

**PS 5307 Scope& Methods in Social Sciences
Fall 2025
Sul Ross State University**

Instructor: Dr. Yen-Hsin Chen

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Office hours:

- Monday & Wednesday: 9:15 AM-10:15 AM, 11:30 AM-12:30 PM
- Tuesday & Thursday: 10:45 AM- 11:45 AM, 1:00 PM-2:00 PM

Course Description

This course introduces the strategies and techniques of the scientific methods used in social science. Students are expected to learn how to apply knowledge of scientific methods to the study of politics and examine various political phenomena with appropriate approaches. This course covers research design, causal inference, hypotheses and variables, measurement, data collection, and basic statistical techniques to attain this goal. This course will enable students to become more informed consumers of political science. Thus, you can identify misleading or poorly conducted research, do original research in your classes, and become an informed participant in contemporary political debates.

Student Learning Outcomes

The three Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for MA-Political are:

SLO 1: Graduate students in Political Science will demonstrate the ability to analyze significant theoretical approaches of political science.

SLO 2: Graduate students in Political Science will demonstrate the ability to evaluate domestic and international political processes.

SLO 3: Graduate students in Political Science will demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis.

This course particularly focuses on SLO 3. Students of this course will learn how to conduct a complete empirical research proposal. Further, for the comprehensive degree exam, students will be required to provide a detailed written and verbal explanation of a research question that interests them. Therefore, this course is very important for both MPA and MA Political Science students.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will:

- Be able to describe the difference between a basic research paper and a research study
- Understand the main parts of a research study
- Understand how to formulate a research question and hypothesis
- Be aware of the different ways to approach a research study
- Understand the importance of ethics in research and how to conduct ethical research properly
- Be able to conduct a literature review of existing studies
- Be aware of existing data sources for research
- Be able to select the appropriate statistical test for their research design
- Be more aware of existing theories and how to apply them to research
- Know the steps to publish research in at least one scholarly journal
- Gain valuable experience presenting a research proposal

Program Learning Outcomes

Public Administration	Political Science
The graduating student will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	The graduating student will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate the ability to analyze significant theoretical approaches of political science. • Demonstrate the ability to evaluate domestic and international political processes. • Demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis.

Marketable Skills

Public Administration	Political Science
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can organize and execute presentations relevant to public administration. • Students understand and can execute a program evaluation. • Students can conduct statistical analyses that are useful to the work of public administrators. • Students can read and interpret an organization budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can organize and execute verbal and written presentations of complex social issues. • Students can tackle social and political problems by acquiring relevant data and using insight and technical skills to analyze data and develop logical solutions. • Students understand the roles and responsibilities of institutional authority within local, state, national, and international communities. • Students understand and can execute a policy analysis.

Assignments and Grading

- **Homework** (20% of your grade, 5% for each of the four assignments):
There are FOUR homework assignments for students to complete. Assignments may include short essays on topics learned in the course, math exercises using statistical formulas, and computer-based exercises. A student who does not turn in an assignment on time will receive a zero for the assignment.
- **Research Proposal & Presentation** (40% of your grade):
Students of this course will write a research proposal. This paper includes sections covering the research statement, literature review, theory, hypotheses, and methodological approach. This paper must be between 10 and 15 double-spaced pages and is due **November 23rd**. The due dates and the scores of your final research project grades determined by each installment are as follows. Further details will be provided on a separate handout in the future.
 1. Research statement (5 points): September 7, meeting required
 2. Literature review (5 points): October 5, meeting required
 3. Theory and hypothesis (5 points): October 26, meeting required
 4. Research design (5 points): November 9, meeting required
 5. Final Manuscript (10 points): November 23. You will lose 10 % of your points for every calendar day if your paper is late.
 6. Virtual presentation (10 points): November 23. You will lose 10 % of your points for every calendar day if your presentation is late.

Students are required to schedule FOUR meetings with me to discuss their plans and report their progress by the due date of the first four installments. For example, you need to meet with me to talk about your research ideas BEFORE September 7, so I have a good sense of what your research statement would look like. You also need to meet with me to discuss your theory and hypothesis by October 26, so I can understand the distinction between your theory and the existing literature.

These meetings are NOT optional. I will not accept your submission if you fail to meet this requirement. More specifically, it is NOT OK that you do not meet with me during the semester but then submit your final manuscript at the end of the semester.

Besides, you need to record and post your virtual presentation on Blackboard for your classmates to watch. A separate handout will provide additional details in the future.

- **Exams** (40% of your grade, 20% for each exam)
Two exams will be held. The exams will include multiple-choice questions and short essays on topics covered in the course. The midterm exam needs to be completed by 9/28 (Sunday), and the final exam needs to be completed by 12/9 (Tuesday).
Please keep in mind that you need to install Respondus LockDown Browser to complete exams. Students will lose 10 points for every calendar day if their exam is late.
- **Quiz** (Extra credit)
A number (to be determined by the instructor) of unannounced quizzes will be given occasionally. The quiz scores will be added to your grade as extra points.

Grade Scale

Your points: Homework Assignment Scores + Research Proposal + Midterm Exam Score \times 0.2 + Final Exam Score \times 0.2 + your total extra points earned.

Your course grade will be determined based on the following grading scale:

Points	Letter Grade
100- 90.0	A
89.9-80.0	B
79.9-70.0	C
69.9-60.0	D
59.9 or less	F

Please remember that a “C” is required in graduate school to pass the class. In addition, you must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA to remain in good standing. The program faculty evaluates the progress of students in the program at the end of each semester. Maintaining a “B” average in the program is not enough to be deemed eligible to continue or complete the comprehensive exam.

Many of our graduate students consider this course very challenging. It is your responsibility to keep me posted on your learning progress. Otherwise, I assume that everything works well for you. Please keep in mind that everyone is busy. If you have any difficulties meeting my requirements, let me know in advance.

Assigned Reading

The required textbook for this course is:

- Johnson, Janet Buttolph, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. 2019. *Political Science Research Methods*. 9th ed. Washington D.C.: CQ Press. ISBN: 9781544331430
This text is referred to in the course schedule as J&R.

In addition, the following two books are worth reading. They are not required textbooks, but they are suitable for learning how to conduct empirical research.

- Creswell, John W, and J. David Creswell. 2018. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 5th ed. ISBN: 9781506386690
- Shively, W. Phillips. 2010. *The Craft of Political Research*. 8th ed. ISBN: 9780205791200

All additional readings will be on Blackboard and through the library website.

Attendance and Participation

This is a web-delivered course, and I expect that you will watch all lecture recordings. Although not watching lecture videos will not hurt your course grade, it will affect my overall evaluation of your academic performance. Meanwhile, please note that I will never give an extra-credit assignment to any individual student.

Course Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule of topics and reading assignments for the course.

Week 1 (8/25), Topic 1: Course Introduction

- J&R Chapters 1 and 2
- Lupia, Arthur. 2000. "Evaluating Political Science Research: Information for Buyers and Sellers," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33 (1): 7-13.

Week 2 (9/1), Topic 2: The Empirical Approach to Political Science

- J&R Chapters 2, 3, and 4
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, Shanto Iyengar, Adam Simon, and Nicholas Valentino. 1994. "Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?" *American Political Science Review* 88 (4): 829-838.
- Niven, David. 2006. "A Field Experiment on the Effects of Negative Campaign Mail on Voter Turnout in Municipal Election." *Political Research Quarterly* 59 (2): 203-210.
- Research Statement due on 9/7 at 11:59 PM

Week 3 (9/8), Topic 3: Causal Inference and Research Design

- J&R Chapter 6
- Diamond, Jared. 2010. "Intra-Island and Inter-Island Comparison." In *Natural Experiments of History*, eds. By Jared Diamond and James A. Robinson. Cambridge, M.A.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Banerjee, Abhijit, and Lakshmi Iyer. 2010. "Colonial Land Tenure, Electoral Competition, and Public Good in India." In *Natural Experiments of History*, eds. By Jared Diamond and James A. Robinson. Cambridge, M.A.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- HW1 due on 9/14 at 11:59 PM

Week 4 (9/15), Topic 4: Concepts and Measurement

- J&R Chapter 5
- HW2 due on 9/21 at 11:59 PM

Week 5 (9/22), Midterm Exam Week

- The midterm exam will be available from 9/22 to 9/28.

Week 6 (9/29), Topic 5: Survey Research

- J&R Chapter 11
- Literature review due on 10/5 at 11:59 PM

Week 7 (10/6), Topic 6: Data Analysis 2

- J&R Chapters 10 and 11

Week 8 (10/13), Topic 7: Sampling 1

- J&R Chapter 7
- HW3 due on 10/19 at 11:59 PM

Week 9 (10/20), Topic 8: Statistical Inference

- J&R Chapter 12
- Theory and hypothesis due on 10/26 at 11:59 PM

Week 10 (10/27), Topic 9: Sampling 2

- J&R Chapter 12

Week 11 (11/3), Topic 10: Bivariate Analysis

- J&R Chapter 13
- Research design due on 11/9 at 11:59 PM

Week 12 (11/10), Topic 11: An Example

- HW4 due on 11/16 at 11:59 PM

Week 13 (11/17), Research week

- Final Manuscript and Virtual Presentation due on 11/23 at 11:59 PM

Week 14 (11/24), Thanksgiving Holiday

- Enjoy Thanksgiving Holiday, y'all

Week 15 (12/1) and Week 16 (12/9), Final Exam

- The final exam will be available from 12/1 to 12/9.

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Other Course Policies & Resources

Academic Integrity

Intellectual development requires hard work. Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: Turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden.

The policy can be found at: <https://www.sulross.edu/about/administration/university-policies/> In addition, please note that plagiarism detection software will be used in this class for written assignments.

Course Blackboard Resources

There are several resources on the course Blackboard page. You are expected to review and familiarize yourself with the items in Blackboard in the first week of class.

Blackboard Technical Support

SRSU 24/7 Blackboard Technical Support Online Support Desk Contact Info: Toll Free: 888.837.6055. Email: blackboardsupport@sulross.edu

SUSR Library Services

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LobolD and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

The Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) Libraries at Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass offer additional access to library spaces and resources. Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde students may also use online resources available through SWTJC website, library.swtjc.edu. The SWTJC Libraries serve as pick-up locations for Inter Library Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery from the Alpine campus.

SRSU Disability Services.

SRSU Disability Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Alpine students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mary Schwartz Grisham, M.Ed., LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203, or email mschwartz@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall – room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Commitment to Diversity

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, socioeconomic class, age, nationality, etc.). I also understand that the crisis of COVID, economic disparity, and health concerns, or even unexpected life events could impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. I do this to demonstrate my commitment to you and to the mission of Sul Ross State University to create an inclusive environment and care for the whole student as part of the Sul Ross Familia. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.

SRSU Distance Education Statement

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.