San José State University
Department of Political Science
Pols 195A: Political Inquiry, Spring 2017

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Dr. Sergio Béjar-López
Office Location:	Clark 402C
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Office Hours:	TTR 12:00-1:30 PM, and by appointment
Class Days/Time:	TTR 10:30-11:45 AM
Classroom:	DMH 149A

Course Description

This course introduces students to the techniques used for research in the study of politics (and other social sciences). Specifically, it covers the principles of the scientific method applied to the study of politics, and then emphasizes an approach to understanding politics that uses generalizing theory and testable hypotheses. The course then moves on to address critical considerations in designing empirical tests of theories about political phenomena, such as the issue of sample selection, concept definition and measurement, and types of data collection. The remainder of the course focuses on a variety of techniques for analysis of quantitative political data, from simple descriptive statistics and graphs, to tests of bivariate association, to multivariate regression and logit and probit analysis. Multivariate regression (using the generalized linear model) is the dominant technique for analysis of statistical data in the social sciences, and we will cover variations on that method in some detail in the last month of the course.

This is an applied course. It draws on dozens of real political applications and research examples when introducing each concept and technique. The course emphasizes practice (e.g., choice of appropriate statistical procedure, diagnostics, interpretation) over theory (mathematical derivations and proofs). You do not need any more math background than high school algebra for this course, although having had a prior course on probability may help out at a few points. Along the way, the course will cover practical issues like how to use statistical software, which tests to use for different kinds of problems, and how to interpret the sometimes conflicting and confusing results reported in journals. For statistical software, we will use SPSS, a popular package among political scientists. It is

installed on many SJSU computers and you can purchase it cheaply for use at home or on a laptop as well (see below).

Communication and Office Hours

YOU MUST CHECK YOUR CANVAS PAGE ROUTINELY. Please feel free to contact me at sergio.bejar@sjsu.edu. I will respond to every email within 24 hours, and often sooner. Do not wait to contact me until the last minute to email me about a paper or an exam; I receive many, many emails before deadlines and exams, and may not be able to email you back immediately.

Office hours are a great opportunity for you to get additional feedback on your work or just continue a conversation that we began during class – please use them! My office hours are in Clark 402C, from 12:00 to 1:30 PM T & Th.

Political Science Learning Outcomes

The Political Science Department has the following objectives for its students:

1. Breadth: Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.
2. Application: Students should be able to apply a variety of techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.
3. Disciplinary methods: Students should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, have competence in systematic data gathering using library sources, government documents, and data available through electronic sources, should be able to evaluate research studies, and should be able to critically analyze and interpret influential political texts.
4. Communication Skills: Students should master basic competencies in oral and written communication skills and be able to apply these skills in the context of political science. This means communicating effectively about politics and/or public administration, public policy, and law.
5. Citizenship: Students should acquire an understanding of the role of the citizen in local, state, national, and global contexts and appreciate the importance of lifelong participation in political processes.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Compare and contrast the ways social scientists study political phenomena.
2. Develop hypotheses and measure and conceptualize variables.
3. Match best-suited research method to research question.

4. Construct a research design for an original social science research project.
5. Interpret original political science research.

Students will satisfy these requirements through a combination of class discussion, exams, and written papers.

Required readings

We will use the following textbooks, which you are required to purchase.

- Kellstedt, Paul, and G.D. Whitten. 2013. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research.* New York, N.Y. Cambridge University Press.
- Pollock, Philip H. An SPSS to Political Analysis. 4th Edition. Congressional Quarterly Inc.

I will make additional readings available to you via the Canvas page for the class.

We will also use a statistical computer program called SPSS. It is available on computers located around campus. There are many statistical computing programs used by researchers in the social sciences, but SPSS is in common use by political scientists today. You will be learning how to operate this program, which could prove useful for your research in subsequent Political Science or Economics courses. I strongly recommend that you purchase SPSS for your laptop and bring your laptop to classes where we will be using SPSS (indicated on the course outline below). In these classes, you will have a much easier time doing the homework if you have followed along with the commands I use in class on your computer.

Expectations & Course Activities

You are fully responsible for your performance in the course. I expect you to fulfill the course requirements to the best of your ability. You should come to class prepared to engage in discussions that will touch on the readings listed in the schedule below. Therefore, it is best if you do the reading in the textbook *before* the dates shown. With much information conveyed in class it is difficult to receive a good grade if you choose not to do the readings and/or attend lectures. Politics is a live field of study, and there are always current events across the world that we can link to our readings and discussions, so time will be devoted to discuss such events.

Attendance

Attendance and punctuality are highly recommended. Attendance at lectures has always been a good predictor of a student's performance on exams. If you miss class, you are expected to get notes from a fellow student – 'private make-up lectures' with the professor will not take place.

Courtesy, active listening, and participation will make this course a more enjoyable and productive experience for you and for others. Please plan to dedicate your full attention to the discussion and activities of class.

Policy on Technology in the Classroom

1. This classroom is a tech-free zone. Laptops are not permitted unless you have an accommodation from AEC. If you want to refer to assigned readings during class discussions, bring hard copies of articles to class or notes that you've taken on assigned readings.
2. Students should not use text or use cell phones in class. Violations of this rule will result in a deduction in your participation grade for each observed incident.

Course Requirements

Grades in the course will be based on the following items:

- **15% Home-works**
- **5% Participation**
- **50% Midterm Exams (2)**
- **30% Research Design Report (10% rough draft, 20% full draft)**

Participation (5%)

Your participation in class discussions is expected. Students are required to read all of the assigned readings and be prepared to speak about the main arguments/points in the readings. A significant portion of your grade will be based on your participation in class discussions and demonstrated familiarity with the readings. You should feel free to express your opinions and make comments during class discussions, but students who score highly in this realm are able to effectively reference information presented in the readings.

If you come to class every day but never participate in class discussions or answer questions and/or if your name is called and you can't answer the question, you will receive a "zero" for your participation grade.

Homework (15%)

There will be a handful of take-home (i.e.. homework) assignments during the semester. Their objective is to apply the concepts learnt in class. These assignments will be distributed in class. Late submissions are not allowed under ANY circumstances. Please plan accordingly.

Two In-Class Midterm Exam (25%)

The exams will take place on March 2nd and April 13th**.** You must sit in the exam at the scheduled time. There will be no make-up exams unless you have a documented medical

excuse. Make travel plans accordingly. The exams will include material presented both in the reading and in the lectures.

Research Design Report (30%: 10% rough draft; 20% final draft)

The research paper assignment consists of a 12-15 page paper analyzing data from one of the datasets provided for this course by the instructor. Choose a topic, develop a hypothesis, test it quantitatively, and interpret your results appropriately. The guidelines for the paper, along with a short list of topics from which you must choose the subject of your paper, will be distributed separately. In brief, your paper will include:

1. A statement of the research question and an explanation of its relevance
2. An explanation of your theory and a statement of the specific hypotheses to be tested
3. Descriptions of the sample and variables included in the analysis
4. Presentation of methods and results, including relevant tables and figures attached at the end
5. Consideration of alternative interpretations of your findings, with sensitivity or robustness tests
6. Discussion and conclusions

A rough draft of the paper is due on April 27th.

Each day the paper is late will result in a drop of a 5 percentage points (from 95% to 90%, and so on).

Grading and Written Work Policies

A+ = 97-100%; A = 93-96.9%; A- = 90-92.9%
B+ = 87-89.9%; B = 83-86.9%; B- = 80-82.9%
C+ = 77-79.9%; C= 73-76.9%; C- = 70-72.9%
D+ = 67-69.9%; D = 63-66.9%; D- = 60-62.9%
F = 59.99% - 0%

Policy on Submitting Written Work in this Course

I expect my students to submit written work that fits the grammatical, stylistic and citation expectations for college-level work in English. All written assignments in this course are therefore graded in two ways: both in terms of content (information in terms of logic, quality of evidence, etc.) and in terms of writing. If you are at all uncomfortable with writing at the college level, you need to take steps to rectify this.

Late Work

Missed exams may be re-taken under the following circumstances only:

1) Death in the immediate family (parent, spouse, sibling, or child) within 2 weeks before the exam.
2) Unforeseeable medical emergency affecting yourself, your spouse, or your child (something beyond feeling under the weather---car accident, major sickness, or the like).
3) Participation in an official SJSU-sponsored academic or sporting event.
In the case of reasons (1) or (3), you must give me at least 24 hours advance notice (such as an e-mail or phone call) that you will miss the exam or it may not be made up. I may require supporting documentation. Conflicts with a work schedule and leaving for a non-academic trip or vacation are not an excuse to miss an exam or any other assignment in this class; I suggest that you consult the course schedule in advance and drop the course if you cannot be present for the classes and assignments.

I cannot accept late home-works. Exceptions under the conditions above may be made, but will require at least 24 hours advance permission from the instructor.

Each day the research paper is late will result in a drop of 5 percentage points, e.g., 95% to a 90%, etc.

All work is late if submitted after the date and time specified as the due date, **even if only one minute late**. The number of days late is counted from the due date and time. To ensure fairness (particularly in a large class), this policy will be strictly enforced.

University Policies

Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs **maintains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc.**"

You may find all syllabus related University Policies and resources information listed on GUP's Syllabus information web page at http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo

Disclaimer

All information in this syllabus may be subject to change with fair notice by the instructor, the Department of Political Science or San Jose State University.

Tentative Course Schedule

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics and Readings
1	Jan. 26	**Overview and course requirements**
2	Jan. 31	**The Scientific Study of Politics** 1. Kellsted and Whitten, Ch. 1. 2. Andrew Ehrenberg, "Even the Social Sciences Have Laws." Nature 365 (September 30, 1993): p. 385.
2	Feb. 2	**Research Questions, Theories, Concepts, and Hypotheses** 1. Kellsted and Whitten, Ch. 2.
3	Feb. 7	**Research Design I: The Logic of Experimentation and Causal Inference** 1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 3 and Ch. 4 through p. 76 2. Alan S. Gerber and Donald P. Green, "Do Phone Calls Increase Voter Turnout? A Field Experiment," Public Opinion Quarterly 65 (Spring 2001). <u>**Homework 1 Distributed**</u>
3	Feb. 9	**Research Design II: Non-Experimental Large-N Designs** 1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 4 2. Jeffrey S. DeSimone, "Fraternity Membership and Drinking Behavior," NBER Working Paper 13262 (July 2007)
4	Feb. 14	**Research Design III: Non-Experimental small-N Designs, case selection and inference** 1. Ashutosh Varshney, "Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society: India and Beyond," World Politics 53 (April 2001), 362-398, esp. 370-374 <u>**Homework 1 Due**</u>
4	Feb. 16	**Measurement, Reliability, and Validity** 1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 5

Week	Date	Topics and Readings
		Homework 2 Distributed
5	Feb. 21	**TBA**
5	Feb. 23	**Data Collection: Trade-Offs in Observational Technique** 1. Johnson and Reynolds, Political Science Research Methods 6th ed., Chs. 8-9 (pp. 243-296). **Homework 2 Due**
6	Feb. 28	**Review for Midterm Exam**
6	March 2	**Midterm Exam**
7	March 7	**Survey Design and Sampling Issues** 1. Manheim, Rich, and Willnat, Empirical Political Analysis, Ch. 6 and 7.
7	March 9	**Descriptive Statistics and Graphs I*** 1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 6 **Homework 3 Distributed and Homework 4 Distributed**
8	March 14	**Descriptive Statistics and Graphs II*** 1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 6
8	March 16	**Probability Distributions and Sampling** 1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 7

9	March 21	**Basic Hypothesis Testing ***
		  1. Kelstedt and Whitten, Ch. 8 up to p. 139, plus pp. 145-50
		  2. Jeffrey J. Mondak, "Newspapers and Political Awareness," American Journal of Political Science 39 (May 1995); see especially pp. 523-525, for a two-sample t-test.
		
		Homework 4 Due and HW 5 Distributed

9	March 23	**Crosstabs and the Chi-Squared Test***
		  1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 8 pp 139-145.
		  2. Alan S. Gerber and Donald P. Green, "Do Phone Calls Increase Voter Turnout? A Field
		  3. Experiment," Public Opinion Quarterly 65 (Spring 2001); see especially p. 79 for data for a chi-squared test or two-sample test of a proportion.

Week	Date	Topics and Readings
10	March 28	**Spring Break. No class.**
10	March 30	**Spring Break. No class.**
11	April 4	**Correlation*** **1.** Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 8 pp. 150-157 **2.** Amy Caiazza, "Does Women's Representation in Elected Office Lead to WomenFriendly Policy?" Institute for Women's Policy Research Publication I910 (May 2002) **<u>Homework 5 Due</u>**
11	April 6	**No class. I will be out of town for the Annual Conference of the Midwest Political Science Association.**
12	April 11	**Review for Midterm Exam 2**
12	April 13	**Midterm Exam 2**
13	April 18	**Regression I: Theory and Basics*** 1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 9 up to p. 165 **Homework 6 distributed**
13	April 20	**Regression II: Inference, Multiple Regression and Interpretation*** 1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 9 pp. 165-177, Ch. 10 Section 10.7 (starting on p. 198), and Ch. 11 section 11.5 (starting on p. 220)
14	April 25	**Writing a Research Paper in Political Science** 1. Gary King, "Publication, Publication," PS: Political Science and Politics 36, 119-125. Link: http://gking.harvard.edu/files/paperspub.pdf. **Homework 6 Due and Homework 7 Distributed**
14	April 27	**Regression III: Categorical and Explanatory Variables*** 1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 11 up to p. 212 **<u>Rough Draft or Research Report Due</u>**
15	May 2	**Regression IV: Assumptions underlying Regression** 1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 9, pp. 177-182.
15	May 4	**Logit and Probit Models I: Regression Using DDVs** **1.** Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 11. Pp 212-220.

Week	Date	Topics and Readings
16	May 9	**Regression Problems: Model Specification/non-linearity, Multicollinearity, Endogeneity, and Selection Bias** 1. Kellstedt and Whitten, Ch. 11 pp. 225-233
16	May 11	**Last Day of Classes! Clean-up of Missed Material**
Final Exam		**Final Draft of Research Report Due: Monday May 22nd @ noon.**

Dr. Bejar-Lopez reserves the right to make changes to the tentative schedule as needed. Any changes will be announced in class and through CANVAS.