POLS-002: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH
Dr. Niambi M. Carter

Overview

This course will introduce students to the practice and basic methodologies of Political Science. This course will emphasize quantitative methodologies. This course will cover research design as well as understanding analysis, such as correlation and regression. Additionally, this course emphasizes the everyday ways in which we use research methods and their uses not only in the political realm but their importance for addressing and redressing important social issues.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester you will be able to:

- Understand how to develop a research questions and formulate hypotheses
- Develop survey questions
- Evaluate and interpret political polls
- Conduct basic analyses, such as frequency distributions and measures of central tendency
- Analyze and decipher basic linear regression and causal relationships
- Interpret significance of relationships between variables
- Understand and appreciate the practical application and implications of research methods

This is a green course. Unless otherwise specified, ALL assignments will be completed via Blackboard. *You* are responsible for making sure you have access to the Blackboard system. If something is wrong, please let me know ASAP! You will get most of your communications regarding the course via Blackboard, please make sure you check the email address associated with your Blackboard account.

Required Texts

Philip H. Pollock, *The Essentials of Political Analysis* (5th Edition) ISBN: 978-1-5063-0583-7

Fachner & Carter, Collaborative Research Initiative: An Assessment of Deadly Force in the Philadelphia Police Department (Blackboard)

**Technology Requirements

This course relies heavily on the use of Blackboard. Announcements, important messages, discussion board, and ALL assignments use this platform. You need to make sure: 1) you have access to Blackboard and 2) your email address in Blackboard is current.

Further, some assignments will utilize SPSS, a statistical package owned by the university. This will require you to complete certain assignments on-site in the iLab. I suggest you plan accordingly for these assignments.

**This syllabus is subject to change at the professor's discretion. You will be notified of all intended changes in advance.

In-Class Exams (3): 300 points

Exams will consist of a mixture question types to ascertain your understanding of major concepts and their application. This will require you to be familiar with a number of formulas and the like. Though these are not open-book exams, you are allowed to have with you the major formulas and a calculator with you during the exam. STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO ADHERE TO THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT; SPECIAL ATTENTION SHOULD BE PAID TO THE SECTION ON ACADEMIC CHEATING
https://www.howard.edu/policy/academic/student-conduct.htm

PLEASE NOTE, ALL USE OF PHONES/TABLETS IS RESTRICTED TO THE CALCULATOR FUNCTION. FAILURE CAN RESULT AS A VIOLATION OF THIS RULE.

Quizzes (6): 60 points

Quizzes will be given either in class or online. Online quizzes will be announced in advance. In-class quizzes may not be announced in advance. I do not give makeup quizzes. If there are

Homework (10): 100 points

Assignments are due on a weekly basis and should be uploaded to Blackboard. Please refer to the syllabus for due dates. Please allow 1 week (7 days) for assignments to be returned.

Grading Rubric

THREE (3) EXAMS: 300 points

SIX (6) QUIZZES: 60 points

TEN (10) HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS: 100 points

TOTAL: 460 POINTS

A=460-414 pts.

B=413-368 pts.

C=367-322 pts.

D=321-276 pts.

F=275 or below

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How Do I Get an "A" in This Class

I'm asked this question often by students. I still don't have a good answer for it. On the one hand, you get what you earn in my classes; I don't necessarily grade your hard work. That said, there are so many things that make some students better than others and it has little to do with intelligence. Some people are gifted, but others, myself included, just have to work harder to "get it". It's not a deeply satisfying answer, but what separates many students from the grades they want is the amount of effort they give the work. This does not mean that all students will magically get A's, but it has been shown that student's who come to class, complete the reading, do their work and adhere to deadlines, ask for help, and the like do better than not.

For those who are still unsatisfied, I've taken the liberty of borrowing the following from Kansas State's Department of Computing & Information Sciences, I think there are some important insights here:

When looking at grades, there are several subjective items which influence my thinking, as well as objective things such as exam scores. Here are SOME of the points I consider.

- **'A' student:** Work is clearly superior to peers, demonstrates a thorough understanding of the material through applications, testing, or discussions. Shows leadership in class discussions and initiative in assignments. Asks questions in class, seeks help from instructor to gain understanding. Rarely misses class.
- **'B' student:** Work is always above average and occasionally better, understands the material in general but demonstrates some lapses, makes some grammar and spelling errors. Contributes to class discussions on an irregular basis, and to class projects when asked. Class attendance is less than 90%.
- **'C' student:** Does mostly average work compared to peers, demonstrates some difficulty in understanding the material, work is occasionally careless, makes more than average mistakes in grammar and spelling. Only contributes to class discussions when asked directly, contributes to class projects only when prodded. Class attendance is less than 70%.
- **'D' student:** Consistently does below average work, makes numerous careless errors, work is late or incomplete, grammar and spelling knowledge seems nonexistent. Resents being asked questions in class, other students have to pick up slack in class projects. Class attendance is less than 50% and inattentive when in class. And what about the "F" student? Well, there is actually very little difference between a D and F student.

Source: (https://www.cis.ksu.edu/advising/faqs/student)

Course Policies

I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE WORK. You are given all assignments and associated due dates in advance so you can plan accordingly. **Makeup or alternative due dates** can be negotiated, however, for students who have university or military commitments. Please bring proper documentation *in advance* in order for arrangements to be made. Documentation of an illness from a medical professional is required if you are too sick to complete required work.

Statement on Disability

Students in need of accommodations due to a disability should contact the Office of the Dean for Special Student Services for verification and determination of reasonable accommodations as soon as possible after admission to the University, or at the beginning of each academic semester. Contact the Office for Special Student Services, Howard Center Suite 725, 2225 Georgia Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20059, at 202-238-2420 for more information. **Please notify me within the first two weeks of class if you require such accommodation.**

Also, students who require accommodation are responsible for making arrangements to take the

exam under the required conditions.

Statement on Interpersonal Violence

Howard University takes sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking and sexual harassment seriously. If a student reveals that he or she needs assistance with any of these issues, all Responsible Employees, which includes faculty, are required to share this information with the University Title IX Office (202-806-2550) or a student can be referred for confidential services to the Interpersonal Violence Prevention Program (IVPP) (202-238-2382) or University Counseling Services (202-806-6870). For more information about these services, please go to www.CampusSafetyFirst.Howard.Edu.

Academic Integrity

Unless otherwise noted, your work is to be completed without assistance. While I do encourage collaboration, your work should be your own. If you cheat, you will receive a 0 for that assignment. If a pattern of cheating persists, you will fail the course and will be referred to the appropriate college and university committees for further disciplinary action.

Cell Phones

Please be considerate of your colleagues. I ask that you put your phones on vibrate during class. If you must take a call, please excuse yourself to do so. If you are texting or using social media during class, you are ultimately harming yourself and being a disruption to the course.

Attendance

There is no attendance policy for the course, however, you will need to come to class in order to pass the exams. **I DO NOT PUT MY LECTURE NOTES ONLINE**.

Email

Email is typically the best way to get in touch with me. I do my best to respond to your messages between 24-48 hours. If you do not receive a response in that timeframe, please contact me again. Unforeseen emergencies do occur, but please try to be as communicative as possible over the course of the semester if these things may impede your ability to complete the course successfully.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Intro to Concepts & Scientific Method

- Intro to the course and syllabus
- What is research and how do we use it? How to start a research project?
    - Read Lesson 1 Getting Started with Research: Belmont Report (BB)
      https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/index.html
    - http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-to-tell-good-studies-from-bad-bet-on-them/

Week 2: Read Pollock Chapter 1

- Writing the research question, identifying key ideas & concepts
- Reliability and validity

Week 3: Pollock Review Chapter 1, READ Chapter 2

- Concepts & Measurement
- Chapter 2

Week 4: Pollock Chapter 3

- Developing Hypotheses (pp. 48-57)/ Exam 1 Review
    - Focus on independent vs. dependent variables

Week 5: Pollock Chapter 3 (cont) & begin Chapter 4

- Chapter 3 (to end) Finding patterns in data & measures of central tendency
    - **READ**: Janelle Wong "The Source of the 'Asian Advantage' isn't Asian Values"
      http://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/editorial-source-asian-advantage-isnt-
      asian-values-n443526

- Chapter 4 (pp. 78-86) & Wong

Week 6: Pollock Chapter 4-end and begin Chapter 5

- Pollock Ch. 4 (pp. 87-end)
- Pollock Ch. 5 (pp. 102-108)

Week 7: Pollock Chapters 5

- Controlled comparisons cont. (pp. 108-end)

Weeks 8-9: Pollock Chapter 6

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- Randomization & variation (pp.123-133)
- 10/16—The Normal Distribution (pp. 133-141)
- 10/18—Confidence intervals and z-scores

Week 10: Pollock Chapter 7

- Establishing significance (pp. 156-163)
- Chi square test (pp.165-170)

Week 11: Pollock Ch. 8

- Review Chi square test and begin correlation
- Correlation (cont.) Pollock Ch. 8 (pp. 183-188)

Weeks 13-15: Pollock Chapter 8 (cont)

Review correlation, begin bivariate regression (pp. 188-194)

- Regression, multiple regression, & R-square Pollock (pp. 198-203)
- Interaction effects (pp. 203-205)

Week 16: Wrapping up

Optional final exam