POL 30: Political Inquiry

Spring, 2024

Last update: Tuesday 2\textsuperscript{nd} April, 2024

Lecture: MW 12:00pm - 12:50pm.

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Welcome to POLI 30!

This course provides an introduction to the tools of political inquiry, including research design, causal inference, and basic statistical methods. Understanding these topics is essential for assessing the validity of others’ studies and for conducting your own research. It is also fun. Really!

Course Objectives

After completing this course, students will:

1. Have a clear understanding of research design, hypothesis testing, and theory building. With this understanding, you will be prepared to evaluate political science research, understand the methods used by scholars, and assess the strengths and weaknesses of research techniques. In addition, you will be able to apply this knowledge to other scientific disciplines.

2. You will be capable and critical consumers of qualitative and quantitative research, in politics and other areas of scientific inquiry.

3. You will acquire the basic applied skills needed to conduct your own research projects.

Practically, this means that by the end of this course, you will be equipped to critically analyze others’ work, including their sample framework, measurement, design, methods, and analysis. You will be able to create and explain a variety of statistics, both graphical and numerical. You will be able to analyze relationships between several types of variables. 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 research design and 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 the basic techniques that we will learn in this class.
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. The logic of political research will provide 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 trained in these methods. In addition, we are in the midst of an explosion in data availability, which has been accompanied a dramatic growth in demand for skilled professionals capable of analyzing such data. If you like this course, you may wish to consider our advanced classes and a concentration in Data Analytics.

3. The material is challenging, but many students enjoy it. Research methodology can be abused, but it has an underlying logic and objectivity that many students find appealing. In addition, the basic analysis skills you learn in this class will empower you to ask and answer innumerable questions about the world.

4. And of course, the best reason to take this course: you have to.

Preparation
Whatever your background, you can do this if you are willing to work at it. This course is heavy on intuition and logic, and only occasionally requires basic math.

Study Methods
You should stay on top of the material and not leave anything until the last minute. 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.

A great deal of your grade comes from the homework assignments. Take them very seriously and start them as soon as they are assigned.

Every student can earn any grade they want in this course. The teaching staff are absolutely committed to supporting your success and will work with you to achieve your goals. We encourage you to reach out to us with any questions or issues.

Evaluation
- Final Exam - 35%
  There will be a cumulative final exam per the Schedule of Classes. It will be worth 35 percent of your grade.
- Homework - 50%
  There will be four homework assignments, worth a total of 50 percent of your grade. Homework will cover most of the core material on the final examination, but it is not just an exam preparation tool. An important component of the homework will be your conducting independent and original research, using the datasets provided in class, or even some other dataset should you so desire. Some problems will come straight from the text, others from the workbook, and others from me. Your lowest-scoring homework will be weighted downward, so that the final formula for your homework score will be:

\[
    \text{HW}_{\text{score}} = \left( \frac{7}{8} \ast \text{Average of Three Best Scores} \right) + \left( \frac{1}{8} \ast \text{Lowest Homework Scores} \right)
\]
• Quizzes and Discussion - 15%
  Fifteen percent (15%) of your grade will come from quizzes, section attendance, and other participatory assignments. I will post a quiz weekly on topics covered in lecture. I may also post discussion questions periodically. Points in this category will come partly from participation (doing the quiz, coming to section) and partly from performance (whether you get it right or wrong). Your use of the iClicker in class will be included in this calculation. You may miss 2 sections and 4 lectures without any penalty.

• Extra Credit - Up to 5%
  There may be a number of extra credit assignments worth up to 5 percentage points. One such assignment is a “Data of the Day” report. This assignment will involve finding and assessing a published representation of data. You can use a newspaper or magazine, or a research journal. You will write a summary of your observations in one page or less. More details will be provided in class and on the class Canvas website.

  There may be additional extra credit available for participation in discussion boards.

Late Assignments and Exams

  Late homework assignments will be marked down by 5 percent per day, and will only be accepted for one week after the original due date, but no later than the last day of week 10 of the quarter. Homework 4 is due on Friday of Week 10, and thus cannot be submitted late. Thus, Homework 1, 2, and 3 may be submitted up to one week late for a penalty of 5% PER DAY. Homework 4 may NOT be submitted late.

  Final examinations may not be submitted after the deadline and cannot be rescheduled; please plan your travel and other obligations accordingly. Exceptional medical and family emergencies will be accommodated with standard documentation.

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.

Syllabus

  The syllabus and course outline is intended to provide an overview of the course. In particular, some dates, readings, assignments, and topics may change.

Other: Nametags

  Please place a name tag on your desk at each lecture so I can call on you and learn your names. I recommend folding an 8.5 X 11 piece of paper lengthwise.

Communications

  We will use the university’s online classroom system, at https://canvas.ucsd.edu. Assignments, updates, and other information will be posted there during the quarter. Please login regularly for updates. Please also post general questions there so that all students can see your question and the teaching staff’s response. Any issues or questions that you wish to raise privately should be sent to a member of the teaching staff via email or raised in office hours as appropriate. Per university policy, limit your use of online class resources to appropriate academic activities.
The instructor and Teaching Assistants will all offer office hours. To maximize accessibility, one of us will hold office hours every weekday, and you may attend office hours of any member of the teaching staff, not just office hours of your TA.

**Required Materials**

The following book is required for this course:

**Textbook and Readings**

- Galderisi, Peter. *Understanding Political Science Statistics*.

I will place a copy of this on reserves, but I recommend purchasing your own copy.

There are other required readings available via the library’s reserves system.

**iClickers**

We will use iClickers in this course. You are required to acquire an iClicker device or iClicker app and register it at the Canvas site for this course (Stand by for the URL). You should bring your iClicker device to every class. You may use an iClicker device OR the iClicker app.

**Computer Software**

This term we will use Stata, a statistical software program, to conduct original research as part of the class. Enrolled students can obtain a copy of the software for Mac or Windows computers following the instructions on our course website on Canvas. You may also use Stata in an on-campus computer laboratory or run it remotely using a virtual machine.

**Format**

This class will meet in both lecture and section. Lecture will consist of two 50-minute meetings per week, scheduled for 12:00pm-12:50pm, Monday and Wednesday. Section will consist of a 50 minute meeting with a teaching assistant in a smaller group.

The tentative course schedule is described below:

**Topic 1: Introduction, Measurement, and Describing Concepts**

- **Monday 1\textsuperscript{st} April, 2024**
  - Introduction
    - Reading: None

- **Wednesday 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2024**
  - Political *Science*? Theories and Hypotheses
    - Required:
      - Galderisi, Chapter 1.
• Monday 8th April, 2024

– Concepts, Variables, and Measurement
  * Required:
    Galderisi, Chapter 2, pages 20-39; Chapter 5, skim pages 103-108.
  * Optional:

• Wednesday 10th April, 2024

– Collecting Data / Surveys and Sampling
  * Required:
    Cohn, Nate. “No One Picks Up the Phone, but Which Online Polls are the Answer?” NY Times. July 2 2019.

• Monday 15th April, 2024

– Describing Variables Numerically
  * Required
    Galderisi, Chapter 3.
    Galderisi, Chapter 4.

• Wednesday 17th April, 2024

– Describing Variables Graphically
  * Required:
  * Optional:

Topic 2: Causal Inference and Research Design
• Monday 22\textsuperscript{nd} April, 2024
  \begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Causality and Challenges}
    \begin{itemize}
    \item Earl Babbie. \textit{The Practice of Social Research}. pp. 72-77.
    \item Galderisi, Chapter 1 - section on causation.
    \item Associated Press. “Study: Delayed schooling linked to increased risk of behavior problems.” October 7, 1997.
    \item Reuters. “Early Onset Of Drinking Linked To Future Alcohol Abuse.” 1/15/1998.
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

• Wednesday 24\textsuperscript{th} April, 2024
  \begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Experimental Studies}
    \begin{itemize}
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

• Monday 29\textsuperscript{th} April, 2024
  \begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Natural Experiments and Observational Studies}
    \begin{itemize}
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\textbf{Topic 3: Measuring and Evaluating Relationships Between Variables}

• Wednesday 1\textsuperscript{st} May, 2024
  \begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Crosstabs}
    \begin{itemize}
    \item Wolfinger and Rosenstone, Chapter 2 of \textit{Who Votes}? Yale University Press, 1980, especially Tables 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6.
    \item Galderisi, Ch 9, section on crosstabs/contingency tables; Ch 10, logic of control.
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

• Monday 6\textsuperscript{th} May, 2024
  \begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Correlation}
    \begin{itemize}
    \item Galderisi, Chapter 11.
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

• Wednesday 8\textsuperscript{th} May, 2024
  \begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Bivariate Regression}
    \begin{itemize}
    \item Galderisi, Chapter 11.
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}
• **Monday 13th May, 2024**
  – Multivariate Regression
    * Galderisi, Chapter 12, pages 272-281.

**Topic 4: Hypothesis Testing and Statistical Significance**

• **Wednesday 15th May, 2024**
  – Introduction to Inference
    * Galderisi, Chapter 6, first half

• **Monday 20th May, 2024**
  – Confidence Intervals and Significance Tests
    * Galderisi, Chapter 6, second half

• **Wednesday 22nd May, 2024**
  – Inference for Regression
    * Galderisi, Chapter 7.

• **Monday 27th May, 2024**
  – Inference for Crosstabs: The Chi Square Test
    * Chapter 9, P185-196.

**Topic 5: The Future of Political Science**

• **Wednesday 29th May, 2024**
  – The Credibility Crisis in Science and How to Fix It

• **Monday 3rd June, 2024**
  – Memorial Day Holiday - No Class

• **Wednesday 5th June, 2024**
  – New Methods for Causal Inference
  – Last Day of Instruction - Review