

**San José State University
Department of Political Science
POLS195A, Political Inquiry, Section 1
Fall 2009**



Instructor: Dr. Melinda Jackson
Office Location: Clark Hall 402C
Telephone: 408-924-5293
Email: Melinda.Jackson@sjsu.edu (preferred method of contact)
Office Hours: MW 3-5pm and By Appointment
Class Days/Time: MW 1:30-2:45pm
Classroom: DMH161

Course description:

This course is about research methods. While there is some discussion of statistics, the emphasis is on the “Why” of research rather than merely the “How”. The purpose of the course is to give Political Science majors the necessary tools to understand and critique the methods and research designs of the scholars in the disciplines contributing to the field.

Beginning with the basic concepts of methodology, the course will then move on to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the various forms of Qualitative and Quantitative analysis. The course will involve short written homework assignments, exams, and a final paper that will help students synthesize the material. Several of these assignments will allow students to explore hypotheses of their own creation and to build on their knowledge of methodology to create research designs that will best suit their research questions.

Student Learning Objectives:

- To develop an understanding of the scientific method and the process and purposes of political science research.
- To develop a critical understanding of different political science research methods, including experimental research, survey research, field research, unobtrusive research, and evaluation research.
- To develop a critical understanding of the differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods in political science, and how they may complement each other in the study of political problems.

Required Texts:

Real Research: Conducting and Evaluating Research in the Social Sciences (2007), Allyn & Bacon

By Loreen Wolfer (abbreviated Wolfer in the course schedule)

ISBN: 978-0-2054-1662-2

Available for purchase in the Spartan Bookstore.

Additional readings will be available on reserve on the course website.

Turnitin.com:

All papers for this course (but not homework assignments) must be submitted through www.turnitin.com. In order to have your papers graded and to receive credit you must submit it through turnitin.com.

If you already have a turnitin.com account, simply log in using your e-mail and password. If you have never used turnitin.com you will need to create an account using the New Users selection at the top right of the home page and following the instructions and prompts.

Class ID number: 2810797

Password: fall2009

Faculty Web Page

Copies of the course materials such as the syllabus, major assignment handouts, etc. may be found on my faculty web page accessible through the Political Science department web page.

Accommodations:

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with DRC to establish a record of their disability.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Homework Assignments

There will be a total of eight homework assignments applying the assigned readings. Detailed instructions for these assignments will be given in class and posted on the course website.

Homework will make up 23% of your total grade.

2. Exams

There will be three exams in this class. Generally speaking, each exam will cover the material learned in the most recent section of the course. The final exam may also ask you to reflect on themes from the entire course, in a comprehensive fashion. *Each exam will make up 14% of your total grade.*

3. Final Paper

There will be a final (10 page) paper in this class, due at the final exam. Details about this paper assignment will be given in class and posted on the course website. *The final paper is worth 14% of your grade.*

4. Survey Projects Participation and Paper

Students in POLS195A will participate in two hands-on survey projects:

For the first survey project students will spend one evening (4:30-8:30pm) in the Survey & Policy Research Institute (SPRI) lab on campus, conducting a telephone survey. You will have a choice of dates on which to complete this project, and we will cancel one regular class session to compensate for this out-of-class required time.

For the second survey project, students will help conduct a door-to-door survey in the Five Wounds/Brookwood Terrace east of campus on SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17.

Students will then write a short (2-3 page) paper comparing and reflecting on their experiences working on the two survey projects.

BOTH SURVEY PROJECTS ARE REQUIRED CLASS ACTIVITIES – IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SPEAK TO PROF. JACKSON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ABOUT ANY SCHEDULING DIFFICULTIES. *Survey project participation and the survey reflection paper are each worth 7% of your grade (14% total).*

5. Class Participation

Participation – meaning coming to class and engaging in class discussion and activities – *will also count for 7% of your total grade.* So that you have plenty of opportunities to participate, expect to be “mobilized” (i.e., called on by name) in class.

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

Your grade will be calculated as follows. You may use the “my points” column to keep track of your grade in the class.

	Points	My Points	Percentage of total
Homework (8 @ 10 points each)	80		23%
Exam 1	50		14%
Exam 2	50		14%
Exam 3	50		14%
Survey Projects Participation	25		7%
Survey Projects Reflection Paper	25		7%
Final Paper	50		14%
Participation	25		7%
Total	355		100%

Final letter grades for the course will be assigned based on the following scale:

- | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| A = 92 – 100% | B = 82 – 87% | C = 72 – 77% | D = 62 – 67% |
| A- = 90 – 91% | B- = 80 – 81% | C- = 70 – 71% | D- = 60 – 61% |
| B+ = 88 – 89% | C+ = 78 – 79% | D+ = 68 – 69% | F = 59% or less |

Academic Integrity:

Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University’s Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development.

The policy on academic integrity can be found at: <http://www2.sjsu.edu/senate/S04-12.pdf>.

The website for the Office of [Student Conduct and Ethical Development](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html) is:

http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person’s ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU’s Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

Other Course Policies:

Late papers or assignments will be penalized with lower grades.

No late papers will be accepted after the final exam.

Missed exams may not be made up unless students are excused in advance. Medical and family emergencies must be documented.

LATE ARRIVALS, EARLY DEPARTURES AND DISRUPTIONS OF CLASS IN ANY FORM ARE UNACCEPTABLE. CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE TURNED OFF AT ALL TIMES IN THE CLASSROOM.

Other Useful Information:

The **library liaison for Political Science** is available to answer questions and provide one-on-one help learning using the library for research. He is also a very friendly guy and happy to meet with students, so don't be afraid to take advantage of his expertise!

His name and contact info is: Nyle Monday
 Librarian (Political Science Liaison)
 (408) 808-2041
 Nyle.Monday@sjsu.edu

Learning Assistance Resource Center

The Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) is located in Room 600 in the Student Services Center. It is designed to assist students in the development of their full academic potential and to motivate them to become self-directed learners. The center provides support services, such as skills assessment, individual or group tutorials, subject advising, learning assistance, summer academic preparation and basic skills development. LARC is an excellent resource if you find yourself needing some extra help with writing or other course skills. [The LARC website is located at http://www.sjsu.edu/larc/](http://www.sjsu.edu/larc/).

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Room 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Our writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. [The Writing Center website is located at http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/).

Peer Mentor Center

The Peer Mentor Center is located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall in the Academic Success Center. The Peer Mentor Center is staffed with Peer Mentors who excel in helping students manage university life, tackling problems that range from academic challenges to interpersonal struggles. On the road to graduation, Peer Mentors are navigators, offering "roadside assistance" to peers who feel a bit lost or simply need help mapping out the locations of campus resources. Peer Mentor services are free and available on a drop –in basis, no reservation required. The Peer Mentor Center website is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/peermentor/>

POLS195A COURSE SCHEDULE – FALL 2009		
<i>Subject to change with fair notice – by class announcement or email</i>		
DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 1 M Aug 24	Introduction to course	Read syllabus Complete online plagiarism tutorial and quiz at: http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org/tutorial/plagiarism/index.htm Be sure to follow the link to read the SJSU Academic Integrity Policy when taking this tutorial. EMAIL YOUR PLAGIARISM QUIZ RESULTS TO PROFESSOR JACKSON BY WED. SEPT 2
W Aug 26	The Role of Social Research What is Political Science?	Read Wolfer Ch.1
WEEK 2 M Aug 31	The Scientific Method	Read Wolfer Ch.2
W Sept 2	The Role of Theory and the Research Process	Homework #1 DUE IN CLASS WED. SEPT 2 PLAGIARISM QUIZ RESULTS TO PROF. JACKSON BY WED. SEPT 2
WEEK 3 M Sept 7	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY	
W Sept 9	Ethics in Social Research	Skim American Political Science Association (APSA) Guide to Professional Ethics, Rights, and Freedoms: http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/ethicsguideweb.pdf Read American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) Statement of Best Practices: http://www.aapor.org/bestpractices Read SJSU IRB Procedures (pdf): http://www.sjsu.edu/gradstudies/Research/irb/ Complete IRB Training (follow link “Protecting Human Research Participants” from SJSU IRB page listed above); <i>print out completion certificate to turn in with HW#2.</i>

POLS195A COURSE SCHEDULE – FALL 2009 <i>Subject to change with fair notice – by class announcement or email</i>		
DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 4 M Sept 14	Developing a Research Question Hypotheses and Causality EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY: TUESDAY SEPT. 15 TH : DON EDWARDS LECTURE, Featuring Tom Campbell, Republican candidate for governor, 7:00pm, Morris Dailey (Tower Hall)	Homework #2 DUE IN CLASS MON. SEPT 14 Read Wolfer Ch. 3, pages 84-100
W Sept 16	Study Validity, Time dimensions, Units of analysis	Read Wolfer Ch. 3, pages 100-123
WEEK 5 M Sept 21	Summing it up: Evaluating a research article Midterm Exam Review	Homework #3 DUE IN CLASS MON. SEPT 21
W Sept 23	MIDTERM EXAM #1 – WED. SEPT 23	Bring T&E 200 SCANTRON FORM, small Blue Book, Pencil & Pen
WEEK 6 M Sept 28	SPRI Lab – Survey Training	Meet in SPRI Lab, Central Classroom Bldg, Room 100
W Sept 30	Operationalization and Measurement	Read Wolfer Ch. 4
WEEK 7 M Oct 5	NO CLASS (SURVEY PROJECT – FREE DAY)	
W Oct 7	Example: Operationalizing social capital	Read Robert Putnam, <i>Bowling Alone</i> (2000), Ch.1 (Posted on course website) Homework #4 DUE IN CLASS WED. OCT 7

POLS195A COURSE SCHEDULE – FALL 2009		
<i>Subject to change with fair notice – by class announcement or email</i>		
DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 8 M Oct 12	Sampling	Read Wolfer Ch. 5
W Oct 14	EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY: DON EDWARDS LECTURE, Featuring CA Insurance Commissioner Steve Poizer, Republican candidate for governor, 7:00pm, Morris Dailey (Tower Hall)	Homework #5: IN CLASS QUIZ – WED. OCT 14
SAT Oct 17	COMMUNIVERCITY DOOR-TO-DOOR SURVEY PROJECT	ATTENDANCE REQUIRED – MEET AT OLINDER COMMUNITY CENTER, 848 E. WILLIAM STREET, 9:00AM
WEEK 9 M Oct 19	CAMPUS FURLOUGH DAY – NO CLASS	
W Oct 21	Experimental Research	Read Wolfer Ch. 6 Homework #6 DUE IN CLASS WED. OCT 21
WEEK 10 M Oct 26	Survey Research	Read Wolfer Ch. 7 SURVEYS REFLECTION PAPER DUE IN CLASS MON. OCT 26
W Oct 28		Read article (TBA) – posted on course website
WEEK 11 M Nov 2	MIDTERM EXAM #2 – MON. NOV 2	Bring T&E 200 SCANTRON FORM, small Blue Book, Pencil & Pen
W Nov 4	Field Research	Read Wolfer Ch. 8 Read Fenno (1977) article – posted on course website

POLS195A COURSE SCHEDULE – FALL 2009		
<i>Subject to change with fair notice – by class announcement or email</i>		
DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 12 M Nov 9 W Nov 11	Unobtrusive Research Methods VETERANS DAY – NO CLASS	Read Wolfer Chs. 9
WEEK 13 M Nov 16 W Nov 18	Evaluation Research Qualitative Research Analysis	Read Wolfer Ch. 10 Homework #7 DUE IN CLASS MON. NOV 16 Read Wolfer Ch. 11
WEEK 14 M Nov 23 W Nov 25	Quantitative Research Analysis I FURLOUGH DAY – NO CLASS HAPPY THANKSGIVING!	Read Wolfer Ch. 12
WEEK 15 M Nov 30 W Dec 2	Quantitative Research Analysis II	Meet in computer lab for data analysis Homework #8 DUE IN CLASS WED. DEC 2
WEEK 16 M Dec 7	LAST DAY OF CLASS	Final Paper DUE IN CLASS AND ONLINE AT TURNITIN.COM Bring one hard copy to class and be prepared to discuss
M Dec 14	FINAL EXAM 12:15 – 2:30pm	Bring T&E 200 SCANTRON FORM, small Blue Book, Pencil & Pen