

# POLS 4396: Research Methods

SPRING 2020

Mark Owens

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*Course Time:* 2:00 p.m. – 3:20 p.m.  
Mondays  
Classroom: CAS 104  
Survey Lab: CAS 151

*Office Hours:* 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Mondays  
3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Wednesdays  
Office: CAS 123

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## 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.

## Required Books

All texts can be found in the bookstore or online.

Gerring, John and Dino Christenson. 2018. *Applied Social Science Methodology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

ISBN13:9781107775558

Online @ <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781107775558>

Salvanto, Anthony. 2018. *Where Did You Get This Number*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

ISBN13: 9781501174834

*Note:* You can get the book free, by joining the mailing list (see ad on page: <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Where-Did-You-Get-This-Number/Anthony-Salvanto/9781501174834>)

## 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 five assignments throughout the semester to make up 100 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. The lowest grade will be dropped.*

The assignments will occur on January 15, January 22, February 5, February 12, and March 16.

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. With that in mind, 50 points are dedicated to the assessment of your participation.

## Election Poll Project: 200 points

During the 2020 Presidential election we have the opportunity to engage with voters across the state to inform the media and voters about what policies the public is most concerned with and which candidates they support. In collaboration with the UT Tyler Polling Lab, we are able to conduct a large statewide poll to analyze attitudes of the public about candidates and policy. This large project is structured through five assignments.

Experimental Learning: Texas Opinion Survey, 100 points (on going Feb. 17-28)

The poll reflects a service learning activity to create real-world experience in the application of social science research and the skills you will be able to provide upon graduation. The poll will be in the field for two weeks, with the Polling Lab open for operation in the evenings between 5pm and 8:30pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, as well as a block of time from 1pm to 5pm on Saturdays and Sundays. You will be able to select two-hour shifts to work at one of the 20 stations during that time.

Your participation will be assessed based on the hours you work (minimum 9 hours). The quality of your participation will reflect a ratio of the quality of your participation that reflects the number of calls made and the number of calls successfully completed. You will also be evaluated through observation of how clearly you communicate with respondents and complete the assigned tasks.

Election Analysis, 100 points (due April 6)

In this journal offer a daily reflection on the similarities and differences of respondent attitudes recorded during the surveys you completed. What combinations of views were unexpected? What is your assessment of the political knowledge of respondents you spoke with? What messages from the media or campaigns are being reflected back in the answers of the individuals you spoke with?

Upon submission of this daily journal of your polling experience add an introduction of the main themes you recognized and a conclusion about the value of these reflections as evidence of the larger themes you recognized. In your conclusion, you may also want to add reflections about topics respondents wanted to talk about beyond the survey and offer advice on how the next survey could address those concerns.

### **Academic Presentation of Survey Research: 200 points**

The University of Texas at Tyler will host the 4th Annual Lyceum student research showcase on April 19, 2019. 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 or organized presentation of the research you have done about political attitudes of voters in Texas in 2020. 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 second stage of the project will allow your project to benefit from peer review. Peers will review your work to check the quality of your theory/observations, evidence used to support your conclusion, and the consistency of the author's project. **Due on April 15**

The final stages of the task include (1) presenting your work at the UT Tyler Lyceum – **April 17, 2019** – 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.**

## Quizzes & Exams: 300 points

Five quizzes will be given for a total of 100 points. The quizzes will be 25 points each and the lowest grade will be dropped. *These quizzes will be given in class on February 4 & 25, March 18, and April 1 & 22.*

The exam on March 25 will ask you to draw connections across topics covered throughout the class. The final exam will be a comprehensive and ask you to think critically about how to apply the methods you have learned. Quizzes and the Exams 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 the 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

Participation	100 points
Class Assignments (x 4)	100 points
Quizzes (x 4)	100 points
Polling Project & Analysis	200 points
Exam (Mar 25)	100 points
Research Presentation (Apr 1 - 19)	200 points
Final Exam (April 27)	100 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

## 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.

## Class Schedule<sup>1</sup>

### Week 1: January 13 & 15

**Jan 13** Introduction to Social Science Research

**Jan 15** Framework for Research

*Readings: Gerring, Ch. 1*

*Assign.: Assignment 1*

### Week 2: January 20 & 22

**Jan 20** Martin Luther King, Jr Day of Service, *No Class*

**Jan 22** Research Ethics & Integrity

*Readings: Gerring, Ch. 13*

*Assign.: 2. UT Tyler IRB Certification*

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

### Week 3: January 27 & 29

- Jan 27-29** Studying Politics and Society  
*Readings:* Gerring, Ch. 2  
Salvanto, Chapters 1-3  
*Quiz:* Quiz 1

### Week 4: February 3 & 5

- Feb 3** Generating Data: Surveys  
*Readings:* Salvanto, Ch. 4  
Hader, Michael. 2008. Chapter 35: "The Use of Scales and Surveys." In *The SAGE Handbook on Public Opinion Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. - <http://methods.sagepub.com.ezproxy.uttyler.edu:2048/book/sage-hdbk-public-opinion36.xml>  
Santos, Rob. 2018. "Should you trust the polls? Can they account for external meddling?" *Los Angeles Times*. September 2. <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-santos-polling-midterms-20180902-story.html>.
- Feb 5** Recognize Sampling Effects  
Keeter, Scott, Nick Hatley, Courtney Kennedy, and Arnold Lau. 2017. "What Low Response Rates Mean for Telephone Surveys." Pew Research Center Methods. <https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2017/05/15/what-low-response-rates-mean>  
Antoun, Christopher, Mick P. Couper, Federick G. Conrad. 2017. "Effects of Mobile versus PC Web on Survey Response Quality: A Crossover Experiment in a Probability Web Panel." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 81(51): 280-306.  
*Assign.:* 3. UT Tyler Polling Lab Training

### Week 5: February 10 & 12

- Feb 10** Research Design & Non-Random Selection Effects  
*Readings:* Gerring, Ch. 3  
Teodoro, Manuel P. and Jon Bond. 2017. "Presidents, Baseball, and Wins Above Replacement: What Can Sabermetrics Tell Us About Presidential Success." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, (April): 339-346.  
*Quiz:* Quiz 2
- Feb 12** Citation, Library Resources, & Research Designs  
*Readings:* Gerring, Ch. 12  
*Assign.:* 4. Come to class with a Research Question

### Week 6: February 17 & 19

- Feb 18** *Service Learning, ALL WEEK*

### Week 7: February 24 & 26

- Feb 24 & 26** *Service Learning, ALL WEEK*

## Week 8: March 2 & 4

- Mar 2** Analysis & Distilling an Argument  
*Readings:* Gerring, Ch. 4  
Salvanto, Ch. 5 & 6  
Owens, Mark. 2018. "Changing Senate Norms in a Nuclear Age."  
*Quiz:* Quiz 3
- Mar 4** No Class

## Week 9: March 9 & 11

- Mar 11** Spring Break, No Class

## Week 10: March 16 & 18

- Mar 16** Know how Details Reflect the Context  
*Readings:* Gerring, Ch. 9
- Mar 18** In-Class Exercise & Exam Review  
*Assign:* 5. Content Analysis

## Week 11: March 23 & 25

- March 23** Exam
- March 25** Correlation & Association  
*Readings:* Healy, Andrew, Neil Malhotra, and Cecilia Mo. 2010. "Irrelevant events affect voters' evaluation of government performance." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107(29): 12804-12809.
- Fowler, Anthony and B. Pablo Montagnes. 2015. "College football, elections, and false-positive results in observational research." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 1-5.
- 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-does-not-affect-presidential-elections/>

## Week 12: March 30 & April 1

- Mar 30** Proving Causality is Theoretical & by Design  
*Readings:* Gerring, Ch. 5 & 6
- Apr 1** "Don't Be Fooled:" Check for Causality  
*Readings:* Salvanto, Ch. 7 & 8  
Imai, Kosuke and Gary King. 2004. "Did Illegal Overseas Absentee Ballots Determine the 2000 U.S. Presidential Election?" *Perspectives on Politics* 2(3): 537-549.
- Quiz:* Quiz 4

### **Week 13: April 6 & 8**

- Apr 6** Writing Up Your Results  
*Readings: Gerring, Ch. 14*  
*Paper Due:* Election Analysis
- Apr 8 Writing Workshop

### **Week 14: April 13 & 15**

- Apr 13** Peer Review & Preparing a Presentation  
*Readings: Gerring, Ch. 11*
- Apr 15** Presenting your work  
*Readings: Gerring, Ch. 15*
- Apr 17** UT Tyler Lyceum for Student Research

### **Week 15: April 20 & 22**

- Apr 20** Experiments vs. Large-N  
*Readings: Gerring, Chapters 7 & 8*  
*Quiz: Quiz 5*
- Apr 22** Final Exam Review  
*Readings: Gerring, Chapter 10*

### **Week 16: April 27**

- Apr 28** Final Reflection on Using Research Skills in your career to simplify concepts and carefully generalize from trends.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT MUST APPEAR IN EACH COURSE SYLLABUS

### UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

### 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>

### Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over 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>

### UT Tyler a 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.

Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products.

There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit [www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free](http://www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free).

### 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.uttyler.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 of which students need to be aware. 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/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

### 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 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 instructor's 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.

### **Student Standards of Academic Conduct**

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

- i. "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to:
  - copying from another student's test paper;
  - using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
  - failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
  - possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed "crib notes". The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
  - using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
  - collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
  - discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
  - divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
  - substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
  - paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
  - falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
  - taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
  - misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.
- ii. "Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the submission of it as one's own academic work offered for credit.
- iii. "Collusion" includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.
- iv. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

### **UT Tyler Resources for Students**

- [UT Tyler Writing Center](mailto:writingcenter@uttyler.edu) (903.565.5995), [writingcenter@uttyler.edu](mailto:writingcenter@uttyler.edu)
- [UT Tyler Tutoring Center](mailto:tutoring@uttyler.edu) (903.565.5964), [tutoring@uttyler.edu](mailto:tutoring@uttyler.edu)
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- [UT Tyler Counseling Center](tel:903.566.7254) (903.566.7254)