

PSC 201: Empirical Political Analysis

Fall 2006

Time: Wednesday, 6 PM - 8 PM

Location: Hall of States

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Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the field of public policy analysis and to equip them with the basic quantitative skills necessary to be a knowledgeable consumer and producer of public policy analyses.

The purpose of this course is to provide a graduate level introduction to political analysis. During the course of the semester we will cover philosophy of science, research design, measurement & data collection, and introductory descriptive & inferential statistics. In terms of the statistical component, no formal mathematics training beyond high school algebra is expected.

This course addresses the empirical and normative foundations of systematic policy analysis, as well as the concepts, theories, models, issues, strengths, limitations, and uses and misuses in the policy process. The goal of this class is for you to learn how to approach critical policy issues with a more analytical perspective and to better understand how public policy analyses of current issues are designed and, potentially, flawed. This class will also address the role of polling in policy analysis, as it has become a vital tool used to direct policy outcomes.

Course Requirements & Grading

Grades will be determined by five (homework) assignments, a personal project, a mid-term, and a final. Each component is weighted as follows:

Assignments	20%
Project	40%
Midterm	20%
Final	20%

The homework assignments will not require the use of a statistical program, albeit each assignment will include a section wherein you are expected to interpret some statistical output.

The project is the most substantial component of the course in that this project will require you to develop a fairly comprehensive research design in an area of interest to you using all the information gleaned in the course. This project is intended for you to synthesize the course material in a manner similar to the final chapter of the course textbook. Specific details, e.g. project length, will be determined shortly.

The material in the midterm and final will reflect the material from the course assignments.

Course Textbooks

There is one required texts for this class:

1. Political Analysis: Technique and Practice (Fourth Edition). Louise G. White. Thomson-Wadsworth.

From time to time, I will also distribute supplemental course materials as appropriate.

Course Itinerary

Date	Topic	Topic Content	Reading/Material Covered
06 September	Introduction; Scientific Method Overview		Ch. 1 & 2.
13 September	Modeling	Basics of Research Design; application of scientific method to politics	Ch. 3 & 4.
20 September (HW #1 to be distributed)	Probability	Role of probability in statistics; distributions & CLT.	Ch. 12: 345-351; Supplemental material.
27 September	Comparison	Univariate Statistics	Ch. 5 & 10.
04 October (HW #1 Due; HW #2 TBD)	Association	Simple Bivariate Statistics	Ch. 11: 307-334; Ch. 12: 353-365
11 October (HW #2 Due; HW #3	Complex Association, I	Multivariate Relationships, I	Ch. 13: all;

Date	Topic	Topic Content	Reading/Material Covered
TBD)			
18 October	Complex Association, II	Multivariate Relationships, II	Ch. 6: all; Ch. 11: 335-344.
25 October	Midterm		
01 November (HW #3 Due; HW #4 TBD)	Complex Alternatives	Time Series, Rational Choice Theory, Index Construction	Ch. 9: 257-265;
08 November	Polling, I	Fundamentals of Polling & Sampling	Ch. 7: all;
15 November (HW #4 Due; HW #5 TBD)	Polling, II	Design & Stratification	Supplemental material
22 November (HW #5 Due)	Polling, III	Processing Poll Data	Supplemental material
29 November	Presentation		
06 December	Final Review		
13 December (?)	Final		