

PSC 200: Empirical Political Science

Spring 2017

MWF 2:00-2:50

112 Obrian

Kevin Stout

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Office Hours: Monday 1-2pm, Wednesday 3-4pm, and by appointment

Course Description

This course is designed to teach the fundamentals of engaging in research in political science. How do we relate what we can observe empirically to how we think the world works? The course is broken up into three parts. The first part deals with general topics of scientific research in the social sciences. Theory building and hypothesis construction are explored. The next part of the class is research design. How do we go about finding evidence in a scientific way? Data, measurement, descriptive statistics, and experimental designs are discussed. The last portion serves as an introduction to the statistical methods commonly used in political and social sciences. Students are introduced to basic concepts of sampling, inference, and linear regression and how they relate to testing hypotheses. The topics covered in this class will give students the skills necessary to evaluate the importance and implications of political theories, evaluate supporting evidence, and gain insight into the causal explanations of political behavior.

Learning Outcome	Assessment Tools
Be able to use scientific approaches to research and research design	Exam 1
Identify hypotheses relating to social, economic and political behavior	Exam 1, Homework 1, Participation
Be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of research approaches	Exam 1, Participation
Understand basic concepts of data, variables, and measurement	Exam 2
Calculate and be able to explain descriptive statistics	Exam 2, Homework 2, Participation

Conduct bivariate statistical tests of independence and gain working knowledge of the linear regression model	Exam 3, Homework 3
Gain understanding of how to interpret linear regression results	Exam 3, Homework 4, Participation

Required Textbook

Paul M. Kellstedt and Guy D. Whitten. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge University Press. 2013. ISBN: 978-1-107-62166-4

Additional readings will be available on UBLearn

Some homework and tests will require the use of a calculator (that isn't your phone).

Some homework will require the use of Microsoft Excel.

Grading

10% - Class participation and attendance

40% - 4 Homework assignments

50% - 3 Exams

The three exams for the class will not be comprehensive.

Homework assignments will be announced in class and made available through UBLearn.

Grading Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
100-94	93-90	89-87	86-84	83-80	79-77	76-74	73-70	69-67	66-61	60 \geq

Grades will be available on UBLearn throughout the semester. Questions about a specific grade should be raised within a week of its posting.

Late Assignments and Missed Exams

Turn in assignments by the deadline. I will allow some assignments to be turned in late, but for a 25% penalty.

If you will have to miss one of the exam dates, you must let me know beforehand and have a good reason (funeral, surgery, etc.) along with documentation. If you experience an emergency on test day (illness, car collision, etc.) you should let me know as soon as possible and be able to provide documentation. Oversleeping, forgetting, etc. are neither emergencies nor good reasons. If you miss an exam and did not have a valid emergency or good reason, I may let you take an exam but with a severe point deduction.

Exams taken outside the normal exam times will differ from exams taken during normal exam times.

Academic Integrity

Do not cheat or plagiarize. Follow the university guidelines for academic integrity. Academic dishonesty on assignments and cheating on exams will result in a zero for that item and can result in further disciplinary action from the University. University guidelines can be found here: <http://catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/integrity.html>

Classroom Etiquette

Please arrive on time. Avoid causing distractions that would harm the ability of others to focus and participate. Be respectful during class discussions. Repeated failures to abide by etiquette may result in loss of participation points.

Students with Special Needs

Students with special needs should contact me about their needs within the first few weeks of class. More information about services can be found on UB's Accessibility Resources website or here: <http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/ods/>

Course Schedule

This is subject to change.

Readings denoted with * will be available through the UBlerns site for this class.

January 30, February 1, 3: What makes it political science?

Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 1

February 6, 8, 10: Theory Building

Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 2

*Hoover and Donovan, Chapter 2

February 13, 15, 17: Causal Relationships and Hypotheses

Homework 1

Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 3

*Powner, Chapter 2

February 20, 22, 24, 27: Research Design

Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 4

*Angrist and Pischke, Chapter 1

March 1: Review and Questions

March 3: Exam 1

March 6, 8, 10, 13: Data, Measurement, and Variables

Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 5

Powner, Chapter 7

March 15, 17, 27: Descriptive Statistics

Homework 2

*Johnson and Joslyn, Chapter 11

March 29, 31, April 3: Sampling

Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 6

*Johnson and Joslyn, Chapter 7

April 5: Review and Questions

April 7: Exam 2

April 10, 12, 14: Hypothesis Testing

Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 7

*Pollock, pages 122-135

April 24, 26, 28: Bivariate Regression

Homework 3

Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 8

*Berry and Sanders, Chapter 2

May 1, 3, 5: Intro to Multivariate Regression

Homework 4

Kellstedt and Whitten, Chapter 9

*Berry and Sanders, Chapter 3

May 8, 10: Other Multivariate Regression Concepts

May 12: Review and Questions

May 15: Final Exam @ 3:30pm

