COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the research process through which political scientists gain reliable knowledge about the political world. The emphasis is on empirical study of political institutions and behavior outside the United States. Beginning with the basic assumptions and principles of empirical research, the course will cover research design, hypothesis formulation, and various qualitative and quantitative methods for collecting and analyzing data. It employs some elementary statistical methods and offers students opportunities to gain hands-on experience with the use of computers in data analysis. Although the emphasis is on Large-N approaches, this course also covers such important Small-N approaches as case study and comparative methods; as well as a brief discussion on deductive approaches (rational choice).

The objective of this course is to train students to become educated consumers (and perhaps producers as well) of political knowledge. This will not be an easy task. Predictably there will be point(s) where you feel totally frustrated by the subjects presented, partly because it is so different from most, if not all, the other Political Science courses you have taken. But it may be reassuring to remember that nearly everyone (including the person preparing this syllabus) who has taken a course in research methods and analysis has gone through the same experience. The skills you learn from this class may pay long-term future dividends.

Curiosity, hard work, and tenacity are prerequisites for success. A sense of humor will also help. It is important to recognize that the study of research methods and analysis is cumulative -- that is, we will constantly build on previous information. Therefore, it is imperative that you keep up with the readings and assignments, attend classes regularly, practice, and ask questions.

READINGS

Required:
- Janet Buttolph Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, Political Science Research Methods, 5th ed. (CQ Press, 2005) [hereafter, PSRM]
- Philip H. Pollock III, An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis, 2nd ed. (CQ Press, 2005) [hereafter, SPSS]
- All other readings are on Library e-reserve or available online (where indicated).

Recommended: Choose one of the following books on Library reserve and read on your own to appreciate a book-length empirical comparative political study.
• Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *Predicting Politics* (Ohio State University Press, 2002) [JZ1234 .B84 2002]

**REQUIREMENTS**

*Workload estimate: The tasks on hand in this class require that you spend about 3 hours outside the classroom for each class hour.*

1. **Attendance (5%)**: You are expected to attend all classes. Ten times randomly throughout the semester a roll will be taken. You will earn ½ points each time you are present when the roll is taken. Poor attendance will impair your grade and cause you to fall behind.

2. **Class Participation (5%)**: Coming to class fully prepared and actively engaging in class discussion are important. You are expected to complete all readings assigned for a specific day before that class. You are responsible for all the work that takes place inside and outside classes. Participation is not simply a matter of raising one’s hand early and often. The quality of participation, making good observations based on sound analysis and reference to assigned readings are just as important as the frequency of comments made in class. This part is graded on the quality, quantity, substance, and relevance of your contributions in the class, as well as the courtesy and professionalism you show to the other students and the instructor. It can work to your advantage in the case of a borderline grade.

3. **Statistics of the Day (5%)**: To expand our collective political knowledge and to enliven the class, every Monday and Wednesday (starting January 29) one student will present a piece of interesting, significant, or counterintuitive quantitative information about our political world. You will then lead a short discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of the information you selected and potential alternative approaches to its collection. As you prepare to lead the discussion, please consider:
   - Succinctly present the 5W1H (what, who, where, when, why and how) of your story.
   - What is the source of your information?
   - How, specifically, is the information collected?
   - Are there any flaws related to the collection or the interpretation of the information?
   Your presentation and discussion are limited to ten minutes. You will be graded on the relevance/significance of the information, clarity and accuracy of presentation, and effectiveness of discussions. A schedule will be distributed.

4. **Lab Exercises (25%)**: Most of the lab sessions will be devoted to working on exercises assigned from PSRM and SPSS, problem-solving on other assignments, or your own research project. A separate lab schedule will be distributed. You must turn in every exercise. Up to five sets of exercises will be given a letter grade; the others will be given completion grades.
5. **Assignments (30%)**: Six assignments, each designed to enrich certain skills, are scheduled throughout the semester. Detailed instructions for each assignment will be distributed later. Each assignment is due at the beginning of the class on the due date.

- **Assignment 1**: Ranking Political Science Departments (1/29)
- **Assignment 2**: Evolution of Political Science as Seen Through APSR (2/12)
- **Assignment 3**: Practice Data Analysis (2/26)
  - Library course reference guide site <TBA>
  - ICPSR <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/>
- **Assignment 4**: Content Analysis of International Press (3/16)
- **Assignment 5**: Field Research in Richmond (3/30)
- **Assignment 6**: Elite Interviewing (4/13)

These assignments will be graded on the basis of content as well as writing -- organization, clarity, precision, and technical presentation. For my expectations on written assignments, see [http://oncampus.richmond.edu/~vwang/Paperwriting.html](http://oncampus.richmond.edu/~vwang/Paperwriting.html).

6. **Research Project (30%)**: Over the course of the semester, you will perform an original piece of research exploring a specific question related to comparative politics or international relations. The final paper you submit at the end of the semester must include: (1) a clearly formulated research question, (2) a literature review, (3) a design for research (and a discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of your design), (4) the results of your data collection, (5) an analysis of those results. Your project **must** include some level of statistical analysis using a standard statistical software package (e.g., SPSS for Windows).

You may work on the research project alone or in a two- or three-person group. If you work as a team, you will be graded as a group. Your project should be produced in two forms: (1) a traditional paper copy, and (2) a web-based version. More details to follow.

To encourage you to work steadily and progressively toward completing your research project, the following dates for the various facets of your project have been set:

- **2/7**: Research project question; individual meetings with me prior to 2/7 (2.5%).
- **2/21**: Annotated bibliography with at least ten different sources, with no more than one-half from online sources, and at least half from books or journal articles (2.5%).
- **3/12**: Literature review due (5%)
- **3/21**: Research design due (5%). **Note:** *If your research involves human subjects, you must first clear with the Institutional Review Board before it can be implemented. The IRB meets once a month during the semester. See [http://as.richmond.edu/opportunities/irbresources.htm](http://as.richmond.edu/opportunities/irbresources.htm) for IRB guidelines, application forms and deadlines. If your project is innocuous, Dr. Kathy Hoke (khoke@richmond.edu) can grant expedited approvals. Start as early as possible.*
- **Week of 4/2**: Individual meeting to discuss your research project.
- **Weeks of 4/16 & 4/23**: Presentation of full draft papers. Final research project due 4/30 (both hardcopy and web version) (15%).

Research projects will be graded on the basis of both content and writing, including research design, data collection, methodological skills, and presentational effectiveness.
This course does not grade on a curve; each student is evaluated on his (her) own performance. A 100-point scale is used for the final course grade:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100.0-93.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0-92.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.0-89.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83.0-86.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80.0-82.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.0-79.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
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<td>C-</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67.0-69.9</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63.0-66.9</td>
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<td>D-</td>
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<td>F</td>
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Grades in the “A” range are for truly *excellent* work, “B” grades are for *good* or very good work, “C” grades are for *average* work, “D” grades are for *below average* work, and "F" for *failure* or no credit.

I will endeavor to provide a grade for each assignment, when applicable (e.g., a paper), to give you a sense of how well you did. However, projecting any single grade (or several grades) to the final course grade is unwarranted, because the final course grade takes into grades on all assignments and other additional factors, such as your relative standing in the class and your improvement (or retreat) over the semester. *There is no allowance for additional work for extra credit.* Each student will have ample opportunities to make a grade (s)he deserves and I will be happy to discuss your progress at any time during the semester.

**CLASS POLICIES**

1. **Attendance and absences:** Regular attendance is important to success in this class. We enforce the University’s class attendance policy (see *Undergraduate Catalogue*, pp. 36-37). Students participating in University-sponsored events should obtain notifications as early as possible from appropriate residential deans or program coordinators for me to honor such requests for excuses from class absences. Any other absences (e.g., class field trips, illness, funerals and family emergencies, etc.) will not be announced by the deans or coordinators, and excuses are at my discretion. Regardless of circumstances, you are responsible for all the work missed during absence. Misrepresenting the reason for class absences to a professor if a violation of the University’s Honor Code.

2. **Late works:** All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the syllabus. Any work turned in after that is considered late and is subject to one full grade deduction per day (e.g., from “A” to “B”), until 72 hours after due when the grade turns into an “F.” *Note: “F” is calculated as half-credit, whereas not turning in the work at all is counted as zero-credit.* So it’s better late than never. This policy will be strictly enforced.

3. **Make-ups:** There is no make-up or incomplete except in those cases involving documented extraordinary circumstances beyond your control (e.g., you suddenly become very ill or hospitalized and cannot take the exam as scheduled). Any such requests must have instructor’s approval before make-up can be granted.

4. **Honor code:** This course enforces the University of Richmond Student Honor Code. Any type of academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, is prohibited. You are required to provide and sign the honor pledge on all assignments: "I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work."

5. **Academic help:** You are strongly encouraged to talk with me, or the experts at the Writing Center, Speech Center, and Academic Skills Center, if you need help.
This syllabus contains important information about the course. We will adhere to the following schedule, but beware that the schedule is subject to change, as pedagogical needs may so require.

**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS**

1/15 Course Introduction

1/17 Thinking Empirically: The J-Curve and Globalization

1/17 lab Library Research Skills: Reference Matters, Databases, and Internet Evaluation
Guest Lecturer: Mr. Keith Weimer (Jepson G23)

1/19 Examples of Crossnational Research (I): Comparative Political Culture

1/22 Examples of Crossnational Research (II): Democratic Peace Theory

1/24 Scientific Study of Politics?
PSRM, Ch. 1-2

1/26 Measuring Democracy
Instructor attends a conference at Longwood University

1/29 Research Design
PSRM, Ch. 3
**Assignment 1 Due 1/29**

1/31 Case Study and Comparative Methods
2/2  Rational Choice
   “China After Deng,” in Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., *Red Flag Over Hong Kong* (Chatham House, 1996), 69-100

2/5  Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables
    PSMS, Ch. 4

2/7  Literature Review
    PSRM, Ch. 5
    **Research Project Question Due 2/7**

2/7  lab SPSS Refresher and Descriptive Statistics
    SPSS, Ch. 1-2

2/9  Life Beyond College for Political Science and International Studies Majors
    Guest Lecturers: Joshua Walker, Princeton University, and Katybeth Dreisbach, Career and Development Center
    *Instructor attends a conference in Atlanta*

2/12~ Measurement
2/14  PSRM, Ch. 6
    **Assignment 2 Due 2/12**

2/16  Crosstabs, Comparisons
    SPSS, Ch. 3

2/19  Empirical Observations: Direct and Indirect Observation
    PSRM, Ch. 7

2/21  Field Research
   **Annotated Bibliography Due 2/21**

2/23  Transforming Variables in SPSS and Controlled Comparisons
    SPSS, Ch. 4-5

2/26  Document Analysis
    PSRM, Ch. 8
    **Assignment 3 Due 2/26**

2/28~ Sampling
3/2  PSRM, Ch. 9
Guest Lecturer: TBA

Instructor attends the ISA annual conference

3/5~ Spring Break: No Classes 😊
3/9

3/12~ Elite Interviewing
PSRM, 270-275
“Collecting Primary Data: Interviewing,” in Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 213-237

Research Project Literature Review 3/12

3/14~ Survey Research
3/16 PSRM, Ch. 10
Assignment 4 Due 3/16

3/19~ Univariate Data Analysis and Descriptive Statistics
3/21 PSRM, Ch. 11
Research Project Research Design Due 3/21

3/23 Making Inference about Sample Means
SPSS, Ch. 6

3/26~ Measuring Relationships and Testing Hypotheses: Bivariate Data Analysis
3/28 PSRM, Ch. 12

3/30 Chi-square and Measure of Association
SPSS, Ch. 7
Assignment 5 Due 3/30

4/2 Correlation and Linear Regression
SPSS, Ch. 8
Individual meetings with instructor on your research project (the week of 4/2)

4/4~ Seeking Complete Explanation and Causal Knowledge: Multivariate Analysis
4/6 PSRM, Ch. 13

4/9 Dummy Variables and Interaction Effects
SPSS, Ch. 9

4/11 Logistic regression
SPSS, Ch. 10

4/13 Doing Your Own Political Analysis
SPSS, Ch. 11
Assignment 6 Due 4/13
4/16  The Research Report: An Annotated Example
       PSRM, Ch. 14
       “How to Write a Paper,” in Stephen Van Evera, Guide to Methods for Students of
       Political Science (Cornell University Press, 1997), 123-128

4/16~ Research Practicum: Individual Presentation of Project Findings
4/27  Schedule: TBA

4/30  Final Research Project Due (hardcopy and web version)