

Political Research Methods
POLS 4396, Fall 2008
BUS 260

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Office Hours:
Monday 3:00 – 4:30
Tuesday 2:00 – 3:30
Wednesday 10:00 – 11:30

Required Texts

The Essentials of Political Analysis (2nd Edition), Philip Pollock III
An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis (3rd Edition), Philip H. Pollock III

Course Overview

Does right-to-work produce economic growth? Does the performance of students given vouchers to attend private schools improve? Does democratization lead to an increase in economic growth? Do citizens really vote based on candidate image? We often attempt to answer these questions with quantitative, empirical research, which relies heavily on – that's right folks – statistics!

This course will introduce you to basic methods of empirical inquiry in the social sciences. Much discussion of politics and public policy relies on statistical analysis, both in government and academia. Political variables are measured, quantified, and evaluated with the use means, standard deviations, t-tests, regression coefficients, and so forth. In order to interpret and evaluate this type of analysis as well as to actually conduct it, you must first understand the basic theory and technique of statistical analysis.

You should realize by looking through the books that this class is not a typical political science course – it is structured more as a math course.

- If you already think you're going to hate this class, then you most likely will. I highly recommend that you keep an open mind, if for no other reason than the fact that you cannot graduate with a degree in political science without passing a research methods course (This is a standard requirement at every university I've ever been at). Get over it and consider it a lesson in adulthood – you'll be required to do several things over the course of your life that you don't like and don't want to do. You'll probably have to do them anyway. It builds character.
- If you don't attend class, you won't do well. Very few people will be able to read the text book and understand it without asking some questions and seeing some examples. That's what lecture periods are for – make good use of them. Read the assigned materials before class and come to lecture with questions. Read them again after the lecture – they should make more sense. If they don't, come see me.
- You must keep up with the course material as we progress through it. If you don't understand what we're talking about in Week 3, you will definitely not understand Week 4. Chances that you will be able to leave all the reading until the week of the exam and pass are astronomically small.
- You will have almost weekly homework assignments, and you will most likely find them challenging. If you find it useful to work on the assignments with a classmate or two, do so. I don't recommend groups of more than three as they tend to turn into social sessions. I am available to help with the homework assignments – come see me! I won't tell you the answers, but I can help you work through them and answer questions on the spot. If you can't do the problems on the homework assignments, you certainly won't be able to do them on the exams.

Course Objectives

After completing this course, you should be able to:

- Produce a methodologically sound research design
 - Chose and define a concept
 - Determine appropriate measures for the concept
 - Locate or gather the needed data
 - Form a testable hypothesis
- Conduct basic statistical analysis (by hand and with SPSS)
 - Determine the appropriate statistical method to test the hypothesis
 - Perform the test
 - Evaluate and interpret the results of the test

Blackboard

This class will heavily utilize Blackboard. This is where all course materials, and your grades, will be posted. You will need to log in to Blackboard (<http://ccs.uttyler.edu/blackboard>) and enroll yourself in this course ASAP.

The Blackboard server does not know what courses you have registered for during UT Tyler registration. At the first of each semester you may have to search for, and "Enroll", in any Blackboard courses that are available to you.

- After you Log In, click on the "Courses" tab at the top of the Blackboard window
- Search for your course in the Course Catalog (If it is not there, you will need to let your instructor know that it does not show up.)
- When you find your course name, **DO NOT CLICK ON THE COURSE NAME**
- Look for and click on the "Enroll" button to the right of the course name (If it is not there, you will need to let your instructor know that it does not show up.)
- Follow the instructions for enrolling in that Blackboard course
- You will need the access code to enroll for this course. The code is 11677

Attendance

Regular attendance is crucial to your success in this class. Therefore, I will be holding you accountable. Roll will be taken at the beginning of every class session. You may miss up to 5 class sessions without penalty. This does not mean that you are encouraged or allowed to miss 5 class sessions. Barring some severe emergency, ***you should be present at every class session.*** If you miss 6 or 7 class sessions, your final grade will be lowered by one letter grade. If you miss 8 to 10 class sessions, your final grade will be lowered by two letter grades. If you miss more than 10 class sessions, you will receive no higher than a D for the semester. This policy is non-negotiable. If you think you might have to miss more than five classes, it would be in your best interests to take this class another semester.

Class Decorum

You are all adults and I expect you to act as such. Arrive on time. Do not leave early unless you have seen me first. Turn cell phones and all other electronic devices off. (Note: I find text messaging during class to be just as annoying and disrespectful as actually making a phone call – don't do it). Do not talk in class unless you are asking a question or participating in class discussion. Keep your comments relevant to the class material and discussion. Please sleep elsewhere. In short, be respectful of the professor and your classmates. Students who fail to do so will be asked to leave class.

Policy on Laptops in Class

This class does not lend itself well to note-taking on a laptop. If you insist, you are welcome to try it. If you do bring a laptop to class and I suspect you are doing anything other than taking notes, I will ask to see you at the end of the class period. If you cannot show me a reasonable set of notes from that class period, you will no longer be allowed to use your laptop in class.

Disability Statement

If you have a disability, including a learning disability, for which you request disability support services/accommodation(s), please contact Ida MacDonald in the Disability Support Services office so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting disability support services/accommodation(s) must provide appropriate documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Support Services counselor. In order to assure approved services the first week of class, diagnostic, prognostic, and prescriptive information should be received 30 days prior to the beginning of the semester services are requested. For more information, call or visit the Student Services Center located in the University Center, Room 282. The telephone number is 566-7079 (TDD 565-5579)." Additional information may also be obtained at the following UT Tyler Web address: <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>.

Social Security Statement

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number.

Academic Dishonesty

The UT Tyler community regarding cheating as an extremely serious matter and deals severely with those who violate the standards of academic integrity. Examples of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to):

- Copying from another person's test paper
- During a test, possession of materials not authorized by the person administering the test
- Discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination or the divulging of examination contents to another when an instructor has allowed the exam to be kept by the student
- Working with other in taking tests or preparing academic assignments when not authorized by the course instructor
- Obtaining by any means another person's work and submitting that work as one's own. This included the downloading of academic papers or the purchase of papers written by others.

If a student is suspected of academic dishonesty, the classroom instructor may ask the student to meet with him or her to discuss the incident. A student may admit to allegations of academic dishonesty, waive the right to a hearing and accept penalties imposed by the instructor. The student may also deny all allegations and ask to see the Dean of Student Affairs. An accused student may accept the decision of the Dean of Student Affairs or ask for a hearing before an impartial hearing officer appointed by the university. Witnesses may be called and evidence presented. The hearing officer will consider all evidence and make a decision. The decision of the hearing officer may be appealed to the President by either the student or the Dean of Student Affairs. For a discussion of possible penalties, please see <http://www.uttyler.edu/mainsite/conduct.html>.

Grade Replacement

If you are repeating this course for a grade replacement, you must file an intent to receive grade forgiveness with the registrar by the census date. Failure to file an intent to use grade forgiveness will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grape point average. A student will receive grade forgiveness (grade replacement) for only three (undergraduate student) or two (graduate student) course repeats during his/her career at UT Tyler. (2006-08 Catalog, p. 35)

Grading

Your grade in this class will consist of two components:

- Homework (100 points) – these will be handed out or announced in class and are due the next class period. You will have 9-10 assignments over the course of the semester. Your homework grades will be averaged. All homework grades will be included in the average – no grades will be dropped.
- Research Design Paper (100 points) – We will work on this in pieces throughout the semester.
- Exams (200 points) – there will be a midterm (100 points) and a final (100 points).

Policy on Late/Make-up Work

You will be given a grace period of one class period on homework assignments. If an assignment is due on Tuesday, you may still turn it in Thursday without penalty. After the grace period, the homework key will be posted on Blackboard. After the key is posted homework will still be accepted, but only for half-credit. In short, homework is due on the due date – get it in on time.

Make-up exams may be given at the professor's discretion (and will likely consist of different questions than the in-class exam) and only for the following reasons:

- Serious illness
- Family emergency
- Required participation in a university sponsored event

I reserve the right to request documentation. If you know you will miss an exam, please inform me as soon possible to discuss a make-up. If advance notice cannot be given, then *you must contact me within 48 hours of the missed exam* to discuss a make-up. This is your responsibility.

Important Dates

Classes begin	August 27
Labor Day	September 1
Final day to drop/withdraw	October 31
Thanksgiving	November 26-29
Finals	December
Midterm	October 21st
Literature Review	November 18 th
Research Design	December 9th
Final Exam	December 18, 12:30-2:30