

POLS 235: Political Research Methods and Approaches

CLASS LOCATION: ADMIN BUILDING 336

CLASS TIME: MWF 10:30 am – 11:20 am

INSTRUCTOR: Chen Wang, Ph.D.

OFFICE: Admin Building 205J

OFFICE HOURS: Wednesday 11:30 am – 12:30 pm or by appointment

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TEACHING ASSISTANT: Marwa Elsayed

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course has three main goals. First, students should become familiar with the scientific study of politics (including but not limited to formulating research questions, conducting literature reviews, formulating hypotheses, and constructing various research designs). Second, course participants will learn how to write a Political Science research paper. Third, students will become familiar with the various subfields of Political Science. Taken as a whole, this class contributes to several of our university's learning outcomes (including: Learn and Integrate; Think and Create; Communicate).

The course is organized as follows. During the first section of the class, we will focus on Research Questions (RQs) in Political Science. More specifically, we will discuss what types of RQs are asked by scholars in American Politics, Comparative Politics, and International Relations. The second part of the course is devoted to Literature Reviews. In this section of the class, students will learn how to conduct thorough library searches and how to write a literature review for a POLS research project. Section 3 of the class will focus on theories and research designs. Here, students will learn how to formulate testable hypotheses, and they will construct a research design built to examine their theoretical expectations. The final section of the class will highlight how to conduct data analysis, and it will expose students to advanced research designs in Political Science.

COURSE MATERIALS

You will need to buy or rent one book for this class:

- Baglione, Lisa (2020). *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science. A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, & Methods. Fourth Edition.* Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press ([buy the 4th edition – older editions have different page and chapter numbers!](#)).
- The book is available for purchase or rent at [Sage](#), [VitalSource](#), or [Amazon](#).

All other readings on the syllabus will be provided to you online (on Canvas). It is absolutely essential that you carefully read all of the required material prior to coming to each class session. I

expect that you take your responsibilities seriously. Failing to do so will both significantly impact your grade and the quality of our in-class activities.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADES

Your grade in this course will be derived from your performance on the following components:

- **Attendance and Participation: 15%**

Your participation grade will be based on the quality and quantity of your contributions during class. As stated above, I expect you to read and think about the assigned material prior to our meetings. In class, you should be able to discuss the main ideas and demonstrate that you are able to apply them to political research. Please note that your participation grade depends heavily on your **active participation**. If you don't talk, your final participation grade will not exceed 60. If you have any concerns about your participation grade, contact me as soon as possible.

During the semester, you are allowed **THREE** unexcused absences. For every class you miss beyond that, 5 percent will be deducted from your final participation grade (calculated on a scale from 0 – 100). Excused absences (e.g., illness, sports events for athletes, religious holidays, etc.) will not be deducted from your grade. The TA will **randomly take 20-25 attendance check** throughout the semester. Therefore, it is essential that you show up on time. If you do come in late, it is your responsibility to approach the Instructor or the TA directly after class (as long as we are still in the classroom) and make sure that we checked your name.

While attendance and participation are important to your success in this course, I am willing to work with you throughout the semester in any way that I can. Please reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns.

- **Online Reading Quizzes: 25%**

Each day with a reading on the syllabus will have an associated reading quiz. This quiz needs to be completed on canvas prior to the regular start time of our class. Over the course of the semester, there will be 30 reading quizzes. Each quiz will count towards 1 percent of your overall course grade. However, I will **only count the 25 highest grades**. In other words, your five lowest quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the semester.

- **Homework Assignments: 20%**

There will be **four homework assignments** over the course of the term. Each assignment is graded on a scale from 0 to 100 and counts towards 5 percent of your final grade. The **due dates can be found in the course schedule below**. **Late assignments will not be accepted.**

- **Research Paper: 40%**

As part of your final grade you will have to write a research paper in which you apply the tools introduced in this class. The paper will be divided into four parts. More information will be provided in class.

- Part I: Introduction and Literature Review (10%)
- Part II: Theory and Hypothesis (10%)
- Part III: Research Design (10%)
- Part IV: Analysis and Conclusion (10%)

- **Grade Scale**

There will be no curving in this class. Final letter grades will be calculated as follows:

[90, 100]	A
[80, 90)	B
[70, 80)	C
[60, 70)	D
[0, 60)	F

COURSE POLICIES

- **Deadlines**

The assignments in this class are all designed to help you write a Political Science Research Paper. In general, late work will not be accepted. Extensions will be granted only in cases of documented emergencies.

- **Academic Integrity**

Cheating and plagiarism are taken very seriously in this course. All assignments must be solely original work of the student. Violations include quoting or paraphrasing another author without attribution on written assignments. Avoid plagiarism by using citations (with page numbers) whenever you quote, paraphrase, or otherwise borrow someone else's ideas. If you are unsure whether you are committing plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask me for guidance (before you submit your work).

Note that forming a group to study for homework assignments or offering feedback on a draft of another student's paper are not considered violations of academic integrity. On the other hand, writing portions of a classmate's paper or copying a paragraph from a book or website without attribution are very serious violations.

It is the policy of our department to refer instances of suspected academic dishonesty to the Student Judicial Council. For the Dean of Students' Academic Integrity site which includes UI Policies and Student Academic Dishonesty Resources, see [here](#).

- **Accommodations**

University of Idaho is committed to ensuring an accessible learning environment where course or instructional content are usable by all students and faculty. If you believe that you require disability-related academic adjustments for this class (including pregnancy-related disabilities), please contact Center for Disability Access and Resources (CDAR) to discuss eligibility. A current accommodation letter from CDAR is required before any modifications,

above and beyond what is otherwise available for all other students in this class will be provided. Please be advised that disability-related academic adjustments are not retroactive. CDAR is located at the Bruce Pitman Building, Suite 127. Phone is 208-885-6307 and e-mail is cdar@uidaho.edu. For a complete listing of services and current business hours visit <https://www.uidaho.edu/cdar>.

- **Learning Environment Civility**

In any environment (including online) in which people gather to learn, it is essential that all members feel as free and safe as possible in their participation. To this end, it is expected that everyone in this course will be treated with mutual respect and civility, with an understanding that all of us (students, instructors, and guests) will be respectful and civil to one another in discussion, in action, in teaching, and in learning. Should you feel our classroom interactions do not reflect an environment of civility and respect, you are encouraged to meet with your instructor during office hours to discuss your concern. Additional resources for expression of concern or requesting support include the Dean of Students office and staff (5-6757), the UI Counseling & Testing Center's confidential services (5-6716), or the UI Office of Human Rights, Access, & Inclusion (5- 4285).

- **Tutoring and College Success (TCS)** TCS offers three distinct services dedicated to student success: tutoring, SI-PASS, and Academic Coaching. Vandal Tutoring provides drop-in style tutoring in person at the Library or online through uidaho.edu/tutoringonline at no cost to undergraduates. SI-PASS provides peer assisted study sessions for difficult courses. You can find the schedule of currently supported courses at uidaho.edu/si. Academic Coaching offers students an opportunity to work with a coach, one on one, to improve their academic skills such as: effective studying, test taking, time management, and note taking. Visit uidaho.edu/academic-coaching to schedule an appointment.

- **Grade Appeals**

Hopefully there will be no reason to contest a grade. However, a student who believes strongly that a homework assignment or the paper has been graded incorrectly may appeal by submitting a typed memo (no longer than one page) explaining why the grade was inappropriate. No sooner than 72 hours and no later than 10 days after the original grade was issued, the memo must be submitted along with the original graded assignment to me for re-grading.

- **AI Use Policy** In this class, every student will acquire the necessary skills to write a formal research paper in political science. As such, it is essential that every language in every assignment is produced by you! The use of any Artificial Intelligence (AI) platform (such as ChatGPT) is **NOT** allowed. Any evidence of AI usage will be treated as plagiarism.

- **Religious Holidays**

Although students are expected to meet every due/deadline, exceptions will of course be made for religious holidays. Students who know they will miss any deadline owing to observance of a religious holiday need to **notify the Instructor or TA during the first week of the semester**.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is only a tentative schedule for this course. Content may change

PART I: Introduction – Research Questions in POLS

Week 1: Course Introduction

- August 19: Read this syllabus
- August 21: Pollock 2012 (pages 6 – 12)
- August 23: – Johnson, Reynolds and Mycoff 2019 (pages 49 – 53).
– Baglione Chapter 2.

Week 2: Research Questions in Political Science

- August 26: Watch the Documentary “Knock Down the House” (Netflix Production publicly available on YouTube): <https://youtu.be/YCSo2hZRcXk>
- August 28: Watch the PBS Documentary “Dismantling Democracy”: [Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)
- August 30: No readings

Week 3: Paper Writing Basics

- September 2: **Labor Day (No Class)**
- September 4: – Kellstedt and Whitten Chapter 1
– **Due Date for Homework 1**
- September 6: Baglione Chapter 3

PART II: Literature Review

Week 4: Working on a Literature Review I

- September 9: **Mandatory Library Workshop 1 (bring your laptop)**
- September 11: **Due Date for Homework 2**
- September 13: **Mandatory Library Workshop 2 (bring your laptop)**

Week 5: Working on a Literature Review II

- September 16: Baglione Chapter 4
- September 18: Fuhrmann 2009 (pages 7 – 12)
- September 20: Familiarize yourself with the APA-Citation Guide on Purdue Online Writing Lab: available [here](#)

PART III: Theories and Research Designs

Week 6: Theories and Hypotheses I

- September 23: **Due Date for Introduction (1 page) and Literature Review (3 pages).**
- September 25: – Reread Fuhrmann 2009 (pages 10 – 12)
– Fuhrmann 2009 (pages 12 – 15)
- September 27: Kellstedt and Whitten Chapter 2

Week 7: Theories and Hypotheses II

- September 30: Johnson, Reynolds and Mycoff 2019 (pages 73 – 86)
October 2: Baglione Chapter 5 (skip section called “The Thesis”)
October 4: Johnson, Reynolds and Mycoff 2019 (pages 121 – 124)

Week 8: Research Design I

- October 7: **Due Date for Theory & Hypothesis (1-2 pages)**
October 9: Pollock 2012 (pages 28 – 32)
October 11: Johnson, Reynolds and Mycoff 2019 (pages 135 – 141)

Week 9: Research Design II

- October 14: Johnson, Reynolds and Mycoff 2019 (pages 196 – 202)
October 16: **No Class (The Instructor will be away for conference)**
October 18: Fuhrmann 2009 (pages 15-23 only)

Week 10: Research Design III

- October 21: Baglione Chapter 7 (skip section called “The Thesis”)
October 23: **Mandatory Library Workshop 3 (bring your laptop)**
October 25: Readings TBA

PART IV: Theory Testing**Week 11: Theory Testing I**

- October 28: **Due Date for Research Design (3 pages)**
October 30: Baglione Chapter 8 (skip “Quantitative and Statistical Analysis” section)
November 1: Pollock 2012 (pages 58 – 71)

Week 12: Theory Testing II

- November 4: Tannenwald 1999
November 6: – Schultz 2001 (pages 161 – 163 **and** 175 - 195)
– **Due date for Homework 3**
November 8: Koivu 2016

Week 13: Theory Testing III (R Workshops)

There is no reading for this week. But feel free to use this free book ([here](#)) to familiarize yourself with R

- November 11: No Readings
November 13: No Readings
November 15: No Readings

Week 14: Advanced Political Science Research Methods

November 18: Piston et al. 2018 (pages 662-669 only)

November 20: Myrick and Wang 2024

November 22: – Research Day

– **Due date for Homework 4**

Week 15: Thanksgiving Break

November 25: **No Class**

November 27: **No Class**

November 29: **No Class**

Week 16: Course Conclusion

December 2: Research Day

December 4: Review and Catch-Up Day

December 6: Course Conclusion

Week 17: Finals Week

December 9: **Due date for Analysis (3 pages) and Conclusion (1 page)**