

POLS 3303

Contemporary Political Analysis

Fall 2019

Department of Social Sciences
Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi

1 Instructor Information

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Office Hours: Mondays: 2:00pm-4:00pm
Tuesdays: 9:00am-10:30am
Thursdays: 3:30-5:00pm
and by appointment
Class Location: Corpus Christi Hall 206
Course Time: 12:30pm to 1:45 TR

2 Course Description and Purpose

Political scientists explore a variety of intriguing questions. For example, some scholars are interested in explaining how voters choose between candidates. Others are interested in why democratization occurs in some countries but not others. I wonder how judges make decisions and how attorneys attempt to persuade judges. While it is tempting to explain these questions with conjecture or punditry, political scientists rely on empirical evidence to test their theories and claims. That is what puts the “science” in political science.

The goal of this course is to provide students with a toolset to address a range of questions and puzzles in the social sciences 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 your capstone class.

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 based on survey data from the American National Elections Studies. 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. Describe data in statistical terms
2. Analyze patterns and relationships amongst variables

3. Communicate data analysis in written & verbal form
4. Describe the components of a research design

3 Course Format

This course is heavily readings based, from both the text books and supplemental materials available on Blackboard. 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 SPSS assignment and ask yours peers or me for help.

4 Requirements

Text

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

The books are available at the campus bookstore; although it is available at a *substantially* lower rate online. To this end, I provide the ISBN for the book below. To allow time for shipping, I will place the first week’s readings on Blackboard. After the first week I expect you to have the book and bring it with you to class. Unfortunately, I will not be able to place the book on course reserve at the library.

1. Pollock, Phillip P. 2016. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. Congressional Quarterly Press: Washington.
ISBN: 978-1-5063-0583-7
2. Pollock, Phillip P. 2016. *An IBM SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*. Congressional Quarterly Press: Washington.
ISBN: 978-1-5063-0579-0
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: 20 points
- Research Project: 40 points
- Quizzes: 10 points
- SPSS Assignments: 20 points
- Participation: 10 points

1. **Exams (20 points)**—There are two exams, each is worth 10 points. This is to say each exam is worth one letter grade. Exams will 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. Both exams are take-home. One week before the due date for the exam, I will post to Blackboard two essay questions and five identification terms. You must write on one of the essay questions and three of the identification terms. The exams are open book and open note, but you must work individually. The first exam is due at 11:59pm on Friday October 18. The second exam is due by the end of the final exam time slot as assigned by the University. All exams are turned in simply by uploading them to Turnitin on Blackboard.
2. **Research Project (40 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 the American National Election Studies. The project is broken up over several smaller assignments which build upon each other. I will provide feedback on each assignment which will help you in preparing the next assignment. For more information on the research assignment please see the research assignment handout available on Blackboard. For now, suffice to say the due dates for each assignment are September 20 (Research Interests Statement), October 11 (Hypotheses & Concepts), November 8 (Rough Draft), and December 5 (Final Draft).
3. **Quizzes (10 points)**— Periodically throughout the semester I will administer unannounced quizzes. These quizzes will be given at the start of class and will consist of multiple choice, true or false, fill in the blank, and/or short answer items. They can cover anything previously discussed in class or anything from that day's readings. Quizzes will be passed out at exactly 12:30PM and no quizzes will be passed out after that time, so it is important to arrive to class on time. There will be a total of seven quizzes; I will take your top five quizzes over the course of the semester to compile your total quiz score (with each worth 2% of your final grade). Quizzes cannot be made up, therefore it is imperative you attend class regularly, read for class, and are on time for class.
4. **SPSS Assignments (20 points)**— For most every week, we will have a series of exercises from the Pollock Companion book. These assignments will help reinforce how to run the statistical analyses that we discuss in class and get you familiar with SPSS. While these are “easy” assignments which can be done quickly, I encourage you to really take your time with these assignments as they will form the basis of your final project and be pivotal to your capstone project.
5. **Participation (10 points)**— Class is more fun when it is not just me talking and I will accordingly call on students to provide summaries of the readings. I am aware, however, that not everyone is an outgoing person that enjoys talking. To this end, I consider active listening to be participation.

Assessment Scale

A: 90-100	B: 80-89.9	C: 70-79.9	D: 60-69.9	F: <59.9
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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 less than six hours. 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.

Papers are due in hard copy **and** digitally on Turnitin at the beginning of the class on the date indicated in the schedule unless otherwise noted. I will not accept e-mail copies or papers placed under my door. Please do not be afraid to print multiple rough drafts and revise them before turning them in. I am happy to look at drafts and help you with crafting your final paper. I do not accept excuses about dogs, computers, or traffic. Be responsible.

Extra Credit

The only extra credit I offer is a one point increase on each paper grade (remember, the course is only worth 100 points) for visiting the writing center. Appointments are usually necessary for the writing center. When visiting the writing center, be sure to ask them for a slip detailing your visit and give that to me at our next class period.

Academic Honor Code

Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code published in the University Student Handbook. The Academic Honor Code is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility (1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student's own work, (2) to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community, and (3) to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community. Violations of the Academic Honor Code will not be tolerated.

Academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism of any kind are unacceptable. There are no exceptions. Consequences for academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism include, but are not limited to, a failing grade for an assignment or exam, a failing grade for the course, noncredit for an assignment or exam, additional work, and/or direct referral to university officials.

If academic dishonesty, cheating, or plagiarism is suspected on any assessment, the instructor reserves the right to impose restrictions and make changes on future assessments for an individual and/or the entire class as needed.

Please also note that the university requires that faculty members formally report all instances of academic misconduct. Here are the official procedures: http://judicialaffairs.tamucc.edu/assets/procedure_academicmisconductcases.pdf

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the use of unauthorized information during a quiz or exam, plagiarism, submitting the same paper for multiple courses without permission, or depriving another student of the ability to perform his or her work. The term cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments, plagiarism; or (3) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the university faculty or staff. The term plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. Plagiarism also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling or distribution of term papers or other academic materials. If you have questions about the university's policy on academic dishonesty, please see the Student Code of Conduct at <http://judicialaffairs.tamucc.edu/StudentCofC.html>.

Please note "plagiarism" includes intentionally, knowingly, or carelessly presenting the work of another as one's own. Additionally, the procedure has been updated to reflect the Academic Integrity Committee as the body to consider grade appeals and academic misconduct cases, as well as identifies the selection process of committee members. Detailed information can be found on the University Handbook of Rules and Procedures website. Contact for interpretation or clarification is the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Student Caregivers: If you have caregiving responsibilities (e.g., parent of a child or care for elderly parents) and you anticipate scheduling difficulties, please discuss this with me the beginning of the semester to work out an appropriate strategy in advance.

Sexual Assault & Gender Based Discrimination

TAMUCC faculty is fully committed to supporting students and upholding an environment free of sexual violence and gender based discrimination. If a student chooses to confide in faculty (or other entities on campus) regarding an issues of sexual violence, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking it should be understood that faculty members are often obligated to report this information. Students can choose to disclose their experience confidentially to the following resources:

- University Counseling Center
- Student Health Center

Academic Advising (for students with a majors in the College of Liberal Arts)

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

Dropping a Class

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation **WILL NOT** automatically result in your being dropped from the class. **November 8, 2019** is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Grade Appeals

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, <http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html>.

Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

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:

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

Course Introduction

Tuesday August 27– Introduction to the Course

- *No readings*

Research Questions, Theories, & Hypotheses

Thursday August 29– What is a Research Question?

- Powner: Chapter 1

Tuesday September 3– Conceptual Definitions

- Pollock: Chapter 1

Thursday September 5– Getting to Hypotheses

- Powner: Chapter 2

Tuesday September 10– Building a Good Theory

- Lave & March, Chapter 2 (B)

Thursday September 12– Building a Good Theory (2)

- Lave & March, Chapter 3 (B)

Tuesday September 17– I’m A POLS Senior... Now What?!

- *No readings, but write down your concerns about what comes next*

- *Guest presentation from Nancy Salinas from Career Services*

Thursday September 19– Getting Nitty & Gritty with Hypotheses

- Powner: Chapter 4

Tuesday September 24– Library Research Tutorial

- *No readings*
- *Class meets in Library 216A*

Thursday September 26– Variables: The Pieces-Parts of Hypotheses

- Pollock: Chapter 2

Tuesday October 1– Writing a “Good” Hypothesis

- Pollock: Chapter 3

Thursday October 3– So, How Do We Structure Research?

- Powner: Chapter 3

Qualitative Methods

Tuesday October 8– Qualitative Methods

- Powner: Chapter 5

Thursday October 10 – The Experimental Ideal

- Pollock: Chapter 4

Tuesday October 15– The Basics of Quantitative Methods

- Powner: Chapter 7

Thursday October 17– The Basics of Quantitative Methods (2)

- Pollock: Chapter 6

Tuesday October 22– Cleaning Up Data

- Powner: Chapter 8

Descriptive Statistics

Thursday October 24– Descriptive Statistics

- Pollock: Chapter 6

Tuesday October 29– Descriptive Statistics in SPSS

- Youtube: Descriptive Statistics

Statistical Relationships

Thursday October 31– Measuring Statistical Relationships

- Pollock: Chapter 7

Tuesday November 5– Measuring Statistical Relationships (2)

- Pollock: Chapter 7

Thursday November 7– Statistical Relationships in SPSS

- Youtube: Statistical Relationships

Tuesday November 12– Statistical Relationships in SPSS (2)

- Youtube: Statistical Relationships

Thursday November 14– What Could Possibly Go Wrong?!

- Powner: Chapter 8

Regression Analysis

Tuesday November 19– Regression

- Pollock: Chapter 8

Thursday November 21– Regression (2)

- YouTube: SPSS Regression

Tuesday November 26– From a Bunch of Data to a Finished Product

- Powner: Chapter 9

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

- *Enjoy your day!*

Tuesday December 3– Presentations

- No readings

Final Exam: Thursday December 12, 11:00am to 1:30pm in our normal classroom