

Welcome to “POL 301-H: Methods of Political Inquiry”
Mondays & Wednesdays 3:30-4:45, 312 Social Sciences

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Office Location: 337 Social Sciences

Office Hours: MW 2-3 pm

OVERVIEW: Much (if not all) of the information we learn about the world relies on different types of research methods: case studies, surveys, experiments, statistics, and more. In this class, we will learn (a) how to conduct research of our own, and (b) how to properly evaluate the research that others are doing. Whether you are interested in knowing if the economy predicts the President’s chances of electoral victory, if female politicians enact different laws than do male politicians, or if democracies are better at fighting wars than are dictatorships, this class will be able help you consume research with a critical eye and produce original scholarly work.

This class is about how to conduct research. You will complete a series of small assignments that will help to familiarize you with different types of research methods commonly used in political science and the social sciences at large. Your semester will culminate with a presentation detailing a prospective research design for your forthcoming honors thesis.

READINGS: Assigned readings come from the Dixon et al (2015) textbook required for this course, as well as occasional articles. All textbook readings are denoted as “Chapter (#)” next to the due date. All non-textbook readings are provided on the course D2L page under “Content” tabs for each unit.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK: Dixon, Jeffrey C., Royce A. Singleton, and Bruce C. Straits. 2015. *The Process of Social Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

ASSIGNMENTS: There are several written assignments in this class, and they are all listed in this syllabus. Unless otherwise instructed, ***you must upload your assignment to the D2L Dropbox before class begins at 3:30 pm every Monday.*** These assignments must be submitted on time in order for us to efficiently move through the material. **Assignments will not be accepted late and there will be no deadline extensions.** Please plan accordingly. You will be discussing your assignment in class on Mondays as part of a small group workshop to receive feedback from your peers, so you will want to either print off a hard copy and bring it with you, or have access to your submission on your laptop. In addition to the written assignments, there are periodic reading quizzes, and two in-class presentations.

PARTICIPATION: Please consider this class as an active workshop. You are taking this class because you are an honors student who is intent on producing a large piece of original research. There is very little to be gained from listening to lectures day in and day out. Rather you will be *active participants* of this course. This means you will be frequently sharing your work with each other, presenting your work to the class, and providing constructive and thorough feedback to one another. The general format of the class will involve a lecture on Thursday including an assignment that is due the following Tuesday. Each Tuesday you will then present your work to either the entire class or to your workgroup.

It is crucial that you read all assigned readings and participate in all assignments do well in this class. The class relies very much on your participation. Anyone who has not done the reading or completed the assignments will simply not be able to participate.

ATTENDANCE: UA policy on attendance and drops: <http://catalog.arizona.edu/2012-13/policies/classatten.htm>

UA policy on absences and holidays: <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/religiousobservanceandpractice> and http://uhap.web.arizona.edu/chapter_7#7.04.02.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: I have zero tolerance for plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs any time you use someone else's ideas (not just specific words, but general ideas) without giving that person proper credit. In our class we will discuss how to properly reference sources and you are expected to cite all sources in the assignments you turn in. I will thoroughly check all written work for evidence of plagiarism. The first instance of plagiarism will result in a score of 0 for the assignment; a second infraction will result in automatic failure of the course. Academic integrity violations will be reported to the Dean's office, as is required by university policy.

If you are confused about what constitutes plagiarism, you should participate in the free 3-hour workshop on plagiarism that is offered by the Office of the Dean of Students. You can easily register here: <https://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/judicialaffairs/registration/plagiarism-workshops>

CLASSROOM POLICIES: You are invited into this classroom to learn about cutting-edge research, to challenge your existing ways of thinking, and to enjoy the amazing experience of an undergraduate education here at the UA. I am very happy that you are here. **As a class, we will not tolerate any disruptive behavior that impedes anyone's ability to enjoy their time in class, nor will we tolerate any behavior that serves as an obstacle to my teaching.** To that end, absolutely no cell phones are permitted in the classroom. Your ringing cell phone will be your invitation to leave the classroom.

I strongly discourage the use of laptops in this classroom. Laptops will be permitted **only** if it is essential that you type your notes. During class discussions and presentations, I ask that you close your laptop lid.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS: The University of Arizona offers a very wide range of services to support you during your time here. For example, the "Think Tank" offers free tutoring in math, writing, science, foreign language, and even things like time management and study strategies. For this class (POL 301), tutoring in writing might be particularly useful. You can contact the Think Tank writing specialist at chamel@email.arizona.edu. You should also check out scholarship opportunities (of which there are many) at <https://scholarshipuniverse.arizona.edu>. It is **always** worth applying for scholarships. In the words of the great Wayne Gretzky, "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." Finally, the UA provides excellent support for physical disabilities (<http://drc.arizona.edu/>) and for emotional stress (<http://www.health.arizona.edu/caps.htm>). Never hesitate to use these important resources.

GRADING: Your grade will be based on in-class quizzes, weekly assignments, review memos and participation, and two in-class presentations.

Complete List of Graded Items:

- In-Class Quizzes: 10 points
 - Throughout the semester, you will receive 6 reading quizzes worth 2 points each. You have the option of dropping one quiz score, or taking all 6 and receiving extra credit (if you get all 12 points available)
- Weekly Assignments: 50 points
 - (Nearly) every Wednesday you will be given an assignment that will be due **before the start of class** the following Monday. You will have 10 assignments worth 5 points each.
- Peer Review Memos: 15 points
 - Each Tuesday you will workshop your research in a small group. You will critique each group member's work and produce peer review memos. Three of your memos will be graded (worth 5 points each).
- Midterm Presentation: 5 points
 - You will give a very brief (probably 5 minute) presentation introducing the class to the topic you've been working on so far during the semester. More details to follow.
- Final Presentation: 20 points
 - During the last portion of this class, you will each present your project to the class. The presentation will last 15 minutes. More details to follow.

TOTAL POINTS: 100

Letter Grade Distribution for this Course:

(note that grades will *not* be rounded up – but they won't be rounded down, either!)

A: 90-100%

B: 80-89%

C: 70-79%

D: 60-69%

E: 59% or below

Course schedule:

Unit 1: Introduction

Wed 13 January: no assigned reading

Unit 2: The Scientific Method

Mon 18 January: **NO CLASS (MLK Day)**, skim textbook Chapter 1

Unit 3: Theory and Hypothesis Development

Wed 20 January: read textbook Chapters 2 & 4

Mon 25 January: workshop

Unit 4: Measurement and Variables

Wed 27 January: read textbook Chapter 5 & Gohdes and Price (2012) article

Mon 1 February: workshop

Unit 5: Research Ethics (Klar)

Wed 3 February: read textbook Chapter 3 & Zimbardo (1973) article

Mon 8 February: workshop

Unit 6: Experiments (Klar)

Wed 10 February: read textbook Chapter 7 & Humphreys and Weinstein (2008) article

Mon 15 February: workshop

Unit 7: Case Studies

Wed 17 February: read textbook Chapter 9 & Geddes (1990) article

Mon 22 February: workshop

Unit 8: Surveys (Klar)

Wed 24 February: read textbook Chapter 8 & Bailenson et al (2008) article

Mon 29 February: workshop

Unit 9: Writing for Political Scientists

Wed 2 March: read textbook Chapter 14 & and Baglione (2012) chapter on D2L

MIDTERM PRESENTATIONS:

Mon 7 March

Wed 9 March

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS MARCH 13, 15, & 21 (MONDAY)

Unit 10: Observational Data

Wed 23 March: read textbook Chapter 10 & Cunningham (2011) article

Mon 28 March: workshop

Unit 11: Quantitative Analysis

Wed 30 March: read textbook Chapter 12 & Fearon and Laitin (2003) article

Mon 4 April: workshop

NO CLASS WED 6 APRIL & MON 11 APRIL (Professor at conference)

Unit 12: Qualitative Analysis

Wed 13 April: read Chapter 13 & Weinstein (2005) article

Mon 18 April: workshop

Unit 13: Mixed Methods

Wed 20 April: read Chapter 11 & Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) article

Mon 25 April: workshop

FINAL PRESENTATIONS:

Wed 27 April

Mon 2 May

Wed 4 May

Student Information Sheet

(Due at the start of class on the second day)

Name: _____

What year are you?

When do you plan on graduating (semester / year)?

What is your major?

What is your minor?

What do you hope to get out of this class?

What is your preferred name and what pronouns do you identify with?
(e.g., my response: I prefer "Dr. Braithwaite" and "she/her.")

If your first name is commonly mispronounced, please provide me with a phonetic spelling
(e.g., Chelsea = Chell-see).

Tell me something interesting about yourself.

By signing below, I verify that I have read the syllabus in its entirety and that I understand and agree to the policies outlined within.

Signature

Date