

POLS 4396 – Political Research and Methodology

Instructor: Lucas Lothamer

Email: llothamer@uttyler.edu

Time: M/W 2:30-3:55p

Location: STE 127

Office Hours: M/W 11:30a-1p and by appointment (CAS 123)

Course Description

This course is aimed at providing students with an understanding of what political science is and how it is done. Students will learn the study of politics through the scientific method and how to answer real political questions beyond simple debate. We will cover the scientific method, the role of theory and how it is formed, measurement theory, sampling and distributions, confirmation bias, scientific protocols, hypothesis testing, causal inference and statistical analysis.

Communication

I am always available to chat and happy to meet with students. If you ever need to chat, you can either stop by during office hours or email me to make an appointment (either in office or online). When emailing, please allow 24 hours for a response (emails over weekends may not be responded to till the next business day).

Be sure to only email using your student email account. Due to FERPA, I may not be able to respond with course information to personal email accounts.

Assignments

Participation 15%

Labs 15%

Midterm 30%

Final Exam 40%

Participation: Part of doing well in this course is showing up and participating in the class lecture and discussion. Participation is more than being present each class day. Students' active participation in class activities and discussions will also determine the grade for this category.

Labs: There will be periodic lab assignments which will be completed through Canvas. These will include logic, theoretical puzzles, math sets, and more.

Midterm: The midterm examination for this course will consist of short-answer questions based off class activities, discussion, and lectures. There will be a review day to prepare for this exam. Students should come prepared with a Bluebook and writing utensils to complete the exam.

Final: The final examination for this course will be similar to the midterm examination and will include short-answer style questions, theoretical and statistical interpretations, and explanations of research.

Letter Grades:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 59 and below

I will round up to the nearest decimal point. For example, if you end with an 89.5 I will round that from a B to an A. There will be no exceptions to this grading policy.

Late Work

As a general rule, I will not accept late work. This means all assignments, quizzes, exams, etc. are due by their posted due date. Only in extreme extenuating circumstances, such as a medical emergency, shall late work be considered.

Disability Services

I will abide by all accommodations approved by the university to ensure fair accessibility. It is the student's responsibility to meet with the instructor and inform them of the necessary accommodation on or around the first day of class. Do not wait to do so right before an exam!

To apply for services, please follow the link below:

<https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/disability-services/>

Title IX Reporting

The University of Texas at Tyler is committed to the principle that the university's learning and working environment be free from inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment in any form will not be tolerated, and individuals who engage in such conduct will be subjected to disciplinary action, whether on or off campus. I will report any and all behavior that fits the definition of sexual harassment to the appropriate office.

On-Campus Food Pantry

The Patriot Pantry is dedicated to helping students, staff, faculty and community members in need. Its mission is to provide food and personal care items to members of the UT Tyler community. Our pantry is completely donor funded, and it is our goal that no student goes to class hungry! For more information please visit <https://www.uttyler.edu/offices/service-learning/food-pantry/>

Student Counseling

UT Tyler provides in-person and online counseling services to students. For more information, please visit <https://www.uttyler.edu/student-life/health-wellness/student-counseling-center/>

Artificial Intelligence Policy

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged, as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

AI is not permitted in this course at all. I expect all work students submit for this course to be their own. I have carefully designed all assignments and class activities to support your learning. Doing your own work, without human or artificial intelligence assistance, is best for your efforts in mastering course learning objectives. For this course, I expressly forbid using ChatGPT or any other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for any stage of the work process, including brainstorming. Deviations from these guidelines will be considered a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code and academic honesty values.

Students Rights and Responsibilities

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

Course Schedule

The following is the planned schedule for the semester. While I do not foresee any changes to this, I reserve the right to make necessary changes to the syllabus in order to accommodate unforeseen events or due to the pace of the course.

Note: Readings and assignments will be announced in class and in Canvas.

8/24 – Course Introduction & Syllabus

8/26 – Studying Politics Scientifically

8/31 – Confirmation Bias: The Need for Scientific Protocols

9/2 – Importance of Theory

9/7 – Labor Day (No Class)

9/9 – Practicing Theory

9/14 – Source Evaluation, Credibility, and Evidence for Theory

9/16 – Hypothesis Formation and Testing

9/21 – Measurement (How to select the appropriate measures)

9/23 – Midterm Review

9/28 – Midterm

9/30 – Measurement (Surveys)

10/05 – Sampling and Distributions

10/07 – Distributions and Tendencies

10/12 – Probability

10/14 – More probability (what are the odds of that?)

10/19 – Correlation vs. Causation

10/21 – Experiments in Politics

10/26 – Data and the Data Generating Process

10/28 – T Test

11/02 – Chi Square

11/04 - Regression

11/09 – Regression

11/11 – Regression

11/16 – Multiple Regression

11/18 – Multiple Regression

11/23 & 11/25 – Thanksgiving Holiday (No Class)