POL 300: Political Science Research Methods  
3 Credits  
MWF, 9:00-9:50, McGannon 118

Professor Christopher Witko  
Office Hours: MWF 9-9:50, and by appointment  
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Course Description:  
This course is an introduction to Political Science research design and methods.

Course Objectives:  
After completing this course you should be: 1) familiar with the types of research designs and methods that political scientists routinely use to study their subject matter 2) familiar with the strengths and limitations of these designs and methods 3) a more competent consumer of political research, including academic and non-academic varieties (e.g. polls and focus groups presented in the news) 4) able to conduct basic original political science research 5) able to use statistical software programs to analyze data*  5) prepared for the more advanced study of social science research methods.

*You will be exposed to data analysis in excel, STATA, SPSS and R. We will mostly use R. It is somewhat more difficult to learn but you do not need to be in the lab to use it and it is FREE!!!!!

Required Texts:  

Electronic Sources: Most weeks of the course require you to read materials available on the web or from electronic databases available through the library’s website. Where possible I have provided an exact url to the readings. In other cases I have provided the database that can be used to access the article. Any difficulty locating these readings should be brought to my attention well before the class period in which the readings will be discussed.

The politics section of The Washington Post should be read during the week. The on-line version is acceptable. You should read political stories from the standpoint of a political methodologist rather than a mere fan of current affairs and we will begin most classes with a discussion of the methodological implications of these news stories.

Assignments (And Percentage of Final Grade):  
Exams (20% each): There will be a take home midterm and final exam.  
Home work assignments (20%): There will be 4 home works assigned during the semester. You will be permitted to redo the homework if you are dissatisfied with your performance.  
Research Design Paper (25%): This 10-12 page paper will present a research design that would allow you to answer an important political science question of your choosing (you will not actually have to collect and analyze data). Assignments relating to this paper will be due throughout the semester and will be incorporated into your final project grade.
Attendance and Participation (15%): Attendance is mandatory and student participation is necessary to have an enjoyable, productive class. Most, if not all classes will include student discussion and many classes will consist entirely of discussion. Thus, you are expected to come to class prepared and able to discuss assigned readings or material from a previous class if called upon to do so. Excessive absences will negatively affect your participation grade.

Complete On-line Course Evaluation:

****Note: I do not accept e-mailed or late assignments unless such arrangements have been made well in advance of the due date of the assignment.*********

Statement on Academic Honesty:

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student’s own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination or quiz without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, sharing or receiving the questions from an on-line quiz with another student, taking an on-line quiz with the help of another student, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

All clear violations of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. In this course, academic dishonesty on an assignment will result in an automatic grade of 0 for that assignment and a report of academic dishonesty sent to the Academic Honesty Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. In the case of Class B violations, the Academic Honesty Committee may impose a larger sanction including, but not limited to, assigning a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

Students should refer to the following SLU website for more information about Class A and B violations and the procedures following a report of academic dishonesty:
http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml

Disability Statement:
In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to www.slu.edu/success.
Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 314-977-8885 or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

**Grading Scale:**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-70</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>below 60</td>
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**Tentative Course Outline** (subject to change by instructor – changes will be announced in class and/or via e-mail. If you miss class it is your responsibility to check with other students and/or instructor about possible changes).

**Part I: Research Basics**

Week 1: Course Introduction: Science, Social Science and Types of Political Science Research
8/27: Course Introduction
8/29: Meet in the Library in room LL7 (lower level of Pius Library)
8/31: No Class (Witko at American Political Science Association Annual Meeting)

Week 2: Theories and Testing Theories in Political Science
9/3: No class, Labor Day
9/5: Political Science Theories and Arguments
Read: Shively Chapter 1 and 2
9/7 Assessing Empirical Claims in Political Science

Assignment: Homework 1 Due on 9/7.

Week 3: Research Topics and Literature Reviews
Read:
9/10: 1) Shively Chapter 11
9/14: Identifying Appropriate Scholarly Literature

Assignment: Choose topic for research paper.

Week 4: Dimensional Thinking/Measurement
Read:
9/17: 1) Shively Chapter 3
9/21: 1) Shively Chapter 4
Week 5: Measurement
Read:
9/24: 1) Shively Chapter 5
9/28: Data Management and Organization, Introduction to Statistical Software

Assignment: Homework 2 due on 9/26.

Week 6: Causality and Research Design: Experiments, Natural Experiments and Observational Studies
Read:

Week 7: Selecting Observations
Read:
10/8: 1) Shively Chapter 7
10/12: More on Statistical Software

Assignment: Preliminary literature source list due March 4th

Week 8:
Read:
10/15: Midterm Assigned/more on Statistical Software
10/17: Student Meetings
10/19: Midterm Due

**Part II: Qualitative Research Approaches**

Week 9:
10/22: No Class, Fall Break
10/24: Discuss Midterm and Primary and Secondary Data in Qualitative Studies

Week 10: Gathering Data for Case Studies/Qualitative Studies
Read:
Assignment 10/29: Specific research question and list of hypotheses due on 3/25.

Assignment: What types of qualitative data may help you to explore your theoretical concerns and hypotheses?

**Part III: Quantitative Research Approaches**

Week 11: Gathering Data for Case Studies/Qualitative Studies
Read:
11/5: 1) Klass “Just Plain Data Analysis” (I will e-mail to class)


11/9: Shively Chapter 8

Assignment: What types of quantitative data may help you to explore your theoretical concerns and hypotheses?

Week 12: Summary Statistics and Measuring Statistical Relationships
Read:
11/12: Be prepared to discuss a regression-based study of relevance to your paper topic
11/14: Measuring Relationships using statistical software
11/16: More on measuring relationships with software

Week 13: Statistical Significance and Linear Regression
Read:
11/19: Shively Chapter 9
11/21: No class, Thanksgiving
11/23: No class, Thanksgiving

Week 14: Linear/Non-Linear Regression
11/26: Regression using statistical software
11/28: More regression (diagnostics, etc.)
11/30: Shively Chapter 10

Assignment: Homework 3 due on 11/28

Week 15: Student Presentations
12/3: Student meetings
12/5: Student Presentations
12/7: Student Presentations
Week 16: Presentations Continued
12/10: Student Presentations
Papers Due

Final Exams December 12-18, Consult SLU Final Exam Schedule for Date and Time