Course Description & Objectives

This course is designed to provide students with a survey of social science, particularly how it is conducted to study politics and society. Each week the course examines a different problem we can solve with the help of rigorous research methods and tests to better describe a particular phenomenon or trend. Throughout the course students have the opportunity to showcase their comprehension through in-class assignments, class discussions, conducting their own research, and presenting a plan to conduct original research.

The course is focused on analysis and evaluation, however the assignments set an equal emphasis on strengthening how we ask questions in political science. The skills you learn in this course can be applied in your professional career, be it conducting policy research, suggesting reforms by adjusting incentives in a market, or going beyond this course in graduate school.

Learning Objectives

The course is designed with the objective that by the end the semester each student has the ability to:

- Build an argument to answer a falsifiable question by gathering observations and building on existing knowledge.
- Understand how data is generated and develop a research design that mirrors the real-world process.
- Recognize the limitations of what a research method can be used to explain - especially given the unit of analysis.
- Proficient in methods for estimating empirical results of data.
- Interpret the results of a linear regression model and describe the probability that a finding may be significant.
- Defend an argument in public, by understanding the results based on the method of research and observations that tell the story.

Required Books

All texts can be found in the bookstore or online.


Student Evaluation

Assignments & Participation

There will be six assignments throughout the semester to make up 300 points. Each activity will correspond with the research method and question we are covering that week. Some work will be done in class - the rest of the assignment will be done on your own time. All work must be original - responses that only given the answer, without showing work or providing a description will not receive a satisfactory grade. Note: All missed assignments will be counted as a zero.

I encourage you to **CHALLENGE, RESPOND to, & CRITIQUE** what you read and hear outside of class. Our goal is to learn by challenging what preconceived notions we may have.

Online Quizzes

In the Course Page on Blackboard, there will be six online quizzes that correspond to the week’s readings - and are to be completed before class.

Pitch your Research Design

The first component of this assignment is for each student to complete their own research design. A research design outlines the question you are interested in addressing, sets the scope of the research needed to completely answer that question, and sells the audience on why the project is likely to be successful. The paper should be a maximum of 12 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, one-inch margins, using 12 point Times New Roman font, and citing all relevant research with the [Chicago Style](http://www.apsanet.org/Portals/54/APSA%20Files/publications/APSAStyleManual2006.pdf)). Within those 12 pages, each paper should present an Introduction, Literature Review, a well developed theory, description of Research Methods and Data, discussion of early findings from a pilot study, and appendix of the code (or notes) you used.

Students are allowed to choose the topic of their project, as long as it is related to political science. The paper is due Wednesday November 30.

The second component of the assignment is to sell your peers on funding your project through a short 7 minute presentation that will emphasize the value of your study and synthesize how you will complete the research - if your design is funded. The presentation should be interactive, instructive, engaging, and use visuals. You may use the projection system in class or another medium that suits your presentation style. **Presentations will occur on Wednesday November 16 and Wednesday November 30.**

Exams

The Midterm exam on October 12 is worth 150 points. The final, 100 points, **will be** cumulative in that it will ask you to draw connections across topics covered throughout the class. Each exam will offer different types of multiple choice, short-answer and essay questions. Some questions may draw from exercises that will require students to apply techniques discussed in class. Each question will hold different point values. **Missing an exam without the confirmation of an alternative test date, before the exam date, will result in a zero. The alternative test will only count when written documentation for missing the exam is provided.**
Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Assignments (x 6)</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Quizzes (x 6)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam (Sept 30)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design Paper (Nov 30)</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design Pitch</td>
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<td>Peer Comments on Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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Student Conduct

I have high expectations for each student in this class, which are based on your academic performance to get to this point and my belief that you will treat each of your fellow classmates with respect. My goal is to facilitate a supportive and engaging class experience for everyone and one part of that is eliminating disruptive behavior. Using technology in a way that distracts others and demonstrates a lack of respect for the instructor is unacceptable.

Concealed Handgun Campus Policy

*Handbook of Operating Procedures*, Section 2.10.1(6-8): “A license holder who carries a handgun on campus must carry it in a holster or other secure weapon case that completely covers the trigger and the entire trigger guard area. The holster must have sufficient tension or grip on the handgun to retain it in the holster even when subjected to unexpected jostling.

We respect the right and privacy of students who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php.

If a person is believed to have improperly displayed a handgun or carried a handgun into a location where concealed carry is not permitted, the campus police should be contacted.

Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. For more information please visit http://www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free.

Academic Honesty

It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism, cheating, and dishonesty. The University of Texas at Tyler Policies and Procedures for Student Affairs will be strictly followed and can be found here at: [http://www.uttyler.edu/mopp/documents/8Student%20Conduct%20and%20Discipline.pdf](http://www.uttyler.edu/mopp/documents/8Student%20Conduct%20and%20Discipline.pdf). Tests and assignments are designed to assess your understanding of the material—do not reference another student’s answers.

Violations of academic integrity are serious and will have a negative consequence on your classroom performance. In each instance a violation occurs, a failing grade will be assigned for the assignment or the course, require work to be redone, and have you identify what the cause of the violation was. The matter will be referred to the Dean of Students if institutional action is necessary. Reference the rights and responsibilities of students: [http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php](http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php).

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1Should the class schedule need to be amended, I will advise the class in advance by email and via the course page.
Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies:

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at http://www.utttyler.edu/registrar. Each semester’s Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions that students need to be aware of. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy:

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability Services:

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, PTSD or ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment you are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility and Resources office and schedule an interview with the Accessibility Case Manager/ADA Coordinator, Cynthia Lowery Staples. If you are unsure if the above criteria applies to you, but have questions or concerns please contact the SAR office. For more information or to set up an appointment please visit the SAR office located in the University Center, Room 3150 or call 903.566.7079. You may also send an email to cstaples@utttyler.edu.
Student Absence due to Religious Observance:

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor with official documentation at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA 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. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation:

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructors directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

If you have any questions or concerns about what is expected or permissible in this course or about academic integrity in general, please contact me.

Class Schedule

Week One
Aug 31  Introduction and Overview

Week Two
Sept 7  Studying Political Science and Society


Objectives: 1) How have research methods progressed?
2) Identify and Consider Ethical Considerations
3) Build a theory and refine a hypothesis.

Week Three
Sept 14  Building an Argument


Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 1 & 2
Objectives: 1) Apply Rational Choice  
2) Present why a phenomenon may be path dependent 
3) Recognize when an argument may be time dependent

Week Four  
Sept 21  Classifying a Causal Relationship  


Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 3 & 4

Objectives: 1) Understand How to Test a Question  
2) Develop a Research Design  
3) Describe the Data Generating Process

Week Five  
Sept 28  Problems in Measurement  
Readings: Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 5

Objectives: 1) Summarize Data  
2) Visualize information to show a relevant finding

Week Six  
Oct 5  How to write a research paper  
Readings: Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 12.1-12.3

Objectives: 1) Find a Question  
2) Synthesize the literature  
3) Recognize an appropriate theory and apply it  
4) Identify and apply a method for observation  
5) Set the scope for the study and your conclusions

Week Seven  
Oct 12  Introduction to Statistics  
Readings: Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 6 & 7

Objectives: 1) Calculate a probability  
2) Test a hypothesis  
3) Infer a finding from the results

Week Eight  
Oct 19  Midterm Exam
Week Nine

Oct 26  Regression Modeling

Readings:  Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 8

Objectives:  1) Recognize a linear Relationship  
2) Define and describe the error structure of the linear model.  
3) Justify whether there are omitted variables.

Week Ten

Nov 2  Understand the Context


Fenno, Richard. “Appendix on Participant Observation.”


Objectives:  1) Examine descriptive statistics  
2) Consider the benefits of immersion or direct observation.  
3) Develop comparisons across time or units to find variation  
4) Evaluate what is needed for evidence to be reliable or valid.

Week Eleven

Nov 9  Studying the Process


Objectives:  1) How can the sequence of a decision uncover something that cannot be observed?  
2) Can rules change the outcome of an election? A study of Rank-Choice Voting and also the Electoral College?
Week Twelve

Nov 16  Pitch Your Research Design (1st Session of Presentations)

Objective for Presenter:
1) Convince the class that your research is interesting, original, and valuable to our understanding of politics.
2) Be able to respond to questions from an audience by using the details of a pilot study, the literature, or alternative methodological approaches that can be used.

Objectives for Audience:
1) Challenge, Compliment, or Critique a research proposal given the methodology and attention to detail.
2) Find a way to encourage a peer to adapt their plan to maximize the value of their research given the information at hand.

Week Thirteen

Nov 23  Fall Break

Week Fourteen

Nov 30  Pitch Your Research Design (2nd Session of Presentations)

Objective for Presenter:
1) Convince the class that your research is interesting, original, and valuable to our understanding of politics.
2) Be able to respond to questions from an audience by using the details of a pilot study, the literature, or alternative methodological approaches that can be used.

Objectives for Audience:
1) Challenge, Compliment, or Critique a research proposal given the methodology and attention to detail.
2) Find a way to encourage a peer to adapt their plan to maximize the value of their research given the information at hand.

Week Fifteen

Dec 7  Value of Applying Methods - Final Exam Review

Exam Week

Dec TBA  Final Exam