

# POLS 100M-03: POLITICAL INQUIRY

San Jose State University - Department of Political Science

Instructor: Dr. Sergio Bejar-Lopez

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## 1 Course and Contact Information

**Email:** [sergio.bejar@sjsu.edu](mailto:sergio.bejar@sjsu.edu)

**Office Location:** Clark Hall 453

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 3:00-5pm via Zoom

**Classroom:** Virtual

## 2 Course Description

This course will introduce you to the scope and methods of political science. Specifically, it will help you to understand how political scientists develop their research projects (i.e. research design), and how they get their results (i.e. hypothesis testing). In addition, we will analyze the ethical considerations of social science research, and study a variety of research methods including surveys, experiments, interviews, fieldwork, content analysis, and an introduction to quantitative and qualitative analysis.

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, as we are primarily interested in the “WHY” rather than the “HOW” of research.

**This is an Online Education course. All assignments and exams will be conducted over the Internet. Students are responsible for their own access to the Internet and computer resources.**

### 3 Course Expectations and Activities

Success in this class will depend upon your ability to: (1) think critically; (2) read and write University-level English prose; (3) develop an ability to understand and systematically apply the basics of research design; (4) work independently and in group when needed.

I expect students to:

- read this syllabus carefully,
- log on to the class web site a minimum of four times each week,
- read all assigned materials,
- watch lectures,
- submit assignments and exams on time,

DO NOT enroll in an online course if you know that you are going to be away from your Internet access for more than 5 or 6 days during the length of the course. Unless you have an extenuating circumstance, you have to submit all the assignments by the deadline.

Please note that students are responsible for their own Internet access and computing resources. A loss of connectivity is not an excuse for late assignments. Some Internet service providers (ISPs) are notorious for inferior, unreliable service. In previous semesters, students have lost Internet connectivity in the middle of exams. Students who wait until the last possible moment to submit an assignment also run the risk of an unanticipated service disruption that prevents timely submission.

### 4 Communication

I will post announcements in CANVAS on a regular basis. They will appear on your dashboard when you log in and/or will be sent to you directly through your preferred method of notification from CANVAS. Please make sure to check them regularly, as they will contain any important information about upcoming projects or class concerns.

In this course we will use the CONVERSATIONS feature on the help corner (located in navigation links) to send email for private messages. You can either check your messages in the CANVAS system or set your notifications to your preferred method of contact. Please check your messages regularly.

I receive many emails from students everyday, and I try to respond to all of them in a timely manner. An email is a formal communication between you and your professor, and it thus should be addressed properly. For my students, I am Dr. Bejar or Dr. Bejar-Lopez. Please keep this in mind when you send me an email. **I will not respond to emails that are not properly addressed.**

## 5 Creating an Environment of Mutual Respect

This class is a partnership between me as your professor, and you as students. Together, we will build a supportive, respectful, and productive environment to learn and to explore challenging questions about Research Methods in Political Science. Building this kind of environment requires mutual respect.

What do I expect from you, to create an environment of mutual respect? I expect students to complete the readings and watch all the posted lectures. I also expect professional behavior in the class and to remain engaged throughout the semester. Lack of interest or engagement will be reflected in your grade.

What can you expect from me? You can expect me to be tirelessly enthusiastic and to work hard for you, both in this semester and in future semesters if needed. I encourage all of you to stop by my virtual office hours, even if you don't have a question and just would like to chat about the class, life after SJSU or life in general. You can reach me best via email at [sergio.bejar@sjsu.edu](mailto:sergio.bejar@sjsu.edu). I will respond to you within 24 hours during the week, and within 48 hours on the weekend.

## 6 Department of Political Science Learning Outcomes

- Breadth: Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.
- Application and Disciplinary Methods: Students should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, evaluate research studies, and critically analyze and interpret influential political texts. Students should be able to apply these techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.
- 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.
- 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.

## 7 Course's Learning Outcomes

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

- Compare and contrast the ways social scientists study political phenomena (Lectures, Home-works, quizzes, exams).
- Develop hypotheses and measure and conceptualize variables (Home-works, quizzes, research design paper).
- Match best-suited research method to research question (Lectures, quizzes, research design paper).
- Construct a research design for an original social science research project (Research design paper).
- Interpret original political science research (Lectures, home-works).

## 8 Course Workload Expectations: Succeeding in a Four-Unit Course

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. Because this is a four-unit course, you can expect to spend a minimum of nine hours per week, in addition to time spent in class, on scheduled tutorials, assignments, or activities. This additional unit will allow for more in-depth investigation and engagement with course topics. Careful time management will help you keep up with readings and assignments and enable you to be successful in all of your courses. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

## 9 Required Reading Materials

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

- Political Science Research Methods, 9th ed. 2019. Janet Buttolph Johnson, H.T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. Sage/CQ Press. ISBN-13: 9781544331430.

The Spartan Bookstore is closed, so you probably are better off purchasing or renting the book online. May you decide to purchase an older edition, you are responsible for checking that chapters match the topics that are being discussed in class.

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

## 10 Course Requirements

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

- 25% Online Quizzes (8)
- 20% Home-works (8)
- 30% Midterm Exams (2)
- 25% Research Design Report (1)

### **Online Quizzes (25%)**

There will be a total of 8 online quizzes (CANVAS) throughout the semester. Each quiz will ask questions about a different set of readings (see below for details). Quizzes are due before class on the day listed. Late quizzes –even a second late- will receive a zero.

### **Homework (20%)**

There will be 8 homework assignments during the semester. Their objective is to apply the concepts learnt in class, and will be posted on CANVAS. Late submissions are not allowed under ANY circumstances, and they will receive a zero.

### **Two In-Class Midterm Exam (15% each)**

The exams will take place on **October 8th** and **December 7th**. There will be no make-up exams unless you have a documented medical excuse. The exams will include material presented both in the reading and in the lectures.

### **Research Design Report (25%)**

The research paper assignment consists of a 10-page paper due on **December 11th**. The guidelines for the paper will be distributed separately. In brief, your paper will include the following items:

- A statement of the research question and an explanation of its relevance.
- An explanation of your theory and a statement of the specific hypotheses to be tested.
- Descriptions of the sample and variables included in the analysis.
- Presentation of methods (i.e. how you plan to test your hypothesis).
- Conclusions.

## 11 Extra-Credit

There will be NO extra-credit opportunities. If you are looking for a course that allows students to make-up points lost in exams or assignments, this class is not for you.

## 12 Grading Scale

A plus = 97-100%; A = 94-96.9%; A minus = 90-93.9%  
B plus = 87-89.9%; B = 84-86.9%; B minus = 80-83.9%  
C plus = 77-79.9%; C = 74-76.9%; C minus = 70-73.9%  
D plus = 67-69.9%; D = 64-66.9%; D minus = 60-63.9%  
F = 59.99% - 0%

## 13 Written Work

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. Ideas from others must also be referenced. Failure to cite your sources constitutes academic misconduct, which carries with it serious sanctions. A tutorial on citations is available at <http://libguides.sjsu.edu/writeandcite>.

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center visit <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/>.

## 14 Late Work

I understand that we all are facing difficulties during this pandemic. Therefore, I have created a schedule that not only is flexible, but also allows students to have plenty of time to complete their assignments. **Late homework, quizzes, and exams will not be accepted** –i.e. your grade will be **zero**.- If you have an extenuating circumstance, please contact me by private message before the assignment is due to make alternate arrangements.

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 second 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.

## 15 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 re-

sources information listed on GUP's Syllabus information web page at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>.

## 16 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.

## 17 Tentative Course Schedule

Module	Date	Topic	Assigned Reading
Introduction	August 19 - August 21	Introduction	Syllabus
1	August 24 - September 4	Empirical Political Science	JRM, Ch.1 JRM, Ch. 2 JRM, Ch 15
2	September 8 - September 25	Research Question Hypothesis	JRM, Ch.3 JRM, Ch. 4
3	September 28 - October 6	Operationalization Measurement	JRM. Ch 5
	October 8	Midterm Exam	Study for exam!
4	October 12 - October 16	Sampling and Causation	JRM. Ch. 5 JRM, Ch. 6
5	October 19 - October 23	Qualitative Methods	JRM. Ch. 7 JRM. Ch. 8
6	October 26 - November 6	Surveys and Experiments	JRM. Ch. 9
7	November 9 - November 20	Quantitative Methods 1	JRM, Ch. 10 JRM, Ch. 11 JRM, Ch 12
8	November 23 - December 4	Quantitative Methods 2	JRM, Ch. 13 JRM, Ch. 14
	December 7	Midterm 2	Study for Exam!
	December 11	Research Design Report	Due at midnight