

**San José State University
Department of Political Science
POLS195A, Political Inquiry, Section 1
Spring 2012**



Instructor:	Dr. Melinda Jackson
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Office Hours:	MW 3-4pm and By Appointment
Class Days/Time:	MW 10:30-11:45am
Classroom:	DMH149A
Faculty Web Page:	http://www.sjsu.edu/people/melinda.jackson/courses/
Course D2L Web Page:	https://sjsu.desire2learn.com/

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

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks (2011), Broadway, Reprint Edition

By Rebecca Skloot

ISBN-13: 978-1400052189

Available for purchase in the Spartan Bookstore.

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

Course D2L Website

The course Desire2Learn (D2L) site is an online resource supplement for this course. Copies of all course materials include the syllabus, assignments, and reserve readings will be posted on the D2L course site and updated throughout the semester. You will also turn in your papers online using the “dropbox” feature on the D2L course site, which will automatically check for plagiarism using the turnitin.com database. It is your responsibility to become familiar with the D2L site for this class and make sure that you check it regularly.

To access the site go to <http://sjsu.desire2learn.com>

Username = *firstname.lastname*, but may have an appended number (e.g., *joshua.doe2*)

Password = Your initial D2L password is your 9 digit SJSU ID number.

See the online tutorial for additional login and usage information:

Desire2Learn Student Tutorial: http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/students/D2L_students/

Email me immediately if you are still unable to access the site.

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 nine 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 25% 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 Project Participation and Paper

Students in POLS195A 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. You will then write a short (2-3 page) paper reflecting on your experiences working on the survey project and relating it to course topics.

THIS SURVEY PROJECT IS A REQUIRED CLASS ACTIVITY – 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. You can also track your grades throughout the semester on the course D2L site.

	Points	My Points	Percentage of total
Homework (9 @ 10 points each)	90		25%
Exam 1	50		14%
Exam 2	50		14%
Exam 3	50		14%
Survey Project Reflection Paper (Survey Project participation = 25 pts)	50		14%
Final Paper	50		14%
Class Participation	25		7%
Total	365		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. She is also very friendly and happy to meet with students, so don't be afraid to take advantage of her expertise!

Her name and contact info is: Crystal Goldman
 Librarian (Political Science Liaison)
 (408) 808-2015
 Crystal.Goldman@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/).

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/>

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. Their 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. It is your responsibility to arrange a time to meet with the instructors. Consult with your professor in advance to determine whether you need assistance with your writing.

The Writing Center website is located at: <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/>

Political Science Department Statement on Writing:

Students of political science should develop the ability to write in clear, grammatical English. Spelling and grammar count!

Students must take care that appropriate citations are used. Direct quotations must be so indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the page in the source from which it was taken. Ideas from others must also be referenced although quotations marks are inappropriate. Failure to cite your sources constitutes academic misconduct which carries with it serious sanctions. A tutorial on citations is available at the library website at http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/citing.htm.

Arguably the best way to improve your own writing is to read quality material on a regular basis. To that end, students are encouraged to read articles from scholarly sources but also newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Economist*. These publications also contain articles of direct relevance to their political science classes.

POLS195A COURSE SCHEDULE – SPRING 2012		
<i>Subject to change with fair notice – by class announcement or email</i>		
DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 1 W Jan 25	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. UPLOAD YOUR PLAGIARISM QUIZ RESULTS TO D2L DROPBOX BY WED. FEB 2
WEEK 2 M Jan 30 W Feb 1	The Role of Social Research/What is Political Science? The Scientific Method	Read Wolfer Ch.1 Read Wolfer Ch.2 HOMEWORK 1 DUE IN CLASS WED. FEB 1 PLAGIARISM QUIZ RESULTS DUE TO D2L DROPBOX
WEEK 3 M Feb 6 W Feb 8	The Role of Theory and the Research Process Ethics in Social Research	Wolfer Ch. 2 (continued) READ Skloot, <i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i> , Part One: Life, pp. 1-88 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/

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WEEK 4 M Feb 13	Research Ethics - continued	READ Skloot, <i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i> , Part Two: Death, pp. 89-178
W Feb 15	Developing a Research Question/ Hypotheses and Causality	Read Wolfer Ch. 3, pages 84-100 HOMEWORK 2 DUE ONLINE @ D2L DROPBOX – WED. FEB 15
WEEK 5 M Feb 20	Study Validity, Time dimensions, Units of analysis	Read Wolfer Ch. 3, pages 100-123
W Feb 22	Summing it up: Evaluating a research article Midterm Exam Review	HOMEWORK 3 DUE ONLINE @ D2L DROPBOX – WED. FEB 22
WEEK 6 M Feb 27	MIDTERM EXAM 1 – MON. 2/27	Bring T&E 200 SCANTRON FORM, small Blue Book, Pencil & Pen
W Feb 29	Operationalization and Measurement	Read Wolfer Ch. 4
WEEK 7 M Mar 5	Example: Operationalizing social capital	Read Robert Putnam, <i>Bowling Alone</i> (2000), Ch.1 - posted on D2L HOMEWORK 4 DUE ONLINE @ D2L DROPBOX – MON. MAR 5
W Mar 7	Sampling	Read Wolfer Ch. 5

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DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 8 M Mar 12 W Mar 14	Experimental Research	HOMEWORK 5: IN CLASS QUIZ – MON. MAR 12 Read Wolfer Ch. 6 HOMEWORK 6 DUE ONLINE @ D2L DROPBOX – WED. MAR 14
WEEK 9 M Mar 19 W Mar 21	Survey Research MIDTERM EXAM 2 – WED. March 21	Read Wolfer Ch. 7 Read Aldrich, Sullivan & Borgida (1989) article – posted on D2L Bring T&E 200 SCANTRON FORM, small Blue Book, Pencil & Pen
Mar 26-30	SPRING BREAK – ENJOY!	
WEEK 10 M Apr 2 W Apr 4	SPRI Survey Project Training NO CLASS (SURVEY PROJECT – FREE DAY)	Meet in SPRI Lab, Central Classroom Bldg, Room 100
WEEK 11 M Apr 9 W Apr 11	Survey Research - continued Field Research	Read Wolfer Ch. 8 Read Fenno (1977) article – posted on D2L
WEEK 12 M Apr 16 W Apr 18	Unobtrusive Research Methods	Read Wolfer Chs. 9 HOMEWORK 7 DUE ONLINE @ D2L DROPBOX – WED. APR 18

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DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 13 M Apr 23	Evaluation Research	Read Wolfer Ch. 10 SURVEY REFLECTION PAPER DUE IN CLASS – MON. APR 23
W Apr 25	Qualitative Research Analysis	Read Wolfer Ch. 11 HOMEWORK 8 DUE ONLINE @ D2L DROPBOX – WED. APR 25
WEEK 14 M Apr 30	Quantitative Research Analysis	Read Wolfer Ch. 12
W May 2	Data Analysis Exercise	Meet in computer lab for data analysis – NO MAKEUPS
WEEK 15 M May 7	Wrap-up and Final Exam Review	HOMEWORK 9 DUE ONLINE @ D2L DROPBOX – MON. MAY 7
W May 9	NO CLASS – STUDY DAY	
WEEK 16 M May 14	LAST DAY OF CLASS	Final Paper DUE IN CLASS AND ONLINE @ D2L DROPBOX Bring one hard copy to class and be prepared to discuss
FRI May 18	FINAL EXAM 9:45am-12:00pm	Bring T&E 200 SCANTRON FORM, small Blue Book, Pencil & Pen