

POS-3713 (section 3)
Understanding Political Science Research
Spring 2001
TR 9:30 – 10:45
220A BEL

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Office Hours:
Tues & Thur: 10:50 - 12:15,
or by appointment

Course Objective: This course is an introduction to social science research. You will learn fundamental strategies for systematic observation of the political world, and how such observations can be used to test hypotheses regarding political phenomena. An understanding of these strategies should help you understand research discussed in advanced political science courses, and help you evaluate the validity of claims made to you as citizens (by politicians) and consumers (by firms promoting their products).

Course Prerequisite: Students intending to be political science majors should take this course as soon in their college career as possible. Anyone having taken any of the following courses may take POS-3713: POS-1041, CPO-2002, INR-2002, PUP3713 and POT-3003.

Assignments: Each student is expected to do all the readings assigned in the syllabus, complete about seven exercises (on which they work individually, and without collaboration with others), take three exams and about five quizzes, and attend all class sessions. Students will find that both the reading and the lectures are important for an understanding of the topics of the course. Also, students are very unlikely to do well on exams unless they have completed the series of course exercises.

There three exams are scheduled, tentatively, as follows:

- a) a mid-term exam on Thursday, February 8;
- b) a mid-term exam on Tuesday, March 20;
- d) a final exam on Tuesday, April 24 (10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.).

Tentative dates for quizzes are listed in the daily schedule below.

Required Reading: The following book is required to be read and should be available in the University bookstore:

Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and David Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 6th edition.

A small set of additional readings has been placed on reserve at Strozier Library. This selection contains all required readings not included in the textbook. “Hard copies” of each of these readings are available in the Library. They can also be accessed electronically (with Adobe Acrobat software, available free at www.adobe.com) using WebLuis.

The instructions for accessing reserve readings electronically are:

1. Go to www.fsu.edu
2. Click on “Libraries and Computing”
3. Click on “Florida State University Libraries”
4. Click on “WebLuis”
5. Click on “SUS Library Catalogs and Course Reserves Index”
6. For the FSU Course Reserves, click on “Course Reserves” under “Florida State University
7. To search, type “Berry” under instructor’s name, then click on “Submit Search”
8. Under Berry’s name, click on POS3713
9. On the list provided under Berry’s name, click on the title you are searching that has ERC behind it
10. Under the title, click on “Click here to view”
11. If you have problems, contact Berry, or the Reserve Desk at 644-5268.

Grading Criteria: Written assignments will be weighted as follows in computing students’ final course grades:

1 st Midterm exam	15%
2 nd Midterm exam	15%
Final exam	30%
Exercises and quizzes	40%

In computing the 40% of your grade determined by your performance on exercises and quizzes, the lowest three of your scores will be dropped and each of the remaining exercises and quizzes will count equally. Since there will be about eleven exercises and quizzes, approximately eight will be factored into your grade (each counting for about 5% of your final course grade). (The instructor reserves the right to adjust slightly the number of quizzes and exercises from the number listed in the daily schedule below.)

Students are encouraged to participate in class discussion. Course grades will reflect class participation so that no one will be penalized for weak participation, while students with records of strong participation will be rewarded. More precisely, after letter grades based on the exams, quizzes and exercises are computed, the grades of strong class participants will be adjusted upward slightly.

Policy on Missed Exams: Students are expected to take exams on the dates specified. Excused absences from exams will be treated differently than unexcused absences. Absences are “excused” only when a student (1) misses an exam as a result of a family or medical emergency [or some other reason acceptable to the instructor], (2) notifies the instructor in a timely fashion of the reason for the absence, and (3) provides documentation of the emergency conditions. When the reason for the absence is predictable earlier than one week before the exam, “a timely fashion” means at least one week prior to the date of the exam. When the reason for an absence

becomes predictable only during the last week before the exam, “a timely fashion” means by no later than the first working day (Monday through Friday) after the absence becomes predictable. When the reason for the absence is not predictable until the day of the exam, “a timely fashion” means by no later than 9:00 a.m. on the second working day after the exam. Students notifying the instructor of a predictable or emergency absence shall make a reasonable effort to contact the instructor directly (by telephoning his office, and leaving a message on the answering machine – or via e-mail – if he is not there). If the student is physically incapable of contacting the instructor (e.g., because of illness), the student is responsible for making certain that a friend or relative contact the instructor instead. Any missed exam in which the student fails to meet all three conditions above is an “unexcused” absence. Students with an unexcused absence will receive a zero on the missed exam. In the case of excused absences, the instructor will either (i) base the student's grade on the remaining exams, prorating percentages so that the other exams keep the same relative value, or (ii) require the student to take a make-up exam. If the instructor decides to require a make-up, he may give the student an exam identical to the exam he or she missed or one different but covering similar material. Furthermore, the form of the make-up exam (i.e., multiple choice, essay, short answer) need not be the same as the form of the exam missed by the student, but will be an exam viewed by the instructor as being equally difficult.

Policy on Exercises Not Turned In and Quizzes Missed: Late exercises will not be accepted; students not turning in an exercise by the end of the class session at which it is due will receive a zero on the exercise. Similarly, no make-up quizzes will be given. Students who are not in class at the time a quiz is distributed will not be allowed to take the quiz and will receive a zero as a grade.

Statement Concerning American Disabilities Act: Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC); and (2) bring a letter to the instructor from SDRC indicating that the student needs academic accommodations. This must be done within the first week of class.

Reminder of the Academic Honor Code: The Academic Honor System of FSU “is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility (1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student's own work, (2) to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the University community, and (3) to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the University community.” Students are expected to avoid all activities which would violate the honor code (as delineated in the FSU General Bulletin).

Policy on Plagiarism and Cheating: Any student found to be guilty of plagiarism on any class assignment or of cheating on any exam will be given an F for the course. Furthermore, the instructor will notify appropriate University authorities of his finding of plagiarism or cheating.

COURSE TOPICS, READING ASSIGNMENTS AND EXERCISES (WITH TENTATIVE DATES)

Tues, Jan. 9

Course Preview

- Thur, Jan. 11 Introduction to Social Science Research
READ: Nachmias, chs. 1 and 2.
 Wright, Erikson and McIver, “Public Opinion and Policy Liberalism in the American States,” American Journal of Political Science, 1987: 980-1001.
 (Note: this is a study I will draw on periodically to illustrate points made in lectures. Do not be concerned that there are parts of this article that you may not understand; by the end of the semester, you should be able to understand all analyses through p. 992.) [on reserve under “Gerald Wright”]
- Tues, Jan. 16 Introduction to Social Science Research, cont’d.
READ: Nachmias, pp. 46-52.
 Green and Gerken, “Self-Interest and Public Opinion Toward Smoking Restrictions and Cigarette Taxes,” Public Opinion Quarterly, 1989: 1-16.
 (Do not be concerned that there are parts of this article that you may not understand; by the end of the semester, you should be able to understand the full argument.)
 [on reserve under “Donald Green”]
RECEIVE: Exercise on hypothesis construction (due 1/23)
- Thur, Jan. 18 Explanation and Causation
READ: Nachmias, pp. 53-66, 92(bottom)–94(middle).
- Tues, Jan. 23 Explanation and Causation, cont’d.
READ: Nachmias, ch. 4.
EXERCISE DUE: Hypothesis construction
- Thur, Jan. 25 Conceptualization and Measurement
READ: Nachmias, pp. 138-48.
QUIZ: on course material through previous class session
RECEIVE: Another exercise on hypothesis construction (due 1/30)
- Tues, Jan. 30 Conceptualization and Measurement, cont’d.
READ: Nachmias, pp. 148-60.
EXERCISE DUE: Hypothesis construction
RECEIVE: Study guide for midterm exam
- Thur, Feb. 1 Conceptualization and Measurement, cont’d. & Survey Methods
READ: Nachmias, chs. 10 and 11.
QUIZ: on conceptualization and measurement

- Tues, Feb. 6 Survey Methods, cont'd.
- Thur, Feb. 8 MIDTERM EXAM
- Tues, Feb. 13 Sampling Techniques
READ: Nachmias, pp. 161-77.
- Thur, Feb. 15 Experimental Designs
READ: Nachmias, ch. 5.
Mintz and Geva, "Why Don't Democracies Fight Each Other? An Experimental Study," Journal of Conflict Resolution, 1993: 484-503. [on reserve under "Alex Mintz"]
- Tues, Feb. 20 Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs
READ: Nachmias, ch. 6.
Kenneth Meier, "Executive Reorganization of Government: Impact on Employment and Expenditures," American Journal of Political Science, 1980: 396-412. [Don't be concerned about the material on pages 402-05 marked in the margin with a squiggly line.] [on reserve under "Kenneth Meier"]
RECEIVE: Exercise on experimental designs due 2/27
- Thur, Feb. 22 Univariate Descriptive Statistics: Frequency Distributions
READ: Nachmias, pp. 319-28.
- Tues, Feb. 27 Univariate Descriptive Statistics: Central Tendency
READ: Nachmias, pp. 498-99, 328-35.
EXERCISE DUE: Experimental design
- Thur, Mar. 1 Univariate Descriptive Statistics: Dispersion
READ: Nachmias, pp. 335-49.
QUIZ: on frequency distributions and central tendency
RECEIVE: Study guide for midterm exam
- Tues, Mar. 6 The Normal Distribution
REVIEW BEFORE CLASS: material on normal distribution from Nachmias (on pp. 343-47)

Thur, Mar. 8	Contingency Tables READ: Nachmias, pp. 351-61. QUIZ: on dispersion and normal distribution RECEIVE: Exercise on contingency tables (due 3/22)
Week of Mar. 13 thru Mar. 15	SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS
Tues, Mar. 20	MIDTERM EXAM
Thur, Mar. 22	Statistical Inference READ: Nachmias, pp. 435-38. EXERCISE DUE: Contingency tables.
Tues, Mar. 27	Statistical Inference, cont'd & Measures of Bivariate Association READ: Nachmias, pp. 361-74.
Thur, Mar. 29	Measures of Bivariate Association, cont'd. REVIEW BEFORE CLASS: Nachmias, pp. 361-74. QUIZ: on measures of bivariate association
Tues, Apr. 3	Contingency Tables: Statistical Control READ: Nachmias, pp. 385-98.
Thur, Apr. 5	Contingency Tables: Statistical Control, cont'd. REVIEW BEFORE CLASS: Nachmias, pp. 385-98. RECEIVE: Exercise on statistical control (due 4/12)
Tues, Apr. 10	Correlation and Regression READ: Shively, pp. 94-100, 105-07 [on reserve under "W. Phillips Shively"]; Hamilton, pp. 307-10, 316-17 [on reserve under "Lawrence Hamilton"]. RECEIVE: Multiple regression exercise (due 4/19)
Thur, Apr. 12	Correlation and Regression, cont'd. REVIEW BEFORE CLASS: Shively, pp. 94-100, 105-07; Hamilton, pp. 307-10, 316-17. READ: Hamilton, pp. 352-57. EXERCISE DUE: Statistical control.
Tues, Apr. 17	Correlation and Regression, cont'd. RECEIVE: Study guide for final exam QUIZ: Bivariate regression

Thur, Apr. 19

Correlation and Regression, cont'd.

EXERCISE DUE: Multiple regression

Tues, Apr. 24

FINAL EXAM (10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.)