

SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY

Political Science 5307 Graduate Scope and Methods

Instructor: David Watson
Telephone: 837-8368
Office: Lawrence Hall 203

Office Hours: T-R 2:00-3:00
And by appointment
E-Mail: dwatson@sulross.edu

Required Text: Manheim, Jarol B. Richard Rich and Lars Willnat. Empirical Political Analysis: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods. Longman, 2008.

**Additionally, articles will be made available to the students to supplement the book.

Course Description: Political Science 5313 focuses on techniques used in policy development, adoption, and evaluation in the public sector. Topics include policy reviews, needs assessment, the establishment of goals and objectives, and the analysis of benefits, costs, and risks.

Course Objectives: The objectives of this course are for the student to:

1. To identify the goals of empirical research within the social sciences;
2. To develop a knowledge of research techniques;
3. To develop an understanding of quantitative analysis, including statistics;
4. To develop skills that can be used to create independent research.

Methods of Instruction: To the degree we can, we will conduct the course as a seminar. Generally, I will lecture on the material and the book and articles will be used to supplement the material.

Course Evaluation: The student will be evaluated on the following:

1. 4 homework assignments (10% each);
2. An in-class midterm (10%);
3. A research paper (40%; to be divided into a research question worth 5%, an outline worth 10%, and the final paper itself worth 25%);
4. Class participation (10%).

Attendance Policy:

Refer to university policy. If it is necessary for the student to be absent, the student will be given an assignment to compensate for the missed class time.

Expectations:

The duty of the instructor for this course is to be prepared and on time for the lectures. In turn, the students' duty is to be on time and prepared for the lectures as well. "Prepared" means having completed the assigned reading prior to the lecture. This course will rely heavily on discussion between instructor and students; so advanced reading by the students will facilitate an active classroom environment. Keeping up with the readings is essential in order to actively

participate in class and to help the instructor monitor the students' understanding of the material before the exams, rather than on exam days. Please turn off cell phones during class. Seriously.

Religious Holiday: A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence.

ADA: Disability Policy: It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities. If you would like to request such an accommodation because of a physical, mental, or learning disability, please contact Joyce Sesters (University Center 211), the coordinator for program accessibility 837-8178.

Academic Honesty: Students will be expected to adhere to the university honor code for all assignments. Any student who is caught cheating or plagiarizing will be punished by automatically receiving a zero on the assignment in question and may be subject to further disciplinary action.

Cheating is defined in the Student Code of Conduct as:

- 1) Use of any unauthorized aid, sources, and assistance and assisting others in taking a course, quiz, test, or examination, writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out assignments;
- 2) The acquisition without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the University community;
- 3) Alteration of grade records;
- 4) Bribing or attempting to bribe a member of the University community or any other individual to alter a grade.

Plagiarism is defined as: Offering the work of another as one's own, without proper acknowledgement. Any student, who fails to give credit for quotations or essentially identical expression of material taken from books, encyclopedias, magazines, the Internet, and other reference works, or from the themes, reports, or other writings of a fellow student, is guilty of plagiarism.

Plagiarism includes:

- 1) Deliberate copying or use of another's work without citing the source.
- 2) Cutting and pasting of information off of the Internet without citing the source.
- 3) The use of an exact sentence from a source (book, Internet, etc.) without quotes.

Course Outline **Subject to change

Week I (08/19): Course Introduction

Week II (08/26): Operationalization, Instrumentation, Measurement, Validity and Reliability

Week III (09/02) Measurement, Organizing Data **Article for Presentation due

Week IV (09/09): SPSS Intro, Library **Research Questions are due
Week V(09/16): Nominal Data, Ordinal Data, Interval Data, Ration Data **Homework 1 out
Week VI (09/23): Measures of Central Tendency **Homework 1 due; Homework 2 out
Week VII (09/30): Sampling **Homework 2 due; Homework 3 out
Week VIII (10/7): Interval estimates of the mean **Homework 3 due, Homework 4 out
Week IX (10/14): Homework 4 due, review, **In-class Midterm
Week X (10/21): Regression analysis **Research paper outlines are due
Week XI (10/28): Ordinary least squares (OLS)
Week XII (11/4): Model Specifications (problems)
Week XIII (11/11): Non-parametric statistics
Week XIV(11/18): Contingency Tables
Week XV(11/25): Thanksgiving Holiday
Week XVI (12/2): Dealing with BLUE violations
Week XVII (12/9): Review semester, present research papers **Research papers due

Research Paper

*Model: A simplified representation of how the real world works.
Models can be expressed by mathematical equations, geometric graphs, or simply stated with words.*

*Grover Starling in
The Politics and Economics of Public Policy*

Before we as citizens or government officials or policy analysts can make a difference in solving our society's problems, we need to understand what causes those problems. It is only when we can identify the suspected causes that we can design interventions to solve the problem ---or at least lessen the severity of the problem. One way to get a better grasp of the problem is to "model" the problem, actually "diagram" the problem. In the model, the analyst identifies those factors (independent variables) which the analyst believes is causing or contributing to the problem (the dependent variable). The analyst cannot account for all of the variables so only the most significant variables are entered into the model. The analyst also looks at the interrelationships among the field of independent variables as well. Based upon the variables chosen by the analyst and the resources of the agency, the analyst can then develop "interventions" [also called policies] to produce the goals desired by the community.

Your assignment for the class is to select a problem area, develop a model of the problem, and then write a narrative explanation of the model. The project should be between twelve and fifteen, double-spaced pages long; the bibliography is included in the twelve to fifteen pages.

The protocol for the paper is below:

- Select a problem area for your topic. Select a problem that you believe needs fixing, e.g., housing shortage, drug abuse, abortion, teen pregnancy, school dropout rates. In the introduction of the problem state why the problem is important;
- After your statement to (or introduction of) the problem, present your diagram. Identify the dependent variable and then identify your

field of independent variables. Use arrows, lines, and valences to show the interrelationships among the variables. You need to search the library for evidence to support why you included the variables you used;

- Give a narrative explanation of your model explaining the relationships among the variables;
- Include a bibliography page with a minimum of five citations;
- This is a formal paper so include internal documentation/citation in the text of your work;
- Use type no larger than twelve-point and have left, right, top-page, and bottom-page margins no larger than one inch.
- **Any student that does not conform to the documentation requirement will receive an F on the paper, and any student that uses enlarged type or margins without adequate increase in length of the paper will receive a grade no higher than a C on the paper.**