

SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY

Political Science 5307 Graduate Scope and Methodology Fall 2014 Online Format

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Course Description: Political Science 5313 focuses on research design and techniques in the social sciences as well as the theoretical and mathematical underpinnings of these techniques. The overarching goal of this course is for the students to be able to more fruitfully design and create original research projects on their own once the course has ended.

Behavioral and Social Sciences – MA in Public Administration

Program Learning Outcomes

The graduating student will:

- Demonstrate the ability to critique significant theoretical approaches of public administration.
- Demonstrate the ability to evaluate domestic and international administrative processes.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis.

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

1. To identify the goals of empirical research within the social sciences;

Method of Assessment: Reading summaries, research paper and midterm exam

2. To develop a knowledge of research techniques;

Method of Assessment: Reading summaries, research paper and midterm exam

3. To develop an understanding of quantitative analysis, including statistics;

Method of Assessment: Reading summaries, research paper and midterm exam

4. To develop skills that can be used to create independent research.

Method of Assessment: Reading summaries, research paper and midterm exam

5. To demonstrate the ability to critique significant theoretical approaches of political science.

Method of Assessment: Reading summaries, analytical questions.

6. To demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis.

Method of Assessment: Research paper

Methods of Instruction:

This is an online course, and so the method of instruction is somewhat limited. Each week, a series of readings will be made available to the students. The students are to read these

selections and email the instructor a one-page summary of each article. These summaries do not need to be anything fancy, just a one-page summary of the material presented in the article. The questions (and answering thoughts) that the articles address should be articulated in the discussion section of the online course.

Research design is an individualistic process. To supplement the assigned readings, the student is also to find an article (peer reviewed) of their choice and sum it up for week 3. The summaries should be no longer than one single-spaced page, and should reflect a topic the student is interested in researching.

****These summaries combined will represent 20% of your grade for this course.**

Additionally, so that there is a dialogue/discourse, the discussion section of blackboard will be opened up and each online student is required to post 6 questions/answers each week. It does not matter which you choose (questions or answers), as long as you accumulate a total of 6 each week. These questions are meant to be analytical for the sake of discussion rather than trivia questions from the readings.

In fact, one of the most underrated skills in academia is the ability to ask *good* questions (Contrary to popular belief, there are such things as stupid questions.). This is your chance to practice. The questions should be analytical (theoretical) or methodological in nature and can focus directly on the reading or attempt to develop a tangential line of inquiry. In the latter case, these questions may be ideas for future dissertations and/or conference papers. Perhaps you were inspired by an “off hand” comment in a footnote, or would like to examine how a particular work’s thesis might be updated to understand contemporary politics. You may also develop questions that “speak” to multiple readings or other regions of the world. Be creative.

Conversely, the answers should be equally thoughtful and offer insight into what the author was trying to get at in the article. Please be kind and respectful in your responses as the last thing we want to do in an online graduate seminar is start a flaming war amongst students thousands of miles apart.

****Overall, the presence/quality of your questions and answers will constitute 20% of your final grade in this class.**

Additionally, 3 homework assignments will be required. These will be emailed to you at the appropriate times. Each constitutes 10% of the final grade for the course.

****30% Homework Assignments**

The remaining 30% of your grade will be represented by a research paper on a research area of your choice. I do not care which topic you choose, so long as it is somehow relevant to American politics, international relations, or comparative politics and is empirical in nature. The paper will be due in phases, the first of which is a research question (due in week 4), followed by an outline (due in week 9). The final draft of the paper will be due on December 12th. For more on this research paper, see the attached sheet at the end of the syllabus. You should be thinking about a public policy area that interests you while doing the readings for the class. You may use whatever empirical methodology you choose (statistical, formal, case studies, etc.), but the paper should present a testable hypothesis (that you actually test!).

****30% Research Paper**

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

1. Reading Summaries (including self-selected article summary) (20%);
2. Discussion questions/answers (20%);
3. 3 homework assignments (10% each);
4. Research paper (30%; 5% for the question, 10% for the outline, 15% for the final paper).

Attendance Policy:

This is an online course, so traditional attendance policies are irrelevant/flexible. 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.

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; they will be posted online on blackboard.

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 (08/27): Course Introduction

Week II (09/03): Models and Theories in Political Science (article 1), Video on Research Design

Week III (09/10) Research Design and Case Studies (articles 2, 3, and 4) **Article for summary due

Week IV (09/17): Examples of research design (articles 4 and 5) **Research Questions are due

Week V(09/24): Selecting and Sampling Cases (Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of the Manheim book)

Week VI (10/01): Nominal, Ordinal, Interval, Ratio Data, data selection (article 6) **Homework 1 out;

Week VII (10/08): Measures of Central Tendency, Ordinary Least Squares Ordinary (OLS) **Homework 1 due; Homework 2 and 3 out (SPSS)

Week VIII (10/15): Interval estimates of the mean **Homework 2 due

Week IX (10/22): Regression analysis **Research paper outlines are due

Week X (10/29): Alternative research techniques **Homework 3 due

Week XI (11/05): Sampling, experimental design (articles 7 and 8)

Week XII (11/12): Logit/Probit, Model Specifications (problems)

Week XIII (11/19): Examples of Research Design (articles 9, 10, and 11)

Week XIV(12/03): Movie on the ethics of research (provided via blackboard)

Week XV(12/10): **Research papers due/Presented

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.**