

POL 2500: The Science of Politics

University of Missouri

Spring 2023

TR 9:30-10:45AM, Strickland Hall 109

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Office location: Locust Street Building Basement

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Office hours: M 10:30 - 12:00PM; T 11:00 - 12:30PM (or by appointment)

Purpose: The course focuses on real world applications with the goal of using science to empower you in three ways. First, most generally, you will better appreciate that the root of science is skepticism and logic, thereby helping you to make freer choices as well as become a better problem solver. Second, in this course you will become a well-educated consumer of social science, giving you substantial power to understand, evaluate, and utilize scientific knowledge, whether you choose to work in politics, journalism, industry, government, or elsewhere. Third, you leave this class empowered to read and evaluate to your own satisfaction statistical analyses in political science and, more generally, in most domains of human knowledge. In this course you will hopefully gain a deeper understanding of humanity, ‘seeing’ the power of political science.

Grades: Your final grade will be a function of the following components:

1. 2 exams (25% each)
2. Discussion Boards (15% total)
3. Weekly Quizzes (25% total)
4. Class participation (10%)

Examinations: There will be a mid-term examination and a final examination. Exams will cover both lectures and reading materials. Since the study of comparative political behavior relies on a number of theories, these tests will reflect cumulative knowledge. **I do not scale or curve exams. The grade you earn is the grade that you will receive.**

Discussion Boards: There will be a few discussion boards throughout the semester. You will be tasked with responding to a prompt and to one of your classmates’ responses. These will be administered at the beginning of the week they are due on Canvas.

Weekly quizzes: Due at 11:59PM on Friday. You are required to complete weekly quizzes that cover content from the assigned lecture and reading material. The quizzes will be administered on Canvas at the beginning of the week. The purpose of these quizzes is to assess your understanding of the course content; and thus, you will be allowed multiple attempts to complete the quizzes.

Class Participation: Attendance at lectures is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for a passing grade. Ideal answers to questions on the examinations will express clear knowledge of both the assigned reading materials and the content of the lectures. In addition, the lectures will be used to deliver important class information. I will take attendance at each class, and will incorporate this into the class participation component of your final grade. I also expect active participation in the lectures and the discussion opportunities. Note, if there is a lack of active participation, especially during discussion opportunities, then I will resort to randomly “cold-calling” on students.

Final class grades will be assigned with the following grading scale:

A+ = 97.0 - 100
A = 90.0 - 96.99
B+ = 87.0 - 89.99
B = 80.0 - 86.99
C+ = 77.0 - 79.99
C = 70.0 - 76.99
D+ = 67.0 - 69.99
D = 60.0 - 66.99
F = 0 - 59.99

Readings: There will not always be perfect unity between the course lectures and assigned readings. Thus it will be necessary to attend all lectures and to read the assigned materials in order to be exposed to all of the material that you are responsible for in this course.

The following required text is available at local bookstores (as well as through online sources).

- Jeffrey C. Dixon, Royce A. Singleton, and Bruce C. Straits. *The Process of Social Research*. 3rd Edition. Oxford Publications.

Canvas: We will be using Canvas to display grades, post additional readings, and for announcements.

Other Considerations

- Out of respect for fellow students, each person will refrain from talking, making offensive remarks, and other disruptive behavior during lecture. Cell phones may not be used during class time. Inappropriate classroom behavior may result in the student being requested to leave the classroom.
- Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. In this course, you are expected to submit original work and behave in a respectful manner toward both the professor and other students in the class. Breaches of the academic integrity rules are extremely serious

matters. Sanctions for such a breach range from instructor-imposed academic sanctions, such as a failing grade for the course, to University-imposed disciplinary sanctions, such as probation or expulsion. If you have questions, please consult the University's academic integrity website and the University M-book. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any student plagiarizing (or cheating on tests) will receive an automatic F for that assignment, no exceptions!**

- If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible.

If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please register with the Disability Center, S5 Memorial Union, 573-882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for persons with disabilities, click on Disability Resources on the MU homepage.

- University of Missouri System Executive Order No. 38 lays out principles regarding the sanctity of classroom discussions at the university. The policy is described fully in Section 200.015 of the Collected Rules and Regulations. In this class, students may make audio or video recordings of course activity unless specifically prohibited by the faculty member. However, the redistribution of audio or video recordings of statements or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course is prohibited without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded. Students found to have violated this policy are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of Section 200.020 of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters.

Make-up / Late Policy

You are expected to submit work and take exams on time. If work is submitted late, then there will be a 10% deduction in grade for each day late, unless caused by some serious impediment. If there are such impediments, then the expectation is that you email or provide some written documentation to alert me to your situation, where an extension may be offered at my discretion.

Make-up exams will only be given for university-excused absences. To be excused the student must notify their instructor in writing (acknowledged e-mail message is acceptable) prior to the date of absence if such notification is feasible (in particular in times of university-excused absences). In cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. unanticipated illness, accident, or emergency) the student must provide notification by the end of the second working day after the absence by 5:00 PM. This notification should include an explanation of why notice could not be sent prior to the class.

Failing to take a make-up exam at a previously agreed-to time will result in a zero. The make-up exam must be taken within one week of the original test date listed in the syllabus, except under extreme circumstances approved by the instructor. Also, keep in mind that an exam proctored outside of the normal exam time may be of a different format than the original exam.

Class Schedule

We will spend as much time as necessary on each topic for this course. Because I am unable to predict in advance how long each topic will take, the schedule below is only a rough guideline. *I expect that you will have read the assigned readings **before** the class period for which they are assigned. I also reserve the right to announce additional required readings during class meetings.*

Readings

Week 1: Course overview

- Tuesday: Course Overview
- Thursday: Chapter 1

Week 2: Introduction

- Tuesday: Pseudo-science
 - Hansson, Sven Ove, “Science and Pseudo-Science”, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)
- Thursday: **NO CLASS**

Week 3: Research in the Social Sciences

- Tuesday: Chapter 2
- Thursday: Chapter 2

Week 4: Ethics and Politics of Social Science

- Tuesday: Chapter 3
- Thursday: Chapter 3

Week 5: Research Designs

- Tuesday: Chapter 4
- Thursday: Chapter 4

Week 6: Measurement

- Tuesday: Chapter 5
- Thursday: Chapter 5

Week 7: Test

- Tuesday: Exam Review
- Thursday: **Exam One**

Week 8: Sampling

- Tuesday: Chapter 6
- Thursday: Chapter 6

Week 9: Surveys

- Tuesday: Chapter 8
- Thursday: Chapter 8

Week 10: Experiments

- Tuesday: Chapter 7
- Thursday: Chapter 7

Week 11: Spring Break

- Tuesday: **NO CLASS**
- Thursday: **NO CLASS**

Week 12: Field Research

- Tuesday: Chapter 9
- Thursday: **NO CLASS**

Week 13: Mixed Methods

- Tuesday: Chapter 10
- Thursday: Chapter 11

Week 14: Quantitative Research

- Tuesday: Chapter 12
- Thursday: Chapter 12

Week 15: Quantitative Research

- Tuesday: Chapter 12
- Thursday: Chapter 12

Week 16: Test

- Tuesday: Exam Review
- Thursday: **Exam Two**