

Political Science 550: Graduate Seminar in Political Methodology
California State University, Long Beach

Course # 16899
Spring, 2003
Thursday 6:30 pm - 9:15 pm
SPA 107 and SPA 206

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*“We should not cease from exploration.
And at the end of our exploring
We shall come to the place we first started from
And know it for the first time.”
- T. S. Eliot*

Course Description

What do we mean when we say “Political Science”? Is it an oxymoron? How is politics studied “scientifically”? This course is designed to introduce you to research methods in political science. Upon completion of this class you will be well equipped to undertake your own research and better able to understand and evaluate the research of others you find in other classes as well as in the media. Perhaps most importantly, you will attain the skills needed to demonstrate why you are right and everyone else is wrong during conversations and writings with your friends, family, and instructors.

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to understand many things about research methods in the discipline of Political Science:

- You will be able to explain and employ the Social Scientific Method, including the connections among theory, research design, data collection, measurement and hypothesis testing.
- You will understand how Political Science has evolved as a discipline over time, and when, how, and why it has changed.
- You will be able to describe and employ specific research methods such as experiments, surveys, focus groups, content analysis, depth and elite interviews, direct and participant observation, and case study analysis.
- You will understand the various strengths and weaknesses of the above listed methods.
- You will understand the conditions which make selection among the above listed methods appropriate for different research questions.
- You will be able to explain “rational choice” methods of analysis.
- You will be able to discuss the major controversies involving research and publication in the Political Science discipline, including the area studies-quantitative analysis rift in Comparative Politics and the “Mr. Perestroika” challenge to quantitative analysis in general and to “rational choice” theory in particular.
- You will be able to explain an employ non-traditional methods such as postmodernism, feminist research methods, and Marxist analysis.
- You will be able to interpret and perform computer-assisted data analysis.
- You will be able to employ different statistical tests for the purposes of testing hypotheses.
- You will understand how to select the right statistical test for the data you have.
- You will become familiar with the style and content of scholarly research in books and articles in Political Science journals.
- You will be able to understand and critique research articles in Political Science journals.
- You will prepare your own research manuscript at a level of quality suitable for submission to a major Political Science journal.

Required Texts

- Babbie, Earl. 2002. *The Basics of Social Research* 2d ed. Wadsworth. ISBN# 0-534-51904-0. Paperback.
- Fussell, Paul. 1992. *Class: A Guide Through the American Status System*. Simon & Schuster. ISBN# 0-671-79225-3. Paperback.
- Kirkpatrick, Lee A. and Brooke C. Feeney. 2002. *A Simple Guide to SPSS for Windows for Versions 8.0, 9.0, 10.0, & 11.0* Revised (5th) Edition. Wadsworth. ISBN# 0-534-61004-8. Paperback.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. 1996. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* 3rd ed. University of Chicago Press. ISBN# 0-226-45808-3. Paperback.
- Rosenau, Pauline Vaillancourt. 1992. *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads and Intrusions*. Princeton University Press. ISBN# 0-691-02347-6. Paperback.
- Wysocki, Diane Kholos (ed.). 2001. *Readings in Social Research Methods*. Wadsworth. ISBN# 0-534-57915-9. Paperback.

You are required to read from the above texts as part of your coursework. I have placed the above readings on reserve in the Reserve Book Room in the University Library, so you need not purchase these books if you do not wish to do so. In addition, handouts distributed in class will be required reading.

Course Requirements

There are four requirements for the course:

1. **Participation:** includes contributions to classroom discussion as well as attendance (do not be tardy or leave class early). This class will meet in two classrooms: in the data lab (SPA 206) and in a seminar room (SPA 107). Beginning the second week, we will meet in the seminar room (SPA 107), except during Week 4, when we will begin the course in the seminar room and move up to the lab for the second half of class. We will begin meeting in the data lab in Week 12, and we will meet there for the rest of the semester. These dates are noted in the course outline.

In order to participate well in this class, you must pay close attention to assignments and deadlines (all of which are listed in this syllabus). You must complete all assigned readings prior to coming to class. Attendance is a very important aspect of this class — you will not receive the full benefit of this course if you are not in class to learn from your peers and to offer your own analyses. To get credit for attending class, you must show up within 10 minutes of the start of class. If you are not in class within the first 10 minutes, you will be marked absent for the day. You will also be marked absent if you leave class early. You will be permitted one unexcused absence. According to University policy, the following qualify as excused absences:

1. Illness or injury to the student
2. Death, injury, or serious illness of an immediate family member or the like
3. Religious reasons (California Educational Code section 89320)
4. Jury duty or government obligation
5. University sanctioned or approved activities (examples include: artistic performances, forensics presentations, participation in research conferences, intercollegiate athletic activities, student government, required class field trips, etc.)

Attending an athletic event as a fan or to support a friend or family member is not an excused absence. Do not schedule meetings, banquets, vacations, or work for other classes during our regular class meeting time. If you can not attend class on a regular basis due to your employment, please reconsider taking this class. Beyond your first unexcused absence, your participation grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade for every time you are marked absent. For example, if you earned a participation grade of a B+ and had three unexcused absences, you will be penalized two-thirds of a letter grade, and your final participation would be a B-.

Similarly, if you had six unexcused absences and you had earned an A- for your participation grade, you would be penalized for five-thirds of a letter grade, meaning that you would end up with a C for your final participation grade. Turn off all pagers, phones and other electronic devices prior to entering the classroom. If you have an electronic device that emits noise during class (even an audible “vibration”), you will be asked to leave and will be marked absent for that day — no excuses and no exceptions.

2. **Assignments and Exercises:**

Exercises are in-class work that must be turned in by the end of the class period and receives a credit / no-credit grade. Late exercises will receive partial credit if the work is complete and turned in by the *next class* meeting if accompanied by a valid (see above) excuse. Exercises will receive partial credit if they are turned in by the next class meeting and no valid excuse is given. It is your responsibility to notify me that you have

missed the exercise and to get the materials so that you can complete it.

Assignments are take-home work which will receive a letter grade. Any assignments turned in after the first 10 minutes of class will be treated as late by one day. Late assignments not accompanied by a valid excuse will be deducted one full letter grade for every week they are late (see above for an example of this type of calculation). Assignment sheets specifying requirements will be distributed in class. They will not be emailed. See me during class or during my office hours if you missed any of them. Assignments must be double-spaced and turned in as a hard copy, they may not be emailed. Do not show up to class with a diskette and attempt to explain why you have not yet printed your assignment. Always back-up your computer files in at least two places. It is your responsibility to keep track of due dates and to follow up on missed exercises and assignments. Telling the instructor that you “did not know” about a course requirement is not an acceptable excuse. It is your responsibility to keep yourself informed. Refer to this syllabus frequently. Please do not hesitate to email or call me if you have any questions or need any assistance. It is better to email me as I am on campus only two days per week. Late assignments should be turned in directly to me at the next class meeting. Your “Concepts and Hypotheses” and “Literature Review” assignments are part of your **Exercises and Assignments** grade.

3. **Examinations:** There will be two midterm examinations and they will be comprised of essay questions. The exams are take-home and will be distributed the week before they are due.
4. **Final Research Paper:** The Final Research Paper will comprise either a secondary analysis of an existing data set (the 2000 American National Election Study will be provided as will one of my own data sets, you may use a different data set if you like), or a complete research project of your own. If you choose to do a research project that does not fall within the purview of the scientific method (i.e. postmodern or Marxist analysis, or a non-scientific feminist research project), you must inform me the week before your topic is due so that we can make appropriate arrangements. More details regarding the final paper will be discussed in class and in several assignment handouts. Late research papers must be turned in to the Political Science Department Office and date stamped. Late papers will be down-graded one full letter grade for every day that they are late (i.e. a B becomes a C if the paper is one day late). Do not put a cover on your final paper.

Grading

Participation	10%
Exercises and Assignments	20%
Midterm Exams	30% (15% each)
Final Research Paper	40%

A plus/minus system of grading will be used for all assignments, exams, papers and projects. A letter grade will be assigned for each of the above categories. The grade will be converted to grade points and weighted by the corresponding percentage (see above). Here is an example: Suppose Ann received a B+ for Participation, an B for Exercises and assignments, a C+ for both Midterm Exams and a B+ for her Final Research Paper. Ann’s final grade would be calculated as follows:

$$\text{Final Grade} = (3.3 * .10) + (3.0 * .20) + (2.3 * .30) + (3.3 * .40)$$

$$\text{Final Grade} = .33 + .60 + .69 + 1.32$$

Final Grade = 2.94, which is closest to 3.0 grade points, which is equivalent to a B.

Course Outline

Week 1 (1/30). Course Introduction

Exercise: Detecting Assumptions and Biases

- ◆ Syllabus Distributed
- ◆ Assumptions and Biases
- ◆ An Intro to Behavioralism
- ◆ Behavioralism vs. Non-Scientific Methods
- ◆ Come prepared next week by having done the assigned reading

Week 2 (2/6). The Nature and Goals of Political Inquiry and Theory Building

“There are two ways to slide easily through life: to believe everything or to doubt everything; both ways save us from thinking.” -Theodore Rubin

Reading: Babbie, chs. 1-3;
Kuhn, chs. 1-5;
Wysocki, pp. 5-18.

- ◆ Methodological Rigor
- ◆ Epistemology
- ◆ Positivism
- ◆ Kuhn and Scientific Revolutions
- ◆ The Evolution of Political Science as a Discipline
- ◆ Normative and Non-normative Research
- ◆ Errors in Inquiry
- ◆ Characteristics of the Scientific Method
- ◆ Theory Building
- ◆ Qualitative and Quantitative Observations
- ◆ Causality

Week 3 (2/13). Operationalization and Measurement

Reading: Babbie, chs. 5-6;
Fussell, all (you do not need to complete the survey);
Kuhn, chs. 6-8.

Exercise: Deductive and Inductive Logic (in-class)

- ◆ The Logic of Scientific Inquiry
- ◆ The Research Question
- ◆ Hypotheses
- ◆ Variables
- ◆ Levels of measurement
- ◆ Validity and Reliability
- ◆ Taxonomies and Typologies

Week 4 (2/20). The Literature Review and Research Design

First half of class in SPA 107, second half in SPA 206

“If we encounter a man of rare intellect, we should ask him what books he reads.” -Ralph Waldo Emerson

Reading: Babbie, ch. 4;
Kuhn, chs. 9-13.

Assignment: Research Question, Operationalization and Hypotheses due.

- ◆ Reasons for a Literature Review
- ◆ An Introduction to Scholarly Literature, especially Political Science Journals
- ◆ Refining and Narrowing a Research Question
- ◆ Tips on Conducting a Literature Review
- ◆ Research Design and Purposes of Research
- ◆ Units of Analysis and Foci of Study
- ◆ The Ecological Fallacy
- ◆ Time Dimension of Study
- ◆ Kuhn (redux)

Week 5 (2/27). Sampling

Reading: Babbie, ch. 7;
Dowd, "The Manolo Moochers" (Handout);
Wysocki, pp. 159-177.

- ◆ History of Sampling
- ◆ Populations vs. Samples
- ◆ Statistics vs. Parameters
- ◆ Representativeness
- ◆ The Logic of Probability Sampling
- ◆ Characteristics of an "Ideal" Random Sampling Technique
- ◆ Examples of Random Samples
- ◆ Non-random Sampling
- ◆ Confidence Intervals
- ◆ Sampling Error

Week 6 (3/6). Experimental Design

Reading: Babbie, ch. 8;
Wysocki, pp. 57-79, 179-193.

Assignment: Midterm Examination #1 is Due

In-Class Film: Obedience

- ◆ The Uses of Experiments in Political Science
- ◆ Ethics of Experimentation: The Stanford Prison Experiment & the Milgram Experiment
- ◆ Ethics-Validity Tradeoff
- ◆ Characteristics of an "Ideal" Experiment
- ◆ Independent and Dependent Variables
- ◆ Establishing Causality
- ◆ Threats to Internal and External Validity
- ◆ Randomization
- ◆ Varieties of Experimental Design
- ◆ Focus Groups
- ◆ Quasi-Experiments (Natural Experiments)
- ◆ Field Experiments
- ◆ Strengths and Weaknesses of Experimental Design

Week 7 (3/13). Survey Research and Questionnaire Design

Reading: Babbie, ch. 9;
Wysocki, pp. 194-212.

Assignment: Answer questions on p. 204 of Wysocki.

Exercise: Questionnaire Design

- ◆ Topics Appropriate for Surveys
- ◆ Types of Surveys
- ◆ Methods of Administration
- ◆ Selection Bias
- ◆ Social Acceptability Bias
- ◆ Order, Wording and Interviewer Effects
- ◆ Closed and Open-ended Questions
- ◆ Main Factors Affecting the Quality of a Survey
- ◆ Step-by-step Instructions for Conducting a Poll
- ◆ Strengths and Weaknesses of Survey Research
- ◆ Secondary analysis (More on The American National Election Studies)

Week 8 (3/20). Content Analysis and Qualitative Methods

Reading: Babbie, chs. 10-11;
Wysocki, pp. 213-245, 261-267.

Assignment: Literature review due (includes Research Question, Operationalization and Hypotheses)

- ◆ Topics Appropriate for Content Analysis
- ◆ Coding and Intercoder Reliability
- ◆ Running Records vs. Episodic Records
- ◆ Strengths and Weaknesses of Content Analysis
- ◆ Case Studies
- ◆ Direct Observation
- ◆ Participant Observation
- ◆ Depth and Elite Interviewing
- ◆ Step-by-step Instructions for Conducting a Interviews
- ◆ Focus Groups
- ◆ Ethnomethodology
- ◆ The third way: Triangulation

Week 9 (3/27). Alternative Approaches I: Postmodernism

Reading: Rosenau, chs. 1-3, 6-9.

Assignment: Participant Observation Report Due

- ◆ Intellectual Background
- ◆ Reality and Truth
- ◆ Text, Author, and Reader
- ◆ Intertextuality
- ◆ Affirmation, Skepticism, and Irony as Method
- ◆ Critiques of Behavioralism
- ◆ Critiques of Epistemology
- ◆ Postmodernism and Political Advocacy
- ◆ Contributions

Week 10 (4/3). Alternative Approaches II: Feminism

Reading: Handout on Feminist Research Methods (Reinharz);
Wysocki, pp. 230-235.

- ◆ Feminism: Revisioning the Political
- ◆ Empirical Feminism
- ◆ Postmodern Feminism
- ◆ Feminist Standpoint Theory
- ◆ Sexism in Scholarship
- ◆ Feminist Critique of Science: Methodicide
- ◆ Feminist Presentation of Research
- ◆ Feminism: A Theory, a Method, or a Perspective?

Week 11 (4/10). Alternative Approaches III: Marxist analysis and Methodological Controversies

Reading: Handout: Chilcote's Weberian-Marxist Dichotomy
Handouts on Methodological Controversies: Essays by Mr. Perestroika, Mr. Pravda and Prof. Smith

In-Class Reading: Handout: Theses on Feuerbach

- ◆ Marxist Dialectical Materialism
- ◆ Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis
- ◆ Development of Class Consciousness and False Consciousness
- ◆ Liberation as Normative Analysis

- ◆ Feminist Marxism
- ◆ “Rational Choice” Theory and Formal Modeling
- ◆ Game Theory – Prisoner’s Dilemma and Tit-for-Tat
- ◆ Nonlinear Approaches – Richardson Arms Race Model
- ◆ Fuzzy Logic and Chaos Theory
- ◆ Behavioralist Tradeoffs
- ◆ Methodological Controversies

4/17: Spring Break

**Week 12 (4/24). Computers for Data Analysis and Univariate Statistics
Begin Meeting in SPA 207 for the rest of the Semester**

“There are three kinds of lies: Lies, damned lies, and statistics.” - Mark Twain

Reading: Babbie, ch. 14.

Kirkpatrick and Feeney, chs. 1-3, 5-6.

Assignment: Midterm Examination #2 is Due

- ◆ Managing data
- ◆ Frequencies
- ◆ Recoding Variables
- ◆ Combining variables into an index
- ◆ Crosstabs
- ◆ Reading Tables
- ◆ Creating Charts and Graphs

Week 13 (5/1). Bivariate Statistics

Reading: Kirkpatrick and Feeney, chs. 7-8, 17.

Assignment: Frequencies and Means (on variables for your own project)

- ◆ Measures of Association
- ◆ The Chi-Square statistic
- ◆ Bivariate Correlation
- ◆ Difference of Means tests
- ◆ Nonlinearities and Possible Solutions

Week 14 (5/8). Multivariate Data Analysis

Reading: Kirkpatrick and Feeney, chs. 14-16.

Assignment: Data Analysis I (Univariate)

- ◆ Multiple Regression – when and how to use it
- ◆ Interpreting regression coefficients and significance levels
- ◆ Common mistakes associated with regression analysis

Week 15 (5/15). Open Lab and Research Paper Assistance

Assignments: Data Analysis II (Bivariate) and Chi-Square calculation

Final papers due Thursday, May 22, between 7:15 pm - 9:15 pm in the lab (SPA 207)