

POLS 4396: Research Methods
SPRING 2022
Mark Owens
mowens@uttyler.edu

Course Time: 2:30 p.m. – 3:55 p.m.
Mondays
Classroom: BEP 213

Office Hours: 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Mon
4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Wed
Office: CAS 123

Key Reminders: Above the Fold

SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted in local areas (6 feet from the source) when water droplets enter an individual's mouth, eyes, or nose. It is also possible for some virus particles to stay on plastic or metal surfaces for 3 days. Here's what you can do as we meet in person:

- 1) When you are healthy, study together with a small group of students you see often.
- 2) If you are ill, hunker down where you can. Send Dr. Owens a note to set a plan.
- 3) Dust off your work space, because the public has used that desk today.
- 4) Round-up a face covering.
- 5) If you work with a lot of people indoors or travel on public transportation, get tested 3-5 days after you think you were exposed.

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.
- Gain experience in conducting rigorous social science through multiple different methods including estimating empirical results and survey research.
- Annotate content from primary resources.
- 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.

Student Evaluation

Expectations for all work

All work must be original - including only direct quotes without any analysis will result in a 0. Work that largely summarizes or only paraphrases work from other sources will not receive more than a B-. A papers must synthesize arguments and facts to build justifications for the author's main point (or argument).

All missed in-class activities will be counted as a zero, *if not excused beforehand*.

Should it be necessary for a student to make up either the exam, that will be done toward the end of the term.

All out of class assignments are due at the beginning of the class. Failure to turn in an assignment on time will result in a penalty of one letter grade per day. Assignments not received within three days of the deadline will no longer be accepted.

All readings are expected to be completed before class. Although not all readings will be discussed in class, this does not negate your responsibility to know the assigned material.

Assignments & Participation: 200 points

There will be assignments throughout the semester to make up 175 points. Each activity will correspond with a research skill/topic for the week. The assignments range from in-class quizzes to longer assignments we will start in class and you will finish 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. The lowest grade will be dropped.*

I encourage you to **CHALLENGE, RESPOND to, & CRITIQUE** what you read and hear outside of class. I evaluate participation as 50 points using the Texas Education Association's rubric (See the attached page at the end of the syllabus).

Applied Research & Analysis: 200 points

We have the opportunity to do election polls and a poll for policy experts. In collaboration with the UT Tyler Center for Opinion Research, we are able to conduct two large statewide polls to analyze attitudes of the public about candidates and policy during the primary election & one poll of El Paso residents. This large project is structured through five assignments.

Requirements of Service Learning

IRB Certification in Social Behavioral Research

Question design

Reflection Journal of outstanding observations of 20 hours of research (1 - 2 pages).

Analysis paper of Texas Trends (10 - 15 pages).

1 page policy memo describing how the survey information would be useful to a legislator.

Academic Presentation of Survey Research: 100 points

The University of Texas at Tyler will host the 5th Annual Lyceum student research showcase. This is an opportunity to prepare research for an academic presentation as a poster or oral presentation. Details are

provided at <https://www.uttyler.edu/honors/lyceum>.

In preparation for this presentation you will participate in two tasks. The first submission is a poster/infographic or organized presentation of the research you have done about political attitudes of voters in Texas in 2021. This project allows you to present the broad scope of the work you have done as a way to refine what is most important to include in a short presentation. **Due on April 1.**

The final stages of the task include (1) presenting your work at the UT Tyler Lyceum and (2) writing a one to two page reflection of how you would have improved your study knowing what you know now. *Note: It is highly valuable to use this time to apply what you have learned about developing a theory, collecting data, and the steps associated with applying quantitative and qualitative data.* **Final Report is due April 27.**

Grading

Participation	25 points
Class Assignments	175 points
Applied Research	200 points
Research Presentation	75 points
Final Reflection (April 27)	25 points
<hr/> TOTAL	<hr/> 500 points

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.

Rubric for Classroom Discussion

Task Description: Be a part of the conversation and share what you learned from the week's readings. Offer a favorable proportion of the high-quality contributions in each class meeting. Note: incorrect answers during class discussion will not count against you. Points are lost by distracting others or clearly ignoring the class					
Criteria	weight	Exemplary	Effective	Minimal	Unsatisfactory
Level of Engagement	50%	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributes to class activities by offering quality ideas and asking appropriate questions on a regular basis <input type="checkbox"/> Actively engages others in class discussions by inviting their comments <input type="checkbox"/> Constructively challenges the accuracy and relevance of statements made <input type="checkbox"/> Effectively identifies and summarizes main points	<input type="checkbox"/> Contributes to class activities by offering ideas and asking questions on a regular basis <input type="checkbox"/> Often engages others in class discussions by inviting their comments <input type="checkbox"/> Challenges the accuracy and relevance of statements made <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies and summarizes main points	<input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally contributes to class activities by offering ideas and asking questions <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes engages others in class discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes has an understanding of main points <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies and summarizes some of the main points	<input type="checkbox"/> Fails to contribute to class activities <input type="checkbox"/> Fails to invite comment/opinions from other students <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates little understanding of main points <input type="checkbox"/> Does not identify or summarize main points
Preparedness	25%	<input type="checkbox"/> Always prepared for class with assignments and required materials <input type="checkbox"/> Accurately expresses foundational knowledge pertaining to issues raised during the discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Usually prepared with assignments and required materials <input type="checkbox"/> Expresses basic foundational knowledge pertaining to class discussions	<input type="checkbox"/> Seldom prepared with assignments and required materials <input type="checkbox"/> Expresses limited foundational knowledge pertaining to class discussions	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistently unprepared for class <input type="checkbox"/> Expresses no relevant foundational knowledge
Attitude	25%	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistently positive, cooperative attitude during class <input type="checkbox"/> Always supportive of other students' ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> Usually positive and cooperative with classroom projects and discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Often supportive of other students' ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> Seldom actively participates in classroom projects and discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes supportive of other students' ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely if ever participates in classroom projects and discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Occasional disruptive behavior

Assignment Score _____ + Beyond/Bonus _____ = Final Score _____

Class Schedule¹

- Jan 10-12** Scope of the Class & Discipline
What is Social Science?
How is it done?
Why is it complimentary to Science? Let NIH Director Dr. Collins tell you about the importance of studying human behavior: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/dr-collins-reflects-on-career-at-nih-covid-response-effort-work->
- Jan 19** Ethical Research & Citations
Readings: Fuji. 2012. Research Ethics 101
Kelly et al. 2003. Good conduct reporting survey research
- Jan 24-26** Putting Your Ideas to Work
Readings: Stimson. Writing in Political Science
Gerring, John. 2022. "How Good is Good Enough? A Multidimensional, Best-Possible Standard for Research Design." *Political Research Quarterly* 64(3):625-636.
Lupia, Arthur. 2000. "Evaluating Political Science Research: Information for Buyers and Sellers." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33(1): 7-13.
- Jan 31-Feb 2** Getting Your Ideas on Paper
Readings: "Writing Tips for Theses." Northwestern <https://polisci.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/honors/writing-tips.html>
"How to Write a Political Science Research Proposal." UW - School of International Studies. <https://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/Handouts/HowtoWriteResearchProp.pdf>
Lupia, Arthur. 2014. "Communicating science in politicized environments." *PNAS* 1-7. https://512b93a6-0029-45a0-a3c3-7203aa02fd9f.filesusr.com/ugd/fa8393_6973c3639e3c4bdfa2908cab10587cf4.pdf
- Feb 7-9** Social Inquiry: Observations, Context, and Parameters
Readings: Wattenberg et al. 2000. "How Voting is Like Taking an SAT Test." *American Politics Quarterly* 28(2): 234-250.
Gaines et al. 2007. "Same Facts, Different Interpretations: Partisan Motivation and Opinion on Iraq." *Journal of Politics* 69(4): 957-974.
Imbens, Guido. 2021. Statistical Significance, p-Values, and the Reporting of Uncertainty. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 35(3): 157-174.
- Feb 14-16** Survey Question Writing
Readings: PEW Research, Writing Survey Questions. <https://www.pewresearch.org/our-methods/u-s-surveys/writing-survey-questions/>
- Feb 21-23** Scope, Variance, & Potential fallacies
Readings: Kramer, Gerald. 1985. "The Ecological Fallacy Revisited: Aggregate- versus Individual-level Findings on Economics and Elections, and Sociotropic Voting." *American Political Science Review* 77(1): 92-111.
Greenwald et al. 1996. "Effect sizes and p values: What should be reported and what should be replicated." *Psychophysiology* 33(1): 175-186.

¹Should the class schedule need to be amended, I will advise the class in advance by email and via the course page

Wasserstein et al. 2019. "Moving to a World Beyond 'p<0.05.'" *The American Statistician* 73(1): 1-19.

Nemerever, Zoe and Melissa Rogers. 2021. "Measuring the Rural Continuum in Political Science." *Political Analysis* 29(3): 267-286.

Feb 28 Gathering Data: Simplify with Categories, Counts, and Choice
Readings: "Gathering Data on Public Opinion." Chapter 31 of *Conducting Advocacy Research*.
Jacoby, William. 1999. "Levels of Measurement and Political Research: An Optimistic View." *American Journal of Political Science* 43(1): 271-301.
Springer, Melanie. 2019. "Where Is 'the South'? Assessing the Meaning of Geography in Politics." *American Politics Research* 47(5): 1100-1134.

Mar 7-9 Spring Break

Mar 14-16 Back in the Lab

Mar 21-23 Selection Effect

Readings: Finkel, Steven and Thomas Guterbock. 1991. "Race-of-Interviewer Effects in a Preelection Poll: Virginia 1989." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 55(3): 313-330.
Husser, Eaves, and Fernandez. 2019. "Southern Voice: Political Consequences of Regional Accent"
Block et al. 2021. "Are Americans less likely to reply to emails from Black People relative to White people?"

Mar 28-30 Correlation, Association, & Causation

Readings: Imai, Kosuke and Gary King. 2004. "Did Illegal Overseas Absentee Ballots Decide the 2000 U.S. Presidential Election?" <https://gking.harvard.edu/files/gking/files/ballots.pdf>
Gelman, Andrew. 2015. "Maybe College Football Doesn't Affect Presidential Elections." *Monkey Cage: Washington Post*. October 29, 2015. Link: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/10/29/maybe-college-football-do>

Apr 4-6 Writing Results / Poster Formatting
Tips & reminders on clear writing

Apr 11-13 Presentation Practice
Readings: Pole, Antoinette and Sangeeta Parashar. 2020. "Am I Pretty? 10 Tips to Designing Visually Appealing Slideware Presentations." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 53(4).

Apr 18-20 Lyceum Presentation **on Friday April 22**

Apr 27 Final Exam