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.

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. 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.

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, and attend classes regularly.

READINGS

Required: The following three books are available for purchase at the Bookstore.

- Readings marked with (*) are either on Library e-reserve or posted on Blackboard.

Recommended: Choose one book to do assignment 3 (see below). The following three books are available for purchase at the Bookstore and on Library reserve (call numbers provided).

• Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *Predicting Politics* (Ohio State University Press, 2002) [JZ1234 .B84 2002]

ASSIGNMENTS

Statistics of the Day (5%):
To expand our collective political knowledge and to enliven the class, every Monday (starting September 5) one of you will present a piece of interesting or significant information about our political world. You will then lead the class in 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:
• What is the source of your information?
• How, specifically, is the information collected?
• What are the flaws related to the collection of the information?
• What are the flaws related to the interpretation of the information?
• What is the precise meaning of the information?

Your presentation and discussion should not exceed 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.

Workbook Exercises (20%):
Most of the lab sessions will be devoted to working on exercises assigned from WPSRM and SPSS, and problem-solving on other assignments. A separate lab syllabus will be distributed. You must turn in every exercise. Up to five sets of exercises will be graded.

Assignments (50%):
Seven assignments, each designed to enrich certain skills, are scheduled throughout the semester. Detailed instructions for each assignment will be distributed at least one week in advance. Each assignment is due at the beginning of the class on the due date.
• Assignment 1: Ranking Political Science Departments (9/7)
• Assignment 2: Evolution of Political Science as Seen Through *APSR* (9/21)
• Assignment 3: Methodological Critique / Book Review (10/10)
• Assignment 4: Content Analysis (10/24)
• Assignment 5: Participant Observation (11/7)
• Assignment 7: ICPSR ([http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/)) (12/5)

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

Research Project (20%):
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-person group. Your project should be produced in two forms: (1) a traditional paper copy, and (2) a web-based version. We will discuss the latter in more detail in class.

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

- 9/26: Research project question; individual meetings with me prior to 9/26
- 10/14: A draft of your literature review, consisting of a minimum of 10 sources
- 11/4: A full draft of your research design
- During the weeks of 11/7: Each student will make an individual appointment with me to discuss his (her) research project
- The week of 12/5: Presentation of full draft papers. Final research project due 12/9 (both hardcopy and web version).

Research projects will be graded on the basis of both content and writing, including research design, data collection, methodological skills, and presentational effectiveness.

Attendance and Participation (5%):
Everyone is expected to read and to be prepared to discuss the readings and assignments due for each class period specified on the syllabus, unless I change the schedule. 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.

Students are expected to attend every class period. I will take attendance. Poor attendance records will lower this grade.

GRADING

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:

<table>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.0-89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83.0-86.9</td>
</tr>
<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>
<td>73.0-76.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70.0-72.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67.0-69.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60.0-62.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.0-0.0</td>
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</tbody>
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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.
Please note: while a grade is provided for each assignment, when applicable (e.g., a paper), to give you a sense of how well you did, 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 and I will be happy to discuss your progress at any time during the semester.

POLICIES

1. **Attendance and absences:** Regular attendance is important to success in this class. Please note that the Dean’s office excuses only participation in University-sponsored events. Absences due to any other reasons (e.g., illness, family emergencies, court dates, etc.) must be first cleared with the instructor. Missing many classes will prompt a report to the Dean and impair your grades. Regardless of circumstances, you are responsible for all the work missed during absence.

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. The old adage: It’s better late than never. The policy on late works 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.

4. **Honor code:** This course adopts 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. Retain it. We will basically adhere to the following schedule. However, the schedule is subject to change, as pedagogical needs may so require.

**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/29</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/31</td>
<td>Scientific Study of Politics?</td>
<td>PSRM, Ch. 1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/2</td>
<td>Library Research Skills: Reference Matters, Databases, and Internet Evaluation</td>
<td>Guest Lecturer: Mr. Keith Weimer  Special Location: BLIB B26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9/5  Examples of Crossnational Research (I): Comparative Political Culture

9/7  Examples of Crossnational Research (II): Democratic Peace Theory

**Assignment 1 Due 9/7**

9/9  Examples of Crossnational Research (III): Human Rights and MNCs

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Sheila Carapico

9/12-9/14  Research Design
PSRM, Ch. 3

9/16  SPSS Refresher and Descriptive Statistics
SPSS, Ch. 1-2

9/19-9/21  Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables
PSMS, Ch. 4

**Assignment 2 Due 9/21**

9/23  Crosstabs, Comparisons
SPSS, Ch. 3

9/26-28  Literature Review
PSRM, Ch. 5

**Research Project Question Due 9/26**

9/28-10/3  Measurement
PSRM, Ch. 6

10/5  Transforming Variables in SPSS and Controlled Comparisons
SPSS, Ch. 4-5

10/7-10/10  Empirical Observations: Direct and Indirect Observation
PSRM, Ch. 7

**Assignment 3 Due 10/10**

10/12-10/14  Document Analysis
PSRM, Ch. 8

**Research Project Literature Review Due 10/14**
10/17  Fall Break: No Classes 😊

10/19-21  Sampling
PSRM, Ch. 9

10/24  Making Inference about Sample Means
SPSS, Ch. 6
Assignment 4 Due 10/24

10/26-10/28  Elite Interviewing and Survey Research
PSRM, Ch. 10

10/31-11/2  Univariate Data Analysis and Descriptive Statistics
PSRM, Ch. 11

11/4-11/7  Measuring Relationships and Testing Hypotheses: Bivariate Data Analysis
PSRM, Ch. 12
Research Project Research Design Due 11/4
Assignment 5 Due 11/7

11/9  Chi-square and Measure of Association
SPSS, Ch. 7

11/11  Correlation and Linear Regression
SPSS, Ch. 8

11/14-11/16  Seeking Complete Explanation and Causal Knowledge: Multivariate Analysis
PSRM, Ch. 13

11/18  Dummy Variables and Interaction Effects
SPSS, Ch. 9

11/21  Logistic regression
SPSS, Ch. 10
Assignment 6 Due 11/21

11/23-11/25  Thanksgiving Break: No Classes 😊

11/28-11/30  Doing Your Own Political Analysis
SPSS, Ch. 11

12/2  The Research Report: An Annotated Example
PSRM, Ch. 14

12/5-9  Research Practicum: Individual Presentation of Project Findings
Assignment 7 Due 12/5
Final Research Project Due 12/9 (hardcopy and web version)