

POLS 2000: METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
Fall 2019

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Office Hours: Mondays 2:10 – 5:10 pm, or by appointment

Class Meetings: MWF, 10:00 – 10:50 pm, McGannon 118L

Lab Meetings: W, 3.30 – 6.30 pm, McGannon 118L

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PREREQUISITES

This is an introductory course on research design, in which we will explore the philosophical and ethical underpinnings of scientific inquiry, assess how research questions are posed, explore issues of measurement, and investigate the virtues of quantitative and qualitative methods. We will learn a bit of epistemology, or the study of “how we learn about the world,” a bit about ethics “is it morally right to lie in order to conduct research,” and a lot about qualitative and quantitative methods. We will draw our examples from political science, which is the study of human political interaction using the scientific method. However, in this course you acquire the tools to design scientific research, to conduct constructive criticism, and to read (and produce) social scientific articles, skills that you should find useful throughout your life.

Learning Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, you are expected to be able to:

1. Understand the benefits and problems of the (social) scientific method as a way of learning about the world.
2. Formulate a research problem/question.
3. Develop concepts and typologies to help analyzing a specific research topic.
4. Construct theory and provide explanations addressing a research problem/question.
5. Extract hypotheses from a theory.
6. Find data and define measures that address a specific research problem.
7. Identify, organize, and analyze information in a critical and systematic way.
8. Identify methods for analyzing data and measurement.

9. Analyze quantitative and qualitative techniques and choose which is most adequate to apply in different fields of social sciences.
10. Evaluate political and social behavior using statistical techniques.
11. Explore the relationship between theory, methods, and the broader goals of research.
12. Ultimately, become an informed consumer of political arguments.

COURSE TEXTBOOKS

Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten (2018). *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research, Third Edition*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Shively, Phillips (2017). *The Craft of Political Research, Tenth Edition*. New York, NY: Routledge.

The textbooks are available for purchase at online retailers, such as Amazon.com. We will be heavily relying on these books, so please obtain them and become familiar with them as soon as possible.

In addition to these textbooks, I recommend (but do not require) two more books for the class. There will not be any readings or assignments from these books, but they can be useful supplements to our main textbooks, especially for the lab sessions.

Pollock, Philip H., III (2015). *The Essentials of Political Analysis, Fifth Edition*. Washington DC: CQ Press.

Pollock, Philip H., III (2018). *A STATA Companion to Political Analysis, Fourth Edition*. Washington DC: CQ Press.

Various academic readings are also required and will be put on Blackboard (and/or handed out). Students are encouraged to bring in whatever interesting reading you find for class discussion. The topics we cover are related to life, and many sources (including ongoing issues) can help illustrate the topic we are covering. Expected topics are listed on the schedule.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND EXPECTATIONS

Course Organization and Logistics

The class will meet four times a week, on Mondays, Wednesdays (twice!), and Fridays. Lecture slides will be posted online each week as supplementary material to the readings. My main tool of communicating with you is going to be Blackboard/Email. I will post any announcements, schedule changes, extra readings, or news through Blackboard. Therefore, I suggest you to check the POLS 2000 tab on your Blackboard pages every day to see if there are any changes.

Our regular classes will be a mixture of lecturing and discussing the intricacies of the scientific method and different research techniques. During our lab sessions, we will go over some main

concepts of research design and statistics and apply them in Stata, a widely used statistical software package in social sciences. The computers in the lab should have Stata installed.

As our lab sessions may include some calculations and computations, please also bring your calculators. You will not be allowed to use your cell phones or share calculators in quizzes and exams.

Assignments

Most weeks will have in-class, in-lab, and/or take-home assignments. The due dates and instructions on the delivery of the assignments will be announced with the assignment. Group-work is encouraged, but you may not directly copy from each other. If you work with others be sure to write up your own answers, and include in the assignment names of the group of people you collaborated with.

For the lab sessions, learning statistics and a new software is best done through repetitive and continuous practicing. Thus, make sure you work on the provided assignments and examples as well as completing and understanding the assigned readings.

I will drop your lowest assignment grade.

Quizzes

There will be several quizzes throughout the semester. The quizzes may be announced at the previous class or through Blackboard, but pop-quizzes may also come up at any time during the class time. The quizzes will mainly be based on the previous week's material. However, you are responsible for any topic we will have covered up to the point when the quiz is given. There is no predetermined number of quizzes.

I will drop your lowest quiz grade.

Exams

There is a closed-book midterm exam and a final exam. The final exam is cumulative with a higher weight on topics from the second half of the semester.

The tentative date for the midterm exam is **October 16**. The midterm exam is going to take place during the lab hours, mainly to be able to give you more time with the exam. The exact date for the midterm exam will be confirmed in the course of the class. The exact date for the final exam will be assigned by the Office of the University Registrar.

Detailed information about the content and dates will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.

Final Project

You are expected to write a research design paper where, in light of what you learned throughout the semester, you will develop a research agenda to study a topic or question of your interest, related to the issues and themes of International Relations or Political Science. As we proceed in the semester, you will complete certain steps and assignments that build towards an original research design paper.

First, during the third week of classes, everyone in the class is required to meet me to discuss potential topics for your final projects.

After we decide on a topic, you will then prepare a short abstract/research outline and an annotated bibliography that will be due on **September 30**. The abstract/research outline that should be 250-300 words-long, and include at least the following:

1. A tentative working title.
2. Your main research question(s)
3. An outline of the main points you will be discussing in the final paper (what problem you will address, why it's important, and your theory/solution/argument, etc.).

The annotated bibliography should be 1250-1500 words long and contain at least 10 sources (academic articles or books) that you plan to be using. Use this assignment to convince me that you are pursuing an important issue, you have done your initial research, and you know what you are going to write about.

Then, you are required to write a shorter, 750-1000 word-long, literature review, which is different than the annotated bibliography. The literature review should include the majority of the scholarly work you mentioned in the annotated bibliography in addition to at least two other, newly identified scholarly works, and synthesize them into a shorter, integrated review. The purpose of the short literature review is to better understand how to concisely convey to readers prior research findings and shortcomings. The short literature review is due on **October 28**.

Combining this literature review with your research question, you will then develop your causal mechanism that is presented through a theory and a hypothesis (or multiple hypotheses) derived from your theory. This is when your paper is going to start to take shape and roughly look like an incomplete research paper. When you are developing your theory and hypotheses, you should aim for presenting a clearly articulated and supported argument that not only situates itself within the wider discussions on the topic, but makes a contribution to that discussion. This rough draft should be 1250-1750 words long and is due on **November 18**.

Finally, your final research design will improve the potential issues the rough draft might have and adds a specific research design proposal to test your hypothesis. The specific research design proposal can be anything we will cover in class, such as a large-N or a small-N study or an experiment or a mixture of methods. I do not expect you to collect or analyze data for this research design paper. Following the topics in the course, I expect you to pose a question, do a literature review, synthesize core theoretical and/or methodological concepts with factual information,

outline a hypothesis, and propose how to test the argument advanced. Even if your ideas relate primarily to theoretical issues, you must specify some appropriate and feasible method for testing your conjectures in a manner that you could actually follow up and execute if you chose to do so.

The final research design paper should be 1750-2500 words long and is due on **December 6**.

All the deliverables for your final project should be double-spaced with Times New Roman, 12-point font size, and regular (1 inch) margins. I will provide you with more information about each step throughout the semester.

Missed Exam / Late Work Policy

The general rule is that a missed exam cannot be made-up. However, make-ups or rescheduling exams will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

For unplanned absences due to emergencies, please contact me as soon as possible (preferably at least 48 hours before the deadline) to discuss the case and make the appropriate arrangements (this is especially true for the discussion leading session).

Late work for assignments and the research paper is most of the time gladly accepted, but it will result in penalties in grading. This is done for equity reasons to level the playing field for those who manage to turn their work products in on time.

Note that you are not guaranteed to get an extension or a make-up.

Grading

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Midterm Exam	17.5%
Final Exam	20%
Final Project	30%
• Abstract / Annotated Bibliography: 5%	
• Short Literature Review: 5%	
• Rough Draft: 7.5%	
• Final Paper: 12.5%	
Assignments and Quizzes	22.5%
Attendance and Participation	10%

The lowest assignment and quiz scores will be taken out of the final grading.

Extra-credit assignments throughout the semester are possible – but undetermined. Any extra credit assignments and their weights will be announced during the course of the semester.

To determine your final letter grade, the following scale will be used:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage
A	93% - 100%	B	83% - 86%	C	73% - 76%
A-	90% - 92%	B-	80% - 82%	C-	70% - 72%
B+	87% - 89%	C+	77% - 79%	D	60% - 69%
				F	below 60%

I may, at my discretion, impose curves to assignments and final grades and alter the grading scale to require fewer percentage points to obtain a particular letter grade.

Attendance, Participation, and Classroom Behavior

Attendance to this class is not mandatory. However, class attendance is necessary to learn the material and succeed in this class. This course has been designed intentionally such that the activities and discussions we experience in class are essential for your learning and success. Your peers and I can summarize the learning that took place, but we cannot reproduce those experiences for you. Therefore, I invite you to be discerning about when and why you miss a class. You will not be automatically penalized, in terms of grading, for being absent, but every absence has the built-in “penalty” of missed learning and practice. This means that missing too much of what happens during class time will make it hard for you to pass exams, prepare high-quality assignments, and contribute equitably on group activities. Because later work in the semester builds on earlier work in the semester, missing too many class meetings may put you in a position where you simply cannot “catch up” and withdrawing from the course may be in your interest. If I see that you are moving toward this outcome, I will let you know by email and in person.¹ Nevertheless, each one of you is responsible for keeping up with the assigned materials and being aware of schedule or exam date changes.

You are expected to participate actively and meaningfully (that is, following the discussions closely, contributing informed answers to the questions, taking notes actively, and asking relevant questions). Effective engagement in the course is demonstrated through consistent and thoughtful contribution to the classroom community (which includes asking thoughtful questions, not just contributing your own views), through focused attention to course materials and conversations, and through a general responsiveness to (and respect for) your peers. Engagement does not always mean talking a lot (in fact, talking for its own sake can often look like the opposite of engagement). Ideally, you will be engaged, self-directed, and motivated to advance understanding for all of us in our class.

You are also expected to be respectful of the classroom, the space, and each other. If you are not able to attend class for any reason please let me know ahead of time. During class discussions, you are expected to remain respectful of your fellow students and their perspectives. Examples of disruptive behavior include, but are not limited to, consistently showing up late to class, leaving

¹ If you have an unexpected situation arise, or if you anticipate significant absence, due to medical or other reasons, please schedule a meeting with me as soon as possible to discuss the implications for your success in the course.

early without prior approval, walking out in the middle of a lecture without prior approval, or chatting and being noisy in the middle of a lecture or another student's discussion. If you insist on showing any disruptive behavior in the class, you may be asked to leave the room.

Important Dates

Research Topic Meetings: September 9 – 13

Abstract/Outline & Annotated Bibliography: September 30

Midterm Exam (Tentative): October 16

Short Literature Review: October 28

Last Day to Withdraw from Class: November 3 (I think)²

Rough Draft: November 18

Final Paper Due: December 6

Final Exam: TBA

INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK AND COMMUNICATION

The best time to get in touch with me is the office hours. If you can't make it to the office hours, you can make an appointment to meet some other time. You can also contact me via email or my office phone. I will try to respond as soon as possible.

Email Communication

When contacting with me through email, please type "POLS 2000" in the beginning of the subject of the email (for example, "POLS 2000: XXXXXXXX"). This will make it easier for me to classify your email and eliminate the chance that I might inadvertently delete it.

Feedback

Timely, specific feedback is essential for growth and learning. Throughout the semester, I will provide you with feedback of various kinds, including informal feedback in meetings and during class and formal feedback on exams and assignments. My expectation is that you will read all written feedback, ask questions about feedback you do not understand, and wrestle with the feedback to identify future actions you can take to improve your learning and performance. Even feedback given at the end of the semester is intended to shape your thinking and your work going forward.

² "The period to withdraw from a course is through 12:00 midnight Sunday of the tenth week for full semester courses." ([SLU Academic Policies](#))

Similarly, you will have opportunities to provide me with feedback on how things are going in the course. Around the mid-term, I will invite you to respond to a short, anonymous online survey to help me better understand your experiences in the course so far. At the end of the semester, you'll also be invited to complete a more comprehensive online evaluation of the course. Along the way, I may ask the class for feedback on specific tasks or assignments – or even if I do not ask, feel free to contact me any time to provide me with your thoughts and suggestions (or just leave anonymous notes with feedback in my mailbox). In all cases, I ask you to treat this process with the same care you hope I bring to the work of providing feedback. Ideally, we all commit to some key principles when providing feedback: reflecting on specific experiences, providing concrete examples and suggestions, and reflecting on our views to ensure any biases we may bring are not interfering with our ability to provide usable feedback.

All of your feedback on this course and the ways in which it has been designed and taught will be taken seriously and will inform how I approach the design and teaching of the course in the future. Indeed, the course looks the way it does today because of constructive feedback from previous students.

Mistakes

From past experience, I have noticed that there is a high frequency of instructor mistakes, especially in the early versions of the course. In order to catch these mistakes quickly, I will buy the first student to catch a substantive numerical or conceptual mistake in the lecture notes a latte (or a drink of their choice from Kaldi's Coffee). This is meant to incentivize the students to be vigilant and pay attention, and the instructor (me) to be careful. A "substantive mistake" means a false statement that will mislead students. A typo is not considered a substantive mistake but I do appreciate them being pointed out to me.

IMPORTANT MATTERS

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy was adopted in Spring 2015, and can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at: https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/policy_academic-integrity_6-26-2015.pdf

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide

by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Dean/Director of the College, School or Center in which your program is housed.

Title IX

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX coordinator, [Anna R. Kratky](mailto:anna.kratky@slu.edu) (DuBourg Hall, room 36; anna.kratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886) and share the basic facts of your experience with her. The Title IX coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the [Office of the General Counsel](#).

Disability Services

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Once successfully registered, the student also must notify the course instructor that they wish to access accommodations in the course.

Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at Disability_services@slu.edu or 314-977-3484 to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about the student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor's course roster.

Note: Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one are encouraged to contact Disability Services.

Student Success Center

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. The Student Success Center assists students with academic-related services and is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331). Students can visit the

[Student Success Center](#) to learn more about tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, and academic coaching.

University Writing Services

Students are encouraged to take advantage of University Writing Services in the Student Success Center; getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels. Trained writing consultants can help with writing projects, multimedia projects, and oral presentations. University Writing Services offers one-on-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, visit the [Student Success Center](#) or call the Student Success Center at 314-977-3484.

Basic Needs Security

Students in personal or academic distress and/or who may be specifically experiencing challenges such as securing food or difficulty navigating campus resources, and who believe this may affect their performance in the course, are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office (deanofstudents@slu.edu or 314-977-9378) for support. Furthermore, please notify the instructor if you are comfortable in doing so, as this will enable them to assist you with finding the resources you may need.

COURSE OUTLINE

Below is a tentative outline of topics we will cover in the course. * Our regular classes are organized into thirteen topics. We will start with Topic I and proceed sequentially. I will notify you throughout the semester of when you will be responsible for certain readings in class and on the Blackboard calendar. Please complete the corresponding readings as we proceed in the semester. Any extra readings or sources will also be announced from Blackboard.

Content covered in the lab section is listed on the final page of this syllabus and will follow the same pattern. The detailed reading list for the lab sessions will be provided later.

Outline of Classes:

Topic I: Introduction & What is Science?

- This syllabus.
- Kellstedt, Chapter 1.
- Richard Feynman (1974). “Cargo Cult Science.” Adapted from the Caltech Commencement Address.
- Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and John Vasquez (2013). “Introduction to the Scientific Method.” in their edited *Conflict, War, and Peace; An Introduction to Scientific*

* This is a tentative course outline. I reserve the right to make changes in the interest of course quality. Any changes will be announced during class and from Blackboard/Email.

Research.

Topic II: How to Ask a Scientific Question

- Shively, Chapters 1 & 2.

Topic III: Reviewing the Literature

- Knopf, Jeffrey “Doing a Literature Review.” *PS: Perspectives on Politics*. 2006.
- Justus J. Randolph (2009). "A Guide to Writing the Dissertation Literature Review." *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 14(13): 1-13.

Topic IV: Theory Building

- Kellstedt, Chapter 2.
- Shively, Chapter 3.
- Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba (1994). *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Chapter 3.

Topic V: Causality

- Kellstedt, Chapter 3.
- Shively, Chapter 6.
- Fearon, James D. (1991). “Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science.” *World Politics*, 43(2): 169-195.

Topic VI: Measurement

- Kellstedt, Chapter 5.
- Shively, Chapters 4 and 5.

Topic VII: Ethics and Research Integrity

- Fujii, Lee Ann (2011). “Research Ethics 101: Dilemma and Responsibilities.” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 45(4): 717 – 723
- The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1978). “The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research.” Technical report, The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research.

Midterm Exam

Topic VIII: Qualitative and Quantitative Research Basics

- James Mahoney and Gary Goertz (2006). “A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research.” *Political Analysis*, 14(3): 227-249
- Collier, David and James Mahoney (1996). “Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research.” *World Politics*, 49(1): 56-91.

Topic IX: Experiments

- Rose McDermott (2002). "Experimental Methods in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 5(1): 31-61.
- Kellstedt, p. 77 – 92.
- Baker, Monya (2016). “1500 Scientists Lift the Lid on Reproducibility.” *Nature*, News Feature. Available at: <https://www.nature.com/news/1-500-scientists-lift-the-lid-on-reproducibility-1.19970>.

Topic X: Large-N Studies

- Kellstedt, p. 92 – 99.
- Barakso, Maryann, Daniel M. Sabet, and Brian Schaffner (2014). *Understanding Political Science Research Methods*. Chapter 6.
- Pollock, Philip H., III (2015). *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, p. 58-70 & 84-97.

Topic XI: Small-N Studies

- George, Alexander and Andrew Bennett (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. pp. 17-39.
- Gerring, John (2004). “What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?” *American Political Science Review*, 98(2): 341-354.
- Also revisit Collier, David and James Mahoney (1996). “Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research.” *World Politics*, 49(1): 56-91.

Topic XII: Survey Research

- Henry E. Brady (2000). “Contributions of Survey Research to Political Science.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33: 47-57.
- Vannette, David L. *The Qualtrics Handbook of Question Design*.

Topic XIII: Formal and Complex Models

- Shepsle, Kenneth A. (2010). *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Dixit, Avinash and Barry J. Nalebuff (1991). *Thinking Strategically: The Competitive Edge in Business, Politics, and Everyday Life*. Chapter 1.
- Kellstedt, Chapter 2: p. 42-51

Outline of Lab Sessions:

Lab I: Introduction to Stata – August 28

Lab II: Doing Research and Using the SLU Library – September 4

Lab III: Descriptive Statistics – Measures of Central Tendency and Variability – September 11

Lab IV: Probabilities and Distributions – September 18

Lab V: Standard Normal Probability Distribution – September 25

Lab VI: Sampling and Sampling Distributions – October 2

Lab VII: Statistical Significance Testing – October 9

Midterm Exam

Lab VIII: Measures of Association – October 23

Lab IX: Linear Regression I – October 30

Lab X: Linear Regression II – November 6

Lab XI: Linear Regression III – November 13

Lab XII: Logistic Regression – November 20

Lab XIII: Conclusion / Review – December 4