

Pols 195A: Political Inquiry

San Jose State University, Fall 2011

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Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 to 10:30 am,
3 to 3:30 pm, and by appointment

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Course Times and Places: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30 to 2:45 pm
Clark Hall 303

Course Description

This course is about research methods. It is not Statistics; whilst there will be a section on statistical analysis, it will not be the sole emphasis of the course. The purpose of this course is to give Political Science majors the necessary tools to understand and critique the theories and research done by scholars in the disciplines contributing to the field.

To that end, the course will approach three aspects of political inquiry: The Basics of Measurement; Qualitative vs. Quantitative Methods; and The Why of Statistics. The first part of the course will start with epistemology and theory, and cover such topics as validity, reliability, scales of measurement and sampling. The second will cover case studies, ethnographies, surveys, longitudinal research, and experimental designs. For the third section, crosstabulation, measures of central tendency, and variability, to name a few aspects of statistical analysis, will be covered.

Required Text:

In recognition that students are facing ever-increasing fees, all the reading materials are on the library's electronic reserve, which can be found at

<http://catalog.sjlibrary.org/search/p>

If you do not have access to the internet, or are unsure how to access the electronic reserve, please see the professor as soon as possible so that you do not fall behind in the reading. See below for the reading order for the material.

Assignments and Exams

Homework

There will be 7 regular homework assignments, each worth 5% of your final grade, and 2 larger homework assignments, each worth 10%, for a total of 55%. The assignments will be posted <<http://pols195a.blogspot.com/>> each week on Thursdays and will be due the following Thursday *at the start of class*. **NO** late assignments will be accepted. Only in exceptional circumstances will assignments be accepted via the Internet. Lack of printer access is not one of those circumstances.

The assignments requiring essays are designed to be completed in two pages, and no more. The assignments that go over the two-page limit will be dinged in points. The reason for this is to teach you to be concise and avoid the "spray and pray" method of writing. Thus, 5 points will

be given to work that is concise, well written, and proves an understanding of the assigned material. Work that is good, but lacking in one of the above qualities, will be awarded 4 points. 3 points will be received for work that barely proves you understand the material, and 2 points for work which shows that you are not putting in the required effort to understand the material. You will get at least 1 point if you just turn in a page with your name on it. Again, there will be no late assignments accepted, as you have a week to work on each assignment.

For the sake of uniformity, the assignments must observe the following format: font, Times New Roman; size, 12; margins, one inch on all four sides; color, black ink; line spacing, double. The larger homework assignments will have individual instructions as to length and format.

Please see the Grammar Pet Peeve list on page 7 of this syllabus and the Scott and Garrison reading for helpful suggestions on how to write a better essay.

Research Paper

This is a 10- to 12-page essay that is the basics of a research proposal. This assignment prepares the students for future graduate and law school proposal writing. To assist the student in fulfilling the page requirement, a number of the homework assignments will involve portions of this essay, in that doing those homework assignments will facilitate the writing of this project. This proposal will be due the last day of class – December 8 – and should follow the same format as the homework assignments. Students will need to turn in a hard copy *and* email a PDF version for departmental review. This assignment is worth 15% of the course grade.

Midterm Exam

There will be one midterm exam, worth 15% of your final grade. There is no set date for the midterm as this will depend on how quickly we cover the material necessary to move on to the second portion of the course. Typically the midterm has been held the 6th or 7th week of the semester. The midterm will be mostly multiple-guess with a few true/false questions.

Final Exam

The final exam will be held during its scheduled date during finals week, which is Wednesday, **December 14 at 12:15 pm**. Only those students who present *excellent* reasons why they must reschedule their final exam, and do so no less than three weeks prior (4/29) to the scheduled exam date as dictated by university rules (S06-4), will have consideration for alternative examination. Those same university rules dictate that no student should have to take more than two (2) final exams on the same day. As you must make your request in advance, it is to your advantage to assess as soon as possible when your finals for all your courses will be and make arrangements accordingly.

The final exam will be a combination of multiple-guess, true/false, and short essay; it will be worth 15% of the course grade.

Grade Breakdown

Thus, the grade breakdown is as follows:

Homework:	55% (7 x 5%; 2 x 10%)
Research Paper:	15%
Midterm:	15%
Final:	15%

The course grade will not be on a curve, which is not as advantageous as some students believe, but rather ‘weighed’. This means that should the highest total grade in the class be less than 97%, that highest grade will be used to recalculate everyone’s grade as though it was at 97%. As a hypothetical example, Ismael’s total points after the final is 76 and the highest total points earned by a student in the class is 92; the new “100%” would be 95 and Ismael’s grade is recalculated to be 80, thereby earning him a B-.

As you can see, a low grade in any one of the assignments or exams will not result in a failing grade in the course. If you should have an off day, do not allow it to concern you too much; learn from the experience and move on to the next item.

Absences

Absences are not acceptable; however, you are all adults, so I will not be taking attendance beyond the second day of the course and will expect you to get the notes from someone who was in class should you miss a day. Please do not email or call to ask if there was anything important covered in class – everything covered in class is important.

While attendance, in and of itself, is not used to determine part of your course grade, the notes you will take will be of assistance and if you are not in class, you will not have the benefit of the discussion that occurred. Quite often, the selection of exam questions stem from the discussion held in the classroom; if you were not there for the discussion, you have put yourself at a disadvantage.

The professor reserves the right to administer pop quizzes should a severe lack of attendance become an evident trend; the points from the pop-quiz will be treated as extra credit in the final point distribution.

If you are unable to attend class on time, you are allowed to enter the classroom late. However, tardiness should be avoided, as you will have my undivided attention when you enter after the class has begun.

The use of electronic devices not necessary for the course is forbidden. Texting and websurfing during class are obnoxious, and will severely impact your grade.

University Policy Information

Per the Academic Senate Policy, F06-2:

The University desires it known that Academic Dishonesty will not be tolerated. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University’s Academic Integrity Policy requires that you be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions, no matter how minor, to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. Any work that is done for another course, current or past, *cannot* be turned in for credit in this course. If you are unsure of the policy on Academic Integrity, please see the information on the university website:

http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf

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 student with disabilities register with the DRC to establish a record of their disability.

Disclaimer

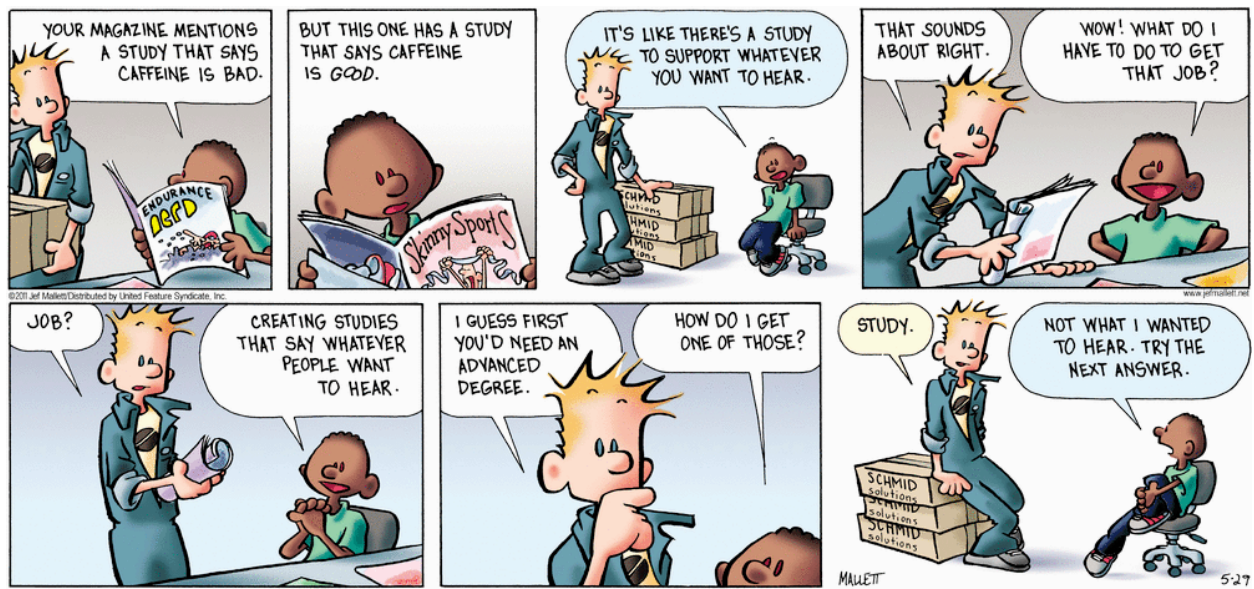
Any and all above information may be subject to change with fair notice from the University, the Department of Political Science and/or the professor.

Final Words

It should be remembered that what you get out this course is directly proportional to the effort you put into it.

Final Grades are not “given” but rather “earned”.

Finally, as I am wont to say: high schools give diplomas; colleges give degrees; an **education** is what you give yourself.



Source: *Frazz* by Jef Mallett, <http://www.gocomics.com/frazz/2001/05/29>

Reading List

Section One: The Basics

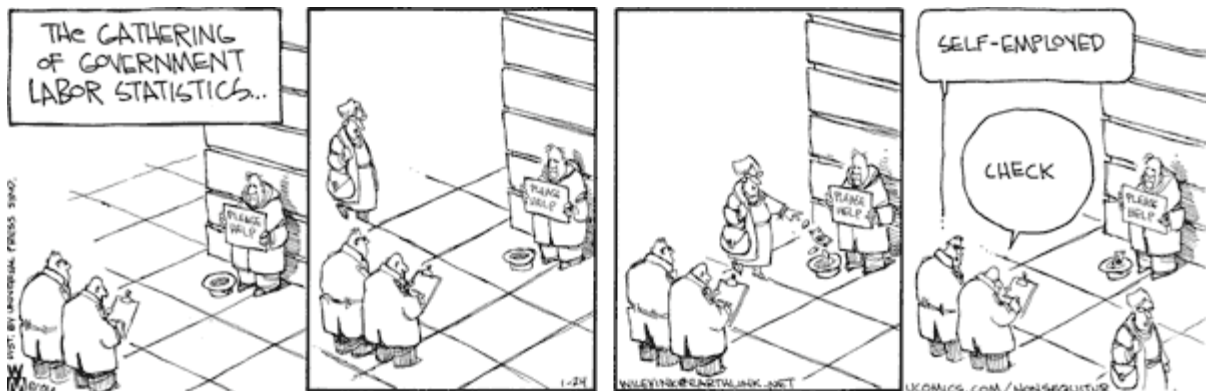
- Babbie, Earl; *The Practice of Social Research*, **Chapter 1** (Human Inquiry and Science)
- Scott and Garrison; *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual*, **Chapter 2** (Writing Competently)
- Babbie, Earl; *The Basics of Social Research*, **Chapter 2**: pp 37 – 49 (Paradigms, Theory, and Research)
- Babbie, Earl; *The Practice of Social Research*, **Chapter 4**: pp 89 – 100 (Research Design)
- Graziano and Rawlin; *Research Methods: A Process of Inquiry*, **Chapter 8** (Hypothesis Testing, Validity, and Threats to Validity)
- Singleton, Straits, Straits, and McAllister; *Approaches to Social Research*, **Chapter 5**: pp106 –110 (Measurement), pp 110 – 117 (Reliability), **Chapter 6**: pp130 – 168 (Sampling)

Midterm (Week 6 or 7)

Section Two:

Quantitative Research Methods

- Singleton, Straits, Straits, and McAllister; *Approaches to Social Research*, **Chapter 9**: pp 233 – 254, pp 256 – 261 (Survey Research)
- Nesbury, Dale; *Survey Research and the World Wide Web*, pp 22-6 (Surveys)
- Judd, Smith and Kidder; *Research Methods in Social Relations*, **Chapter 12**: pp 270-7, 285-6 (Observational Studies)
- Miller and Brewer; *A to Z of Social Research*, pp 181-5 (Longitudinal Studies)
- Miller and Brewer; *A to Z of Social Research*, pp 53-7 (Correlational)
- Judd, Smith and Kidder; *Research Methods in Social Relations*, **Chapter 4**: pp 79–99 (Experiments); **Chapter 5**: pp 101 – 118 (Quasi-Experiments)



Source: <http://www.uclick.com/client/wpc/nq/2006/01/24/index.html>

Qualitative Research Methods

Miller and Brewer; *A to Z of Social Research*, pp 192-4 (Methodology), pp 43-5 (Content Analysis), and pp 95-102 (Ethics, Ethnography)

Patten, Mildred; *Understanding Research Methods*, **Topic 9**: pp 19-21 and pp 141-7 (Quantitative vs Qualitative Research, Validity in Qualitative Research) –
Available in hard copy only

Kinds, Dianne, “Research Instruments” in *The Researcher’s Toolkit*, David Wilkinson, editor. Pp 46 –57 (Qualitative Methods)

Yin, Robert; *Case Study Research*, **Chapter 4**: pp78 – 101 (Conducting Case Studies)

Section Three: The Why of Statistics

Sprinthall, Richard; *Basic Statistical Analysis*, **Chapter 2**, pp 21 –41 (Central Tendency);
Chapter 3, pp 43 – 56 (Variability)

Bohrstedt and Knoke; *Statistics for Social Data Analysis*, **Chapter 3**, pp 86 – 90 (Continuous Data Display); **Chapter 4**: pp 101 – 127 (Crosstabulation)

Miller and Brewer; *A to Z of Social Research*, pp 144-7 (Hypothesis Testing)

Review the information on *Standard Errors* and *Confidence Intervals* in Singleton, *et al.*, Chapter 6.



Source: *Frazz* 3.14 by Jef Mallett, p. 92

Kathryn's Top 35 Grammar Pet Peeves to Avoid

35. Puns are for children, not groan readers.
34. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
33. And don't start a sentence with a conjunction.
32. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
31. Avoid clichés like the plague (they're old hat).
30. Comparisons are as bad as clichés.
29. Be more or less specific.
28. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
27. Understatement is always the absolute best way to put forth earth-shaking ideas.
26. No sentence fragments.
25. Contractions aren't necessary and shouldn't be used.
24. Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
23. Do not be redundant; do not use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
22. One should never generalize.
21. Also, always avoid annoying alliteration.
20. Don't use no double negatives.
19. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
18. One-word sentences? Never.
17. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
16. The passive voice is to be ignored.
15. If you've heard it once, you've heard it a thousand times: Resist hyperbole; not one writer in a million can use it correctly.
14. Never use a big word when a diminutive one would suffice.
13. Also too, never, ever use repetitive redundancies.
12. Use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.
11. Kill all exclamation points!!!!
10. Eliminate commas, that are, not necessary. Parenthetical words however should be enclosed in commas.
9. Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
8. Use the apostrophe in it's proper place and omit it when its not needed.
7. Verbs has to agree with their subjects.
6. Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
5. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
4. Who needs rhetorical questions?
3. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are (usually) unnecessary.
2. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.

And the number one on Kathryn's Pet Peeve list....

1. Their are words that must be used for they're proper meaning or there misused.