

PBPL 220-01

Research & Evaluation

Fall 2024

Public Policy & Law Program
Trinity College

1 Instructor Information

Shane A. Gleason, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: Mondays 2:00pm-4:00pm
Tuesdays: 2:00pm-4:00pm
Wednesdays: 1:30pm-3:30pm
and by appointment
Class Location: Watkinson Library B02
Course Time: 10:50am to 12:05 TR

2 Course Description and Purpose

How do we know when a policy is successful? When we hear “Scholars have discovered XYZ...” how do they arrive at that conclusion? While it is tempting to explain these questions with conjecture or punditry, scholars and professionals from numerous fields rely on empirical evidence to test their theories and claims. That is what puts the “science” in social science.

The goal of this course is to provide students with a toolset to address a range of questions and puzzles in public policy & law broadly. In particular, students in this course will learn how to create viable research questions rooted in theory, formulate hypotheses, locate data, and how to analyze that data to draw conclusions. Moreover, students should be able to understand the methods and analyses you will encounter in peer reviewed publications you read in your other classes. Additionally, this course will lay the foundations for a senior thesis or graduate school.

In addition to the basics of research design and data analysis, another key component of this class are your critical reading, writing, and organizational skills. Toward that end, you will produce an empirical research project. Beyond just conducting original research, you will also communicate your findings through written and verbal communication. If this sounds daunting, fear not: ample feedback will be given over the course of the project.

Student Learning Outcomes

On completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Understand and interpret the basic terminology of social science methodology.
2. Understand, articulate, and implement research designs for a host of social and political research questions.
3. Describe, interpret, and communicate statistical relationships to answer research questions.

3 Course Format

This course is heavily readings based, from both the text books and supplemental materials available on Moodle. Past experience demonstrates that methods classes are much more effective when everyone reads in advance, even if you do not fully understand the material you will at least have a familiarity with the material. Many weeks, we will also have a “lab” element of the class where you will have time in class to work on the Stata assignment and ask yours peers or me for help.

4 Requirements

Text

There are three required books, which the majority of our readings will come from. Other readings are posted on Moodle and are noted on the course schedule.

The books are available at the campus bookstore; although they can also be obtained online. To this end, I provide the ISBN for the book below. I expect you to have the book and bring it with you to class. If you have difficulty in obtaining the book, please reach out to me.

1. Pollock, Phillip P. 2020. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. 6th ed. Congressional Quarterly Press: Washington.
ISBN: 978-1-5063-7961-6
2. Pollock, Phillip P. and Barry C. Edwards. 2024. *A Stata Companion to Political Analysis*. 5th ed. Congressional Quarterly Press: Washington.
ISBN: 978-1-0718-1504-5
3. Powner, Leanne C. 2015. *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide*. Congressional Quarterly Press: Washington.
ISBN: 978-1-4833-6963-1

Assessment

This course is worth 100 points which are broken up over several different items

- Exams: 25 points
 - Research Project: 45 points
 - Quizzes: 10 points
 - Stata Exercises: 10 points
 - Participation: 10 points
1. **Exams (25 points)**—There are two exams. The first is worth 10 points. The second is worth 15 points. Exams consist of short identification terms and a handful of short response items where you will be asked to apply what you have learned to some research problem. The final exam will also include a Stata exercise. Exams are take home. One week before the due date for the exam, I will post to Moodle two possible essay questions and five possible

identification terms. On your exam write on one of the essays and two of the identification terms. **The first exam is due Saturday October 26. The second exam is due at the end of the final exam time slot as assigned by the College (Friday, December 13).** More details are available on the Exam Handout on Moodle.

2. **Research Project (45 points)**— You will conduct a research project exploring a research question that is of interest to you with the methods we have discussed in class and with data from one of several available datasets. The project is scaffolded over several smaller assignments. My feedback on each assignment is designed will help you prepare the next assignment. For more information on the research assignment please see the research assignment handout available on Moodle. For now, suffice to say the due dates for each assignment are September 7 (Research Interests Statement), September 27 (Literature Review Outline), October 4 (Hypotheses & Concepts), and December 3 or 5 (Final Presentation/Peer Review).
3. **Quizzes (10 points)**— Five times throughout the semester quizzes will be due on Moodle ten minutes before class begins and will consist of multiple choice questions. They can cover anything previously discussed in class or anything from that day's readings. Quizzes cannot be made up, therefore it is imperative you attend class regularly, read for class, and are on time for class.
4. **Stata Assignments (10 points)**— Methods is unique in that it is often intimidating until you actually do it. To this end, we will often have assignments from the Pollock & Edwards-Stata book. These assignments will help reinforce how to run the statistical analyses that we discuss in class and get you familiar with Stata. If this seems intimidating, fear not. We will also have in class exercises in advance of the Stata Assignment deadlines.
5. **Participation (10 points)**— Learning is not a passive activity. My goal is that we have a dynamic discussion of the material. If you have a question, you can rest assured someone else in the class is wondering the same thing- so please speak up! In addition to the classroom discussion, a key part of learning is collaborating with others. To this end, we will periodically have workshop days where your peers will provide you feedback (and you will do the same for them). On those days, you will be paired into small groups. I'll wander the room observing and you will complete a peer assessment. This will factor into your participation grade.

Assessment Scale

A: >94	A-: 90-93.9	B+: 87-89.9	B: 84-86.9	B-: 80-83.9	C+
C: 74-76.9	C-: 70-73.9	D+: 67-69.9	D: 64-66.9	D-: 60-63.9	F: <60

5 Course Policies

Contacting the Instructor

I am happy to help you either via e-mail, office telephone, or in-person during office hours. Of course, if office hours do not fit your schedule let me know and we can schedule a meeting at a time that is more convenient. If you come to office hours you should come prepared; bring your book, notes, and read the material in advance. If you contact me via e-mail, I will respond within 48 hours, though in most cases it will be faster. However, in any e-mail you must identify yourself and use proper format which consists of an opening (As simple as the recipient's name), a closing

(as simple as your name), and a descriptive subject line. If you do not follow that convention or if you use Internet shorthand (ie: “u” instead of “you,”) I will not reply to the message. Telephone calls will be returned as soon as possible, though e-mail is usually quicker. Please note, the phone number listed is my office phone; it cannot receive text messages.

Make-up Exams and Assignments

To qualify for a make-up test a student must notify me of the absence in advance via e-mail and provide documentation. Make-up exams will be a written research paper.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

A crucial component of academic writing is effective use of sources. Using the words or ideas of others without granting them credit constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is not permitted on any assignment, whether a short entry on Moodle, a draft, a prospectus, or a final submission. Incidents of plagiarism and academic dishonesty will be addressed in accordance with college policies (Student Handbook) and may result in a failing grade and/or more serious consequences. Trinity asks that students sign a declaration on academic honesty at the beginning of the semester, which we will complete after the first day of class.

This class aims to equip you with critical thinking and writing skills, which can only be gained through practice. Therefore, you should independently draft and refine your own written work without using artificial intelligence or other shortcuts.

Please contact me with any questions regarding use of sources and, when in doubt, acknowledge assistance and cite.

Artificial Intelligence

Use of an AI Generator such as ChatGPT, MidJourney, DALL-E, etc. is explicitly prohibited in this class. The information derived from these tools is based on previously published materials. Therefore, using these tools without proper citation constitutes plagiarism. Additionally, be aware that the information derived from these tools is often inaccurate or incomplete. It’s imperative that all work submitted should be your own. Any assignment that is found to have been plagiarized or to have used unauthorized AI tools may receive a zero and or be reported for academic misconduct.

Collaboration

As part of this class you will give feedback to your peers. Indeed, one of the best ways to learn methods is to learn from others and share what you know. You may discuss readings with classmates outside of class and consult associates at the Writing Center. Where such discussion or guidance significantly shapes your written product, students should acknowledge assistance in a footnote, in line with academic conventions. While discussion of ideas and peer review is strongly encouraged, **all writing and revising must be executed independently.**

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who may need some accommodation in order to fully participate in this class are urged to contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center as soon as possible to explore what arrangements need to be made to assure access. If you have approval for academic accommodations, please notify me by the end of week two of classes. For those students with accommodations approved after the start of the semester, a minimum of 10 days' notice is required. Student Accessibility Resources can be reached by emailing SARC@trincoll.edu.

Additional Assistance

As noted above, I am happy to see you for extra help by appointment. For additional assistance, you are encouraged to consult the Writing Center.

At the Trinity College Writing Center, specially trained peer tutors (called Writing Associates) will help you improve your writing no matter your skill level. Writers are welcome at all stages of the writing process, from the moment you receive an assignment, to when you've produced a draft, to the moment you're polishing up your final version. You can work with a Writing Associate in-person at 115 Vernon Street room 109, or upload your paper using our online scheduling system and receive feedback via an asynchronous eTutoring appointment. Visit the Writing Center web page for further information and procedures. Students can walk-in during our hours of operation or reserve appointments in advance online by registering here.

Aetna Quantitative Center: The Q-Center, located in MECC 172, is open for tutoring during the semester Mondays-Thursdays 4-10pm and Sundays 7-10pm. We usually offer support for QLIT 101, Calculus I, II, & III, Statistics, Economics 101 and 218, as well as other courses on demand. The Q-Center works primarily on a walk-in basis and we usually open for tutoring the second or third week of classes. Students can check our website for the schedule and opening days. If you have any questions, please contact the Center's director, Kaitlyn Gingras at kaitlyn.gingras@trincoll.edu.

Student Equity and Emergency Fund: The Fund provides students with financial assistance for emergency expenses that are temporary, significant, unforeseen, and unavoidable. Emergency expenses include but are not limited to: textbooks and other essential academic expenses; medications and other costs related to emergency medical care; food insecurity; summer internship funding; educational testing for accommodations; travel costs related to a death or illness in the immediate family; or replacement of essential personal belongings due to fire, theft, or natural disaster. Additional details on applying for funds may be found here:.

Trinity College Policy on Sexual/Gender Discrimination: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. Trinity College prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in all of its programs and activities, including academics, employment, athletics, and other extracurricular activities. This prohibition includes gender-based harassment, sexual violence and other sexual harassment. Questions regarding Title IX may be referred to the College's Title IX Coordinator, Shannon Lynch, located at 208 Mather Hall, 300

Summit St. Hartford, CT 06106, or via email at titleixcoordinator@trincoll.edu. You can find more information here at the Title IX Office website

Classroom Courtesy

Classroom courtesy is an essential component of creating an effective learning environment. All students have the right to learn without unnecessary distractions. These distractions include: cell phones, talking during lectures (unless recognized by the instructor), reading newspapers, falling asleep, etc. If you need a cell phone for emergency purposes, leave it on vibrate. Entering and leaving are also significant sources of distraction. It is your responsibility to be on time and to stay for the entire period. In circumstances where you need to leave early, tell the instructor beforehand. Repeated disruptions of class will lead to a reduction in your final grade.

Most importantly, the syllabus includes many sensitive topics which can lead to strong feelings and heated debate. Because this is a college classroom, all discussion must be respectful and scholarly. This is to say you must be respectful, in both content and tone, of diverse opinions and not make personal or partisan attacks.

Acceptable Comments

- are respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement
- are related to class and/or the course material
- focus on advancing the discussion about issues related to the course and/or course material rather than personal beliefs, and
- are delivered in normal tones and a non-aggressive manner.

Unacceptable Comments

- are personal in nature. This includes attacks on a person's appearance, demeanor, or political beliefs.
- include interrupting the instructor or other students. Raise your hand and wait to be recognized.
- often use the discussion to argue for political positions and/or beliefs. If political discussions arise, they must be discussed in a scholarly way (see above).
- may include using raised tones, yelling, engaging in arguments with other students and being threatening in any manner.
- include ignoring the instructor's authority to maintain the integrity of the classroom environment.

Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice. These changes may come via e-mail. Make sure to check your university supplied email regularly. You are accountable for all such communications.

6 *Tentative* Course Schedule

A few notes about reading the course schedule:

- “*PE*” refers to the required Pollock & Edwards book
- “*PE-Stata*” refers to the required Pollock & Edwards Stata book
- “*Powner*” refers to the required Powner book
- “*YouTube*” refers to posted Stata Youtube videos & associated computer files on Blackboard
- “(M)” means that reading can be found on Moodle

Course Introduction

Tuesday September 3– Introduction to the Course

- *No readings*

Research Questions, Theories, & Hypotheses

Thursday September 5– NO CLASS: APSA MEETING

- Powner: Chapter 1
- *Be sure to do the topic of interest writing assignment.*

Tuesday September 10– Can We Really Ever Know?

- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. pages: 1-19. (M)
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, Inc. pages 3-16 & 20-30 (M)

Thursday September 12– Thinking Theory

- Powner: Chapter 2
- Lave, Charles A. and James G. March. 1975. *An Introduction to Models in Social Sciences*. New York: Harper & Row. Chapter 2: “An Introduction to Speculation.” (M)

Tuesday September 17– Locating Sources: Library Research Tutorial

- Powner: Chapter 3
- PE: Chapter 10 (just pages 327-333)
- **GUEST SPEAKERS:** *Jeffrey Liszka & Susan Chatham, Watkinson Library*

Thursday September 19– Concepts

- PE: Chapter 1
- McDermott, Rose and Peter K. Hatemi. 2011. “Distinguishing Sex and Gender.” *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 44(1): 89-92. (M)

Tuesday September 24– Operationalizing Concepts

- Pollock: Chapter 2
- PE: Chapter 1

Thursday September 26– Hypotheses

- PE: Chapter 3
- Powner: Chapter 4 (only pages 81-94)

Tuesday October 1– Theory & Hypothesis Workshop

- *Come to class having read your group’s materials*

Thursday October 3– Research Design

- PE: Chapter 4
- Powner: Chapter 4 (only pages 95-108)

Tuesday October 8– The Experimental Ideal & Case Studies

- Powner: Chapter 5
- Gerber, Alan S. and Donald P. Green. 2000. “The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment.” *American Political Science Review*. 94(3): 653-663. (M)
- Gerring, John. 2004. “What is a Case Study and What is it Good For?” *American Political Science Review*. 98(2): 341-354. (M)

Thursday October 10– A *Very Brief* Primer on Qualitative Methods

- Powner: Chapter 5
- Skocpol, Theda. 1976. “France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 18(2): 175-210. (M)

Statistical Methods

Tuesday October 15– TRINITY DAYS

- *No class. Enjoy your day!*

Thursday October 17 – Quantitative Methods

- Powner: Chapter 7
- PE: Chapter 5
- PE: Chapter 6

Tuesday October 22– An Introduction to Stata

- PE-Stata: Chapter 1
- Powner: Chapter 8
- PE: Chapter 5

Statistical Methods

Thursday October 24– Descriptive Statistics

- PE: Chapter 6

Descriptive Statistics & Stata Basics

Tuesday October 29– Descriptive Statistics & Transforming Variables

- Youtube: Descriptive Statistics
- PE-Stata: Chapter 2
- Youtube: Transforming Variables
- PE-Stata: Chapter 3

Thursday October 31– Measuring Statistical Relationships

- PE: Chapter 7

Tuesday November 5– Measuring Statistical Relationships & Controlled Comparisons

- Youtube: Statistical Relationships
- PE-Stata: Chapter 4
- PE-Stata: Chapter 7

Statistical Relationships & Significance

Thursday November 7– Towards Inference in Stata

- PE-Stata: Chapter 8
- PE-Stata: Chapter 9

Tuesday November 12– Telling a Story With Data

- PE-Stata: Chapter 5 (for Stata Assignment)
- **GUEST SPEAKER:** *Matthew Ouimette, Watkinson Library*

Thursday November 14– Significance Testing

- PE-Stata: Chapter 9
- PE-Stata: Chapter 10

Tuesday November 19– Regression

- PE: Chapter 8

Thursday November 21– Regression in Stata

- PE-Stata: Chapter 12 (for Stata Assignment)
- Youtube: Regression

Tuesday November 26– Regression & Poster Workshop

- *Bring your poster ideas & questions to class!*

Thursday November 28– **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING**

- *Enjoy your day!*

Tuesday December 3– Regression & Poster Workshop

- *Bring your poster ideas & questions to class!*

Thursday December 5– Regression & Poster Workshop

- *Bring your poster ideas & questions to class!*
- **Final posters due midnight-ish Thursday December 5**

Tuesday December 10– REVIEW PERIOD: NO CLASS

- *Good luck studying!*

Final Exam: Friday December 13, 12:00pm to 2:30

- *Poster session*
- *Final exam due by midnight-ish*

7 Due Dates & Assignments

- **Week One (09/01)**
 - Sat. September 7: *Statement of Interest*
- **Week Two (09/08)**
 - *Nothing!*
- **Week Three (09/15)**
 - R. September 19: *Quiz 1*
- **Week Four (09/22)**
 - R. September 26: *Quiz 2*
 - F. September 27: *Literature Review Outline*
- **Week Five (09/29)**
 - *Nothing!*
- **Week Six (10/06)**
 - R. October 10: *Quiz 3*
- **Week Seven (10/13)**
 - F. October 18: *Conceptual Definitions & Hypotheses*
- **Week Eight (10/20)**
 - R. October 24: *Quiz 4*
 - Sat. October 26: *Exam 1*
- **Week Nine (10/27)**
 - W. October 30: *Stata Assignment 1*
- **Week Ten (11/03)**
 - W. November 6: *Stata Assignment 2*
 - F. November 8: *Stata Assignment 3*
- **Week Eleven (11/10)**
 - F. November 15: *Stata Assignment 4*
 - Sat. November 16: *Not So Rough Draft*
- **Week Twelve (11/17)**
 - R. November 21: *Quiz 5*
 - F. November 22: *Stata Assignment 5*
- **Week Thirteen (11/24)**
 - *Nothing!*

- **Week Fourteen (12/01)**
 - M December 2: *Final Poster*
 - T December 3: *Presentations/Peer Feedback*
 - R December 5: *Presentations/Peer Feedback*
- **Week Fifteen (12/08)**
 - F December 13: *Final Exam*