final Research Paper

Students in the class are required to complete an original research paper. The research should be an extension of the research design. The final paper will be a revised iteration of the research design with additional sections for results and a conclusion. Early submission of rough drafts for instructor comments is highly encouraged. The research paper should be approximately 20-25 pages in length. The final empirical paper is due through Slack.

General Expectations

Each student is expected to regularly attend class, arrive on-time, and leave only after the instructor has adjourned the day's session. Students are expected to be cordial with each other and the instructor to facilitate a good learning environment. Students with concerns relating to the classroom environment should bring them to the attention of the instructor before or after class or during office hours.

Zoom Remote Class

We will conduct our class remotely through Zoom Video. To minimize the challenges of synchronous learning, we will meet remotely once a week as a class. This will be on Tuesdays. On Thursdays, I will be available for one-on-one Zoom meetings to go over the material with you. Please sign in to our Zoom session a few minutes before our official class time. If you have not already done so, please register and install the Zoom video application on your device. The Zoom meeting link is as follows:

<https://rhodes.zoom.us/j/94119887997?pwd=aVFxbmNVUUEyY2NhT1d1WWlxOEtVUT09>

Meeting ID: 941-1988-7997 Passcode: 270

Technology in the Classroom

Students are encouraged to use tablets and laptops in the class to take notes and participate in class activities. Multitasking with material that does not relate to the class interferes with the learning process and can be highly distracting to other students. Cell phone use is not allowed in the class.

Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations should contact the Office of Student Accessibility Services at 901-843-3885, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Students should also bring any request for reasonable accommodation to the attention of the instructor.

Honor Code

Students should familiarize themselves with the Rhodes College Honor Code and policy for academic integrity. All work in this course is expected to be completed by the student submitting the work. Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated. Students who engage in academic dishonesty by cheating or plagiarizing will receive a grade of zero for the work. In addition, the student may also receive a failing grade for the course. Violations of the Honor Code may result in expulsion from the college.

Grade Distribution

Attendance & Participation	10%
Weekly Discussion Posts	15%
Research Question	5%
Research Abstract	5%
Midterm Examination	20%
Research Design	20%
Final Research Paper	25%

Grading Scale

100 - 90.00	A	70.00 - 76.99	C
87.00 - 89.99	B+	67.00 - 69.99	D+
80.00 - 86.99	B	60.00 - 66.99	D
77.00 - 79.99	C+	<= 59.99	F

Syllabus Amendments

Over the course of the semester, amendments to the syllabus are possible or may become necessary. The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus at any point during the semester. In the event of an amendment, students will be notified electronically.

Course Schedule

The schedule of courses is listed on the following page also lists the reading assignment for the session. The readings are listed by the class date prior to which they should be completed. Students should complete the reading assignments in their entirety. Students should make note of two important points. First, this course is reading intensive. Second, the readings listed below are required readings for the course – they are not optional. It is critical that students come to class prepared to discuss the material.

	Content
Week 1	
Thr 8/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Course Introduction & Overview ★ Reading assignment: None
Week 2	
Tue 9/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ The Scientific Study of Politics ★ Reading assignment: J&R Chapters 1-2
Thr 9/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ One-on-one Zoom Meetings ★ Reading assignment: None

Week 3	
Tue 9/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Developing Theories & Literature Reviews ★ Reading assignment: J&R Chapters 3-4
Thr 9/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ One-on-one Zoom Meetings ★ Reading assignment: None
Week 4	
Tue 9/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Fundamentals of Research Design ★ Reading assignment: J&R Chapters 5-6
Thr 9/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ One-on-one Zoom Meetings ★ Reading assignment: None ★ Research Question Due
Week 5	
Tue 9/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Fundamentals of Research Design II ★ Reading assignment: None
Thr 9/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ One-on-one Zoom Meetings ★ Reading assignment: None
Week 6	
Tue 9/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Sampling ★ Reading assignment: J&R Chapters 7 and 10
Thr 10/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ One-on-one Zoom Meetings ★ Reading assignment: None ★ Research Abstract Due
Week 7	
Tue 10/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Empirical Analysis, Dissemination of Results, and Implications ★ Reading assignment: None
Thr 10/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ One-on-one Zoom Meetings ★ Reading assignment: None ★ Midterm Exam Distributed
Week 8	
Tue 10/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Academic Writing and Presentations ★ Reading assignment: None
Thr 10/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Midterm Exam Due by 4 P.M. CST via Slack ★ Reading assignment: None

Week 9	
Tue 10/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Research Workshop * Reading assignment: None
Thr 10/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * One-on-one Zoom Meetings * Reading assignment: None
Week 10	
Tue 10/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Data Analysis: First Steps * Reading assignment: J&R Chapter 11
Thr 10/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * One-on-one Zoom Meetings * Reading assignment: None
Week 11	
Tue 11/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Statistical Inference & Hypothesis Testing * Reading assignment: J&R Chapter 12
Thr 11/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * One-on-one Zoom Meetings * Reading assignment:
Week 12	
Tue 11/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Statistical Inference II * Reading assignment:
Thr 11/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * One-on-one Zoom Meetings * Reading assignment: None
Week 13	
Tue 11/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Applied Regression I * Reading assignment: Posted on Slack
Thr 11/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * One-on-one Zoom Meetings * Reading assignment: None * Research Design Due by 4 P.M. CST via Slack
Week 14	
Tue 11/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Applied Regression II * Reading assignment: Posted on Slack
Thr 11/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Thanksgiving Break (No Class) * Reading assignment: None

Week 15	
Tue 12/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Applied Regression III & Course Wrap Up * Reading assignment: None
Thr 12/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * One-on-one Zoom Meetings * Reading assignment: None
Week 16	
Tue 12/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Final Paper Due by 5:30 P.M. CST via Slack