

## **POLI 3000-001: Introduction to Political Science Research**

Summer 2017 | MTWRF 9:45 AM—11:15 AM | Haley 3124

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### **SPECIAL NOTE FOR SUMMER CLASSES**

This is at the beginning of the syllabus for a reason! Please read me! Summer classes are an extraordinary demand on your time. We will meet every day, for a long time every day. You have to pay attention in lecture, and you have to study every day. There is a lot of reading. Read the book and look at your notes at least 20 minutes every day to avoid falling behind. Get in touch with me as soon as you feel like you're falling behind.

### **Overview, Objectives, and Outcomes**

This course is a Political Science course, mostly full of Political Science majors. Most of you have probably not seriously considered the *science* component of these courses. That will be the main focus of this course.

So what is “science”? Science offers a rigorous, systematic way to satisfy our curiosity about the natural world. Political scientists in particular work to offer explanations for how or why particular phenomena occur (why do countries go to war? why do people vote? who do they vote for?), and the scientific method helps to ensure that those explanations are developed and tested in such a way that gives us the best evidence about how the world works.

Specifically, this course is designed to train you to be . . .

1. A critical *consumer* of (political) scientific research
2. A careful *producer* of (political) scientific research, and
3. Literate in the basic statistics that enable both objectives.

You read that correctly: *statistics* are a large component of this course. As we will discover, statistical tools help political scientists to test their theories and explanations of the world. Not to mention, they are some of the most marketable skills you will have upon graduation!

Learning outcomes: by the end of the course, you should be able to clearly outline the scientific method as it is applied to political science, understand the virtues of good scientific research, be able to describe how to test theories in political science, be able to read basic political science research, and be able to use basic statistical tools to test scientific theories.

Official catalog description: Introduction to Political Science Research. (3). LEC 3. Introduction to the basic concepts and methodology used in contemporary political analysis.

## Prerequisites

Any of POLI 1090, POLI 1093, POLI 1097, PHIL 1090, PHIL 1093, or PHIL 1097 with a minimum grade of C.

## Expectations

College is an environment in which you learn how to manage your time and set your priorities. I do not take attendance. There is, however, a strong correlation between course attendance and performance. We will spend a considerable amount of class time in the computer lab. Your performance in this class, particularly on the homework assignments and the research paper, is strongly related to your attendance at these lab sessions. The success of your final research paper is strongly related to your attendance at lecture sessions. Moreover, it is possible for part of your grade to be determined by in-class quizzes (see below). I recommend, therefore, that you attend class regularly. If you choose to come to class, you should do so responsibly. I fully expect that you will have done any assigned readings before coming to class. Class is much more interesting when you engage with both your instructor and the material. I also expect that you make a reasonable effort to maintain classroom decorum by refraining from reading newspapers, doing crossword puzzles, sleeping, texting, or playing on Facebook (or whatever social network/game/trend that I'm oblivious to). Please silence all cell phones.

## Required Materials

There is only one required textbook for this class (referred to in this syllabus as “K&W”).

Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research (2nd Edition)*. Cambridge. ISBN: 978-1-107-62166-4.

The textbook is available at the Auburn University Bookstore, as well as the internet. There are older editions of this textbook. If you get an older edition, I can't promise that chapters and material will be identical. I will teach from the second edition; roll the dice at your own discretion. **There will be additional, (usually) weekly readings posted to Canvas. These are not outlined in the syllabus, but they will be posted online and announced in class.** You are responsible for reading the assigned textbook reading *and* any other assigned reading by the *Monday* of that week of class.

You must obtain a copy of R (available from <https://cran.revolutionanalytics.com/>). You will probably hate, then learn to love, using R. We will use it because it is (a) free, (b) flexible enough to test most theories of political science, and (c) widely popular in both public service and private industry. We will devote an extensive amount of class time to learning to use R effectively.

## Assignments

The course is divided into the following components:

Homework (four assignments)	175 points
Research reviews (two assignments)	25 points (each)
Midterm examination	100 points
Final examination	125 points
Group paper	75 points
Group presentation	75 points
Total	600 points

In order, those components are . . .

**Homework:** these will be assigned in class. Due dates are outlined in the syllabus. They will be exercises in R, with datasets provided on **Canvas**, that will require you to apply concepts and code learned in class to different data. Homework assignments *must be typewritten*, and they *must look professional*. You should not simply copy and paste output from R, unless the assignment specifically requires that you do so. The first two homework assignments are worth 25 points. The third is worth 50 points. The fourth is worth 75 points.

Learning R is a difficult exercise. The best coders and practitioners rarely work alone, and I don't find it realistic to ask you to work alone, either. To reiterate: it is permissible to work with your classmates to solve R problems and work on coding assignments. This comes with two caveats: (1) you should never “divide and conquer” the assignment. All students are responsible for all portions of each assignment (this is actually easy to detect if multiple students get the same questions incorrect), and (2) you are not allowed to collaborate on the “applied” or “discussion” portions of questions. For instance, if an assignment says “what does X mean for our study of politics,” you must answer it on your own.

Specific homework assignments and due dates will be discussed through the semester. **NOTE:** I reserve the right to replace some of your homework assignments with in-class quizzes if I feel that you are not preparing effectively for each class session.

**Research reviews:** part of the course is learning to read and consume political science. Many of you have not read political science research (such as journal articles) before this course. As such, we are going to discuss how to effectively read an article and digest its scientific content. You will then be responsible for producing a research review of two of the assigned readings. An example of this review will be posted to **Canvas**, but it will consist of five parts:

1. *Overview:* Describe, in one or two sentences only, the basic research question and findings in the article.
2. *Theory:* What is the basic theory in the article? What are the main hypotheses in the article?
3. *Data and Methods:* What data did the authors use? What are the sources of the data? How are the key independent and dependent variables measured?

4. *Findings*: Summarize the main findings of the paper. Talk both generally and specifically (words and numbers).
5. *Future Research*: What are your reactions to the research? Did the authors omit any important variables? Are the measures of the concepts “good” measures? If you had to extend the research, what is an important future direction?

Research reviews are expected to be a maximum of one page. Bullet points are encouraged (see the example). The readings are outlined in the syllabus. You can choose any two articles to review that you like. If you are completing the research review of a particular article in any given day (or set of days), it is due *at the beginning of the first day for which the article is assigned*. So if, for instance, you want to do the research review for the article assigned for Days 4-6—Feyrer and Sacredote (2002) *Colonialism and Modern Income: Islands As Natural Experiments*—it would be due on Day 4 (June 29).

You are free to submit as many research reviews as you like in order to earn full credit. You cannot revise a research review, but you can submit a new research review.

**Midterm examination:** there is a midterm exam on July 10. We will discuss the midterm exam in detail as the date approaches.

**Final examination:** there is a final exam on August 4. It is different from the normal class time; it is at 8 AM. This is not my choice. See the final exam schedule at [tinyurl.com/AU-SU-Finals-2017](http://tinyurl.com/AU-SU-Finals-2017).

**Group project:** ultimately, you will be responsible for working in an assigned group for identifying a unique research question, gathering the data to test your research question, discussing relevant political science literature regarding your research question, testing your theory, and communicating your results. This research question will be related to the 2016 presidential election. We will discuss the assignment in more detail in class. You will be graded on two portions: a short presentation (as a group) on the last scheduled day of class: July 28. This presentation is worth 75 points. You will also be responsible for a written assignment. This is due on the day of the presentation. It is also worth 75 points. Everyone in the group will receive the same grade.

## Makeups and Grades

Writing assignments and homework assignments must be turned in, electronically, on the day assigned. Research reviews will only be accepted, in hard copy, on the first day the research is assigned for class. Makeup examinations will only be offered to those with a University excused absence, which can be found at [tinyurl.com/au-st-pol](http://tinyurl.com/au-st-pol). It is your responsibility to ensure that your absence is covered by the University, and it is your responsibility to comply with all policies. These policies require that you notify me of your absence prior to the date of absence if such notification is feasible, but within one week from the missed class. Your makeup examination must be scheduled within two weeks of this notification (though I recommend much, much earlier). If I need additional information on your absence (doctor’s notes, for instance), you must provide this additional documentation within one week of the last date of the absence. Note that this policy also allows for makeup examinations for reasons deemed appropriate by the instructor. If you do

not have a University excused absence, and you are going to miss an examination, it is much easier for me to work with you if you notify me promptly, especially if you can provide some sort of documentation. **Your July 4 plans do not count as an excused absence.**

I will not accept research reviews on any days other than the days assigned, as you have more than enough opportunities to complete these over the semester. If you turn in a homework assignment late, you will be penalized 10 points (not 10%, but 10 points) each day that the relevant assignment is late. Dogs do not eat homework, and there is a computer lab with a capable printer in the building. I fully expect you to turn in your assignments at the beginning of the class period on the specified due date.

I use the following grading scale. To maintain fairness, I do not change grades under any circumstances except when I make a mathematical error in computing your grade.

536.7 - 600 points	= 89.5-100:	A
476.7 - 536.69 points	= 79.5-89.49:	B
416.7 - 476.69 points	= 69.5-79.49:	C
356.7 - 416.69 points	= 59.5-69.49:	D
356.69↓	= 59.49↓:	F

There is a course grade calculator at <http://tinyurl.com/3000gradecalc>. There is no extra credit. All grades will be posted to Canvas.

## Contacting Me

I'm in Haley every day, but especially during my listed office hours. I check my email regularly. I encourage you to see me in person if possible, but you can also email me. If you do contact me over email, I encourage you to follow these guidelines. First: include the course number [3000] in the subject of your email. Your email will almost certainly get lost in the abyss if it missing this information. Second: wait at least 48 hours, not including weekends, to send a second email. I promise I will get to it, but it may not be immediate. Third: email me only from your Auburn University official email address. In the event that I need to contact you, it will almost certainly be at your @auburn.edu email address. You should check this email often!

At some point over the semester, you will almost certainly become frustrated with R. My first recourse: if you don't know how to do something in R, or don't know the function, **Google** it! R is supported by a core group of users who are all nerds with nothing better to do than answer questions about R. If **Google** fails, feel free to email me. I am happy to answer R questions, but I don't ensure that I can answer them at 2:30 AM before assignments. If you do email me, **YOU MUST BE SURE TO INCLUDE A MINIMAL WORKING EXAMPLE (MWE).** This means email me your data (if not provided by me), your code, and the output R is giving you. By "code," I mean the stuff in the R Editor. By "output," I mean the stuff in the R Console. If you email me "when i run `mean(variable)` it says NA does that mean r is broken thx" Instead of "Here is my data. I created the variable `x <- data$x`, but when I run `mean(x)`, it gives me no output. Here's what I tried." I can basically do nothing with the first one, because I don't have your data and I

have no way to tell what is going on.

### **Student Academic Honesty**

Auburn University is a institution committed to integrity and honor. It is your job as a University citizen to uphold those values. I will not tolerate any cheating or plagiarism, broadly defined as using unauthorized aids during examinations or attempting to represent someone else's work as your own. You are not as sly as you think you are. With hundreds of heads facing forward, it is extremely easy to tell who is working alone and who is not. Be aware that academic dishonesty can lead directly to failing the course and being referred to the Academic Honesty Committee. Penalties include expulsion from Auburn, as per Chapter 1202 of Title XII. For additional information visit [tinyurl.com/au-st-pol](http://tinyurl.com/au-st-pol).

### **Emergency Contingency**

If normal class is disrupted due to illness, emergency, or crisis situation, the syllabus and other course plans and assignments may be modified to allow completion of the course. If this occurs, an addendum to your syllabus and/or course assignments will replace the original materials.

### **Students with Disabilities**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please electronically submit your approved accommodations through AU Access and make an individual appointment with the me during the first week of classes (or as soon as possible if accommodations are needed immediately). If you have not established accommodations through the Office of Accessibility, but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Office of Accessibility, 1228 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT).

Any requests or arrangements made with the instructor in person must be followed up with an official email request for documentation. If you believe you may need an accommodation, it is your responsibility to secure it before the first exam.

### **Copyrighted Materials**

The lectures, presentations (including slides), readings, and exams for this course are copyrighted, so you do not have the right to copy and distribute them. This includes recording class lectures.

## Course Outline

Day 1 (June 26): What is “Politics” or “Science”? How is Political Science “Scientific”?

*K&W*, Chapter 1.

Hill, Kim Quaile. 2004. “Myths about the Physical Sciences and Their Implications for Teaching Political Science.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37(3): 467-471.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4488865>

Days 2 - 3 (June 27 - 28): Developing Theories, Testing Hypotheses, and Reading Research

*K&W*, Chapter 2 and 12 (just 12.1 and 12.2).

“How to Read and Take Notes on a Scholarly Journal Article.”

<http://pasadena.edu/hstutoringlab/writing/writingscholarlyarticle.cfm>

Days 4 - 6 (June 29 - July 3): Research Design, Causality, and R

*K&W*, Chapters 3 and 4.

Feyrer, James and Bruce Sacerdote. 2009. “Colonialism and Modern Income: Islands As Natural Experiments.” *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 91(2): 245-262.  
<http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/rest.91.2.245>

Day 7 (July 4): No Class

Day 8 (July 5): Measurement

*K&W*, Chapter 5.

Buhaug, Halvard and Scott Gates. 2002. “The Geography of Civil War.” *Journal of Peace Research* 39(4): 417- 433.  
<http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/39/4/417.full.pdf+html>

Day 9 - 10 (July 6): Probability, Inference, and Hypothesis Testing with Two Variables

*K&W*, Chapters 6 and 7.

**July 6: Homework I Due at 11:59 PM.**

Day 11 (July 10): Midterm

Day 12 (July 11): No Class

Days 13 - 14 (July 12 - 13): Recapping and Survey Responses

Ansolabehere, Stephen, Jonathan Rodden, and James M. Snyder, Jr. 2008. “The Strength of Issues: Using Multiple Measures to Gauge Preference Stability, Ideological Constraint, and

Issue Voting.” *American Political Science Review* 102(2 May): 215-232.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27644512>

**July 13: Homework II Due at 11:59 PM.**

Days 15 - 18 (July 14 - 19): The Logic of Regression, Two-Variable Regression, and Model Fit

*K&W*, Chapter 8.

Brady, Henry E., Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. “Beyond Ses: A Resource Model of Political Participation.” *The American Political Science Review* 89 (2): 271-294.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2082425>

Days 19 - 21 (July 20 - 24): Multiple Regression in Theory and Practice

*K&W*, Chapters 9 and 10.

Smith, Kevin B. 2004. “The Politics of Punishment: Evaluating Political Explanations of Incarceration Rates.” *Journal of Politics* 66(3): 925-938.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2004.00283.x>

**July 24: Homework III Due at 11:59 PM.**

Day 22 (July 25): Extensions: Interaction Models, MLE, Pretty Pictures in R

*K&W*, Chapter 11.

Grissom, Jason A., Jill Nicholson-Crotty, and Sean Nicholson-Crotty. 2009. “Race, Region, and Representative Bureaucracy.” *Public Administration Review* 69(5): 911-919.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2009.02040.x/abstract>

Day 23 (July 26): Skepticism in Research

*Reading to be assigned.*

Day 24 (July 27): Group Project Work Day

Day 25 (July 28): Group Project Presentations

**July 31: Homework IV Due at 11:59 PM**

Day 26 (August 4): Final Exam at 8 AM