

Intro to Research Methods in Political Science Fall 2023

Professor: Miranda Yaver
Email: yaver_miranda@wheatoncollege.edu
Class Time: Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:50am
Class Location: Meneely 101
Office Hours: Monday 1:30-3:30 or by appointment
Office Hours Location: Knapton 204

Course Description:

This course provides an overview of some of the research methods that political scientists use to draw conclusions about the political world and public policy. This course is aimed at equipping you to better understand research and policy debates that you encounter in political science classes and out in the real world, to sharpen your ability to pose and answer empirical research questions, and to help you to use these methods yourself. Emphasis is on observational research design and analysis, with topics including descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing, and linear regression. Students will be asked to think critically about causal inference, and research design more broadly to provide a foundation for political science inquiry. Mathematic calculations will be kept to a minimum, with emphasis placed on statistical interpretation and applied data analysis utilizing STATA. The class will culminate in the writing of a research design on a subject of your choosing.

Course Requirements:

- 5 problem sets: 12% each
- Final project: 30%
 - Annotated bibliography: 10%
 - Research design: 20%
- Attendance and class participation: 10%

Final Course Grading: The final grade for the course will be assigned based on the following scale:

A: 93+%	A-: 90-92%	B+: 87-89%
B: 83-86%	B-: 80-82%	C+: 77-79%
C: 73-76%	C-: 70-72%	D+: 67-69%
D: 63-66%	D-: 60-62%	F: > 60%

Policy Regarding Late Assignments: It is imperative that students turn in work at the specified deadlines. Failure to do so will result in a third letter grade reduction per day late unless you have received an extension in advance. Work will not be accepted at all more than one week late

unless said extension was granted in advance. All students take the final exam at the assigned day and time, with the only exception of university-approved absences. If you have concerns regarding your ability to complete your work on time due to physical or mental health reasons, you are encouraged to seek appropriate treatment from campus services and to discuss with me *in advance* whether an extension is needed.

All members of the academic community should be able to engage fully in the academic opportunities and services provided, regardless of disability status, and to that end accommodations to this course can be made if necessary. Please feel free to discuss with me any concerns you may have.

Note on Participation: Attendance and participation is vital to understanding the concepts of the course. If you miss 6 or more classes, I will recommend that you drop the course.

Note on Office Hours: You should plan to come to office hours at least twice during the semester to discuss your academic goals and progress in the course. You may come with questions about the course, questions about Wheaton College more broadly, grad school or professional plans, or just to chat so I can get to know you better.

Statement on Academic Integrity: All work that students submit is expected to be of their own creation and give proper credit to the ideas and work of others. Thus, plagiarism, cheating, and receiving unauthorized assistance with the work in this course will not be tolerated. This includes the use of AI (*e.g.*, ChatGPT). Should a student violate academic integrity in this class, the matter will be reported to the college administration. If you have questions about citations of sources, ask prior to submitting the given assignment. Students are encouraged to consult writing services for additional assistance on writing and citation so as to avoid plagiarism.

Helpful Campus Resources: There are a number of resources on campus that may help you in your physical, emotional, and academic wellbeing.

- Student Health Center: 14 Taunton Avenue, 508-285-9500
- Student Counseling Center: 42 Howard Street, 508-286-3905
- Peer Tutoring: Scholars Lab at Wallace Library

Textbooks

The following textbooks are required:

- Pollock, Philip H. *Essentials of Political Analysis, 6th, ed.*
- Pollock, Philip H. *A Stata Companion to Political Analysis*

You may use different editions to the textbooks, but page numbers correspond to the edition listed on the syllabus. Any other readings will be made available online. Students will be expected to come to class having read the material and being prepared to engage in the arguments that they present. Students will be alerted in advance to what readings are recommended rather than required, or are skim-worthy. It is imperative that students check their email regularly, as that is how class announcements will be made.

Course Outline:

Tuesday, August 29: Course Introduction

Thursday, August 31: What Is Political Science Research?

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Introduction
- Pollock, *A STATA Companion*, Ch. 1
- Sides, John. 2015. “Why Congress should not cut funding to the social sciences.” *The Washington Post’s The Monkey Cage*

Tuesday, September 5: Reading Political Science, But First, What Is a Variable?

- Kaur, SP. 2013. “Variables in Research.”
- Hoover Green, Amelia. 2013. “How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps.”

Thursday, September 7: Definition and Measurement of Concepts

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 1

Tuesday, September 12: Measuring and Describing Variables

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 2, pp. 34-54

Thursday, September 14: Descriptive Statistics

- Pollock, *A STATA Companion*, Ch. 2

Tuesday, September 19: Measuring and Describing Variables

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 2, pp. 55-71

Thursday, September 21: Transforming Variables

- Pollock, *A STATA Companion*, Ch. 3

Tuesday, September 26: Proposing Explanations, Framing Hypotheses, and Making Comparisons

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 3, pp. 72-84

Thursday, September 28: Proposing Explanations, Framing Hypotheses, and Making Comparisons

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 3, pp. 85-104

Tuesday, October 3: Proposing Explanations, Framing Hypotheses, and Making Comparisons

- Pollock, *A STATA Companion*, Ch. 4

Thursday, October 5: The Importance of Research Design

- King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sid Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry*, Ch. 1
- Shively, W. Phillips. 2009. *The Craft of Political Research*. Ch. 6 (p. 73-96)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10: OCTOBER BREAK – NO CLASSES

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12: MAP DAY – NO CLASS

Tuesday, October 17: Research Design, Research Ethics, and Evidence of Causation:

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 4, pp. 105-114

Thursday, October 19: Research Design, Research Ethics, and Evidence of Causation

- Gerber, Alan and Donald Green. 1999. “Does Canvassing Increase Voter Turnout? A Field Experiment.” *PNAS*.
- Brady, Henry et al. 2001. “The Butterfly Did It: The Aberrant Vote for Pat Buchanan in Palm Beach County, Florida.” *American Political Science Review* 95(4).

Tuesday, October 24: Case Studies and Mixed Methods Research

- Seawright, Jason and John Gerring. 2008. “Case selection techniques in case study research: A menu of qualitative and quantitative options.” *Political Research Quarterly*.

Thursday, October 27: Research Design, Research Ethics, and Evidence of Causation

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 4, p. 114-133

Tuesday, October 31: Making Controlled Comparisons

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 5, pp. 134-150

Thursday, November 2: Foundations of Statistical Inference

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 5, pp. 150-166

Tuesday, November 7: Foundations of Statistical Inference

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 6, pp. 167-183

Thursday, November 9: Foundations of Statistical Inference

- Pollock, *A STATA Companion*, Ch. 5

Tuesday, November 14: Foundations of Statistical Inference

- Pollock, *Essential of Political Analysis*, Ch. 6, pp. 184-198

Thursday, November 16: Foundations of Statistical Inference

- Pollock, *A STATA Companion*, Ch. 6

Tuesday, November 21: Tests of Significance and Measures of Association

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 7, pp. 199-221

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23: THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASSES

Tuesday, November 28: Tests of Significance and Measures of Association

- Pollock, *A STATA Companion*, Ch. 7

Thursday, November 30: Tests of Significance and Measures of Association

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 7, pp. 222-238

Tuesday, December 5: Correlation and Linear Regression

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, Ch. 8, pp. 239-256

Thursday, December 7: Correlation and Linear Regression

- Pollock, *Essentials of Political Science*, Ch. 8, pp. 239-278
- Pollock, *A STATA Companion*, Ch. 8

RESEARCH DESIGN DUE AT END OF DESIGNATED EXAM PERIOD: DECEMBER 13 12PM