

# POL 30: Political Inquiry

Spring 2007

MW 12:00 - 12:50

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## Introduction

This course provides an introduction to the tools of political inquiry, especially basic statistical methods. While political science has traditionally relied upon largely non-quantitative work, several factors have led to a dramatic increase in the use of statistics to study political phenomenon. First, increasing availability of high-quality data allow scholars to test hypotheses that they previously could not. Second, advances in computing have made quantitative methods relatively easy and accessible. Third, quantitative methods have proven to be extremely powerful and flexible tools for social scientists. Quantitative methods are clearly here to stay and growing in scope and application.

## Course Objectives

We have three basic goals in the course. First, after this course, you should be prepared to read and understand most quantitative research in current political science journals. Second, you should be careful and critical consumers of quantitative research. Finally, you should be capable of answering your own basic political science questions with quantitative data.

By the end of this course, you will be able to create and explain a variety of statistics, both graphical and numerical. You will also be equipped to critically analyze others' quantitative work, including their sample framework, methods, and analysis. You will also learn how to use a statistical software program, "Stata". These skills will be useful in reading, understanding, and conducting research in political science, as well as in many other disciplines.

## Reasons to take this course

1. To understand research in political science, you need to understand quantitative methods. Open any one of the top political science journals where the best scholarship is published and you will see that almost every article uses quantitative methods.
2. The skills you will learn in this course are valuable. Many of you will go on to run government agencies, administer nonprofit organizations, or have your own businesses or law practices. Statistics provides a powerful set of tools for understanding problems and making decisions. If you master the material in this course, you will have an additional set of resources for your future career. If you do not, you will always be at the mercy of those that are literate in statistics.
3. Finally, believe it or not: this stuff is fun.

## Preparation

This course is targeted to an audience with no previous experience in statistics. You should have reasonable math skills, or be willing to work hard. No calculus is required - basic algebra should be sufficient.

## Study Methods

The material covered in this course is inherently cumulative. If you do not keep up, you will quickly find yourself too far behind to catch up. Hence you should not expect to be able to blow off this class until the week before the final, unless you are trying to fail.

I believe that anyone can get any grade they want in this course. I will work with you to achieve your goals and encourage you to contact me with any questions.

## Evaluation

- Midterm

There will be one in-class midterm as listed on the course schedule.

- Final Exam

There will be a cumulative final exam as per the official Schedule of Classes.

- Homework

There will be four homework assignments. These will help me track your progress and will encourage you to keep up on the reading. Part of the homeworks will be based on a the textbook problems, and part will require computer analysis of a dataset that I will provide.

- Participation/Quizzes

Ten percent of your grade will reflect your participation in section discussions and performance on occasional unscheduled quizzes.

Note: excluding online assignments, all assignments should be submitted physically, not electronically, i.e., no email submission of assignments.

## Grades

Your performance on the above projects will be weighted according to the following table:

Homework	30%
Midterm	20%
Final Exam	40%
Participation	10%
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Total	100%

You may also complete an optional extra credit assignment, “Data of the Day”, as described on the website. This is worth up to 2.5 points.

## Evaluation Policy

Late assignments will not be accepted and will receive a failing grade, in accordance with University regulations.

## Policy on Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be subject to disciplinary action consistent with University rules and regulations. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with University regulations regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty. If you have any doubt as to what is expected in these regards, please ask.

## Additional Information

This syllabus is posted on the course website. Assignments, updates, and other information will be posted there during the semester.

## Textbooks

The following should be available for a bundled sale at the University bookstore:

De Veaux and Velleman: *Intro Stats*

Supplemental readings are all available online through the UCSD library, via JSTOR or other electronic materials suppliers. You may have trouble trying to access these materials from an off-campus computer.

## **Assignments and Lectures**

All reading should be completed before class. I may call on individual students to participate in discussions. I reserve the right to adjust the lecture and reading schedule as needed. A tentative list of weekly topics, readings, and exam dates are listed below.

Date	Topic	Reading
2-Apr-07	Introduction	Chapter 1-2 Thompson (2003)
4-Apr-07	Origins of Data - Surveys	Chapters 11-12 Wattenberg and Brians (1999)
9-Apr-07	Origins of Data - Experiments	Chapter 13 Ansolabehere et al. (1994)
11-Apr-07	Univariate Statistics: Categorical Variables	Chapter 3
16-Apr-07	Univariate Statistics: Quantitative Variables	Chapter 4 Mayhew (1974)
18-Apr-07	Univariate Statistics: Quantitative Variables	Chapter 5
23-Apr-07	Multivariate Statistics	Chapter 7
25-Apr-07	Multivariate Statistics	Chapter 8
30-Apr-07	Multivariate Statistics	Chapter 9
2-May-07	Multivariate Statistics	None.
7-May-07	Midterm	None.
9-May-07	What is inference?	None. Sullivan (1985)
14-May-07	Basic Probability and Central Limit Theorem	Chapter 16-17
16-May-07	Univariate Inference: Proportions	Chapter 18-19 Desposato (2007)
21-May-07	Univariate Inference: Proportions	Chapter 20-21
23-May-07	Univariate Inference: Proportions	Chapter 22
28-May-07	Memorial Day Holiday	None
30-May-07	Bivariate Inference: Chi-Squared	Chapter 26
4-Jun-07	Bivariate Inference: Chi-Squared / Regression	Chapter 27
6-Jun-07	Bivariate Inference: Regression / Review	

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FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, June 13, 11:30am - 2:30pm

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## The Syllabus

The syllabus and course outline is intended to provide an overview of the course. You cannot claim any rights from it. In particular, scheduling and dates may change. Although the syllabus should be a fairly reliable guide for the course, official announcements are always those made in class.

## References

- Ansolabehere, S., S. Iyengar, A. Simon, and N. Valentino (1994). Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate? *American Political Science Review* 88(4), 829–838.
- Desposato, S. W. (2007). The Impact of Negative Campaigning in New Democracies: Results From An Experiment in Brazil. *Working Paper, UCSD*.
- Mayhew, D. (1974). Congressional Elections: The Case of the Vanishing Marginals. *Polity* VI(3), 295–317.
- Sullivan, J. F. (July 23, 1985). Court in Jersey Upholds Equal Odds for All. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851-2003)*, B1.
- Thompson, C. (2003). 2003: The 3rd Annual Year in Ideas; PowerPoint Makes You Dumb. *The New York Times*.
- Wattenberg, M. P. and C. L. Briens (1999). Negative Campaign Advertising: Demobilizer or Mobilizer? *American Political Science Review* 93(4), 891–899.