

# PS245: POLITICAL METHODOLOGY [3 CREDITS]

University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh

Spring 2021

Class meets 3:00-4:30 T-TH in Sage 1208A

Computer Lab, Sage 2234 (starting 3/29)

Office hours: W/F 9-10:30 on MS Teams.

Professor James Krueger

Department of Political Science

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Teams!

**Course Description:** This course is designed to acquaint students with the process of exploring political questions and conducting research. Topics include theory definition, hypothesis development, concept definition, and data collection and analysis. This course will also expose students to a variety of data sources and methods of collection such as survey research, content analysis, and experimentation.

## But what does that mean?

The practice of political science requires more than a summary of state institutions, public opinion, or the history of a war. It requires practitioners to develop testable hypotheses and sound research designs to uncover the relationships that explain the behavior of an individual, group, or nations. It also requires those practitioners to develop proficiency in writing formal research papers and presenting their results to their peers. This course provides an introduction to the research methods used across the social sciences by grounding students in hypothesis formation, research design, and common forms of statistical analysis; it also serves as a forum for you to make a first attempt at writing a research paper and making a scholarly presentation.

**Prerequisites:** There are no prerequisites for this course. Political Science majors and minors are encouraged to complete their introductory courses for all subfields prior to taking this course to ensure familiarity with examples used in class. This course is intended for students in their sophomore or junior years as it prepares students for upper division work in Political Science.

## Course Learning Outcomes:

- Develop research question and hypothesis creation and testing skills
- Gain familiarity with elementary quantitative and qualitative research designs
- Gain familiarity with SPSS and common statistical tests for quantitative data
- Improve data analysis skills, including graphical and written interpretations
- Develop and practice written and oral communication skills

## Required Texts:

Philip H. Pollock, *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Sage/CQ Press.

Lisa A. Baglione. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science* 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Sage/CQ Pres

Additional course readings and data will be available on D2L.

## Grading Scale and Assignments:

I use a 93/90/87 grading scale in this course (which means that 93 is the cutpoint for an A, 90 for an A-, 87 for a B+, etc.). Your grade will be determined by several assignments and exams, detailed as follows:

**In class assignments (10%):** In the past, students have been assigned a “statistical methods guidebook”. The purpose of this assignment was to encourage students to create a set of notes in their own words to help them work through research design, writing, statistical analysis, and results interpretation. For this class, I’m going to show you

how to prepare your guidebook and assume you are completing it. Rather than have you turn it in, I will give you 3-5 unannounced in class assignments which will allow you to demonstrate you have a mastery of the material. If your guidebook is up to date, you will have a great resource to ensure you complete the work in time.

**Statistical Methods and Interpretation Exam (15%):** Students will have one exam, testing their proficiency with SPSS, hypothesis development, and interpretation of statistical tests. This exam will be take home, open note, and open book. It should take no longer than an hour and a half and must be completed individually.

**Data Analysis Project (20%):** For a final project, students will analyze an existing dataset and produce an essay presenting those results. This assignment is roughly analogous to the “findings” section of an academic research article. Students will be given a research question, a few academic articles, and two datasets. With these materials, students will produce a 6-10 page paper that includes all necessary hypotheses, tables, graphs, and written analysis to answer their research question.

**Research Design (50%):** Each student will write one research paper, 10-12 pages in length. The design’s topic may be chosen from any field of political science, but must have an explicit quantitative, qualitative, or mixed research design. The full grade weight of the paper will be 40% of your total course grade, divided as follows: topic submission and annotated bibliography 7.5%, literature review 7.5%, theory/methods/data 7.5%, final paper submission 17.5%, and design presentation 10%. All assignments are due at 11:59pm on the date listed. Each of these submissions will contain the following:

**Research Question:** a statement of the topic, preliminary research question, and justification of the question or puzzle’s importance. Take a look at the next assignment—it will be necessary to start reading research articles on your topic to complete this assignment without a need for future changes.

**Annotated Bibliography:** This will be followed by a collection of *at least 15 articles* which are relevant to your research topic, and summarized in 1-2 paragraphs each, and identifying major schools of thought, connections, findings, and other information useful to your project. Further guidance on constructing your bibliography can be found in Baglione’s text.

**Literature Review:** evidence of significant connections between your research project and prior work on the topic (see Baglione text). This work will indicate what other scholars have found, show what questions remain to be answered on the topic, and anticipate your theory and hypotheses.

**Theory/Methods/Data:** What are you adding to this work? How does your explanation for your research question connect to the existing literature? After explaining your theory, you need: a testable main hypothesis that would validate or invalidate your theory you will test in support of your theory, operationalization of your concepts, a detailed description of the relationship between variables in your research design (including alternative explanations of the problem), and sources of data and the methods you would use to analyze that data (see Baglione on data and method appropriate to your question). This section should also include limitations resulting from your data or method and a statement about the value of this research.

**Final Paper Submission:** a compilation of revised versions of all of the above into a coherent article. This submission should read like a coherent paper (minus the data analysis) and be ready for submission to an academic journal. *Uploading this paper to Google Drive and your ePortfolio is strongly encouraged so you have a copy for future use.*

**Research Presentation:** In preparation for the formal presentations required in some upper division political science courses and the senior capstone, students will give a short presentation of their research to

their fellow students, and possibly some faculty. Presentations will be limited to 5-7 minutes. Further information on this assignment will be forthcoming.

**Political Science “Midcareer” Reflection (5%):** To help both you and the department with assessment of your skills development in the major, you will complete a short reflection (form provided). The reflection should be taken seriously, as it will help you identify what you should focus on to achieve competence in all of the skills we employ in PS (and you will employ in your future work life). The assignment is graded not on evidence of success, but on the seriousness with which you attempt self-assessment.

**Attendance:** Attendance is required for all synchronous classes and individual meetings. Each missing class will reduce your total course grade by 1.5%. Students with a university approved excuse are not subject to this penalty. Please note that excused absences are three things: severe illness, death in the family, and required school activities. With proof of this absence (for example, an obituary), I am happy to work with you to cover missed material and make up assignments. Common illnesses (colds, sinus infections, non-COVID flu), personal travel, etc. are not excused absences. Students who are in isolation or quarantine can attend class online through Collaborate Ultra from our Canvas page. In person attendance is strongly recommended for all students who are able. Only if you think you fit into the “excused” category do you need to provide me with documentation.

For participation, I expect you to come to class prepared to work, to speak up and answer questions, and contribute substantively to class discussions. Most students come to the class with no prior experience with statistics, therefore it is important that all students ask questions and participate in problem solving. There is no specific number of times you should talk, but you should make a concerted effort to be active and involved in the class. *Participation will not be graded, but will be used to determine whether or not a student’s final grade deserves extra consideration.*

**Late Papers:** All assignments will lose 10% of their value for *each day* they are late, unless you are subject to one of the three excused absence instances above (hospitalization, death in the family, and required school activities) and can provide proof. You are welcome to turn any assignments in early if you cannot attend class when the assignment is due.

Please note that computer problems and printer problems are not an accepted excuse for late papers. You should always, always, always back up your work and allow plenty of time for printing, and so computer problems and printer problems should not be an issue in handing in your project on time.

**Regrading:** I will be glad to take another look at a paper you feel is not graded fairly, with the following conditions: you must wait 24 hours after the paper is handed back, provide a written explanation of why you think you deserve a higher grade, and then you must speak to me about it during my office hours or by appointment. The reason for this is I would like for you to take the paper home and carefully read and think over comments before we talk. If I feel your paper was graded unfairly, I’ll change the grade in your favor, but I also reserve the right to lower your grade upon rereading the paper, if, after reevaluation, I think you received too high a grade.

**Expectations for Academic Honesty:** A college education is intended to develop your skills, knowledge, and confidence. Graded assignments are designed to work on these items. Thus, to gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence of a college-educated person all graded work is to be your own. When you are directed to work alone, an assignment or test must be done by you, its primary ideas are to be your own, and any outside materials should be dealt with properly (quoted when using someone’s words, and cited when quoting or referencing them in any other way). When your teacher directs you to work in teams, the work is to be done by the team. More information can be found here: <https://uwosh.edu/politicalscience/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/08/Academic-Honesty.pdf>

**Office Hours:** The Political Science Department uses Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) for holding office hours. This system is available to all UWO students. Faculty will be available during the hours noted on your syllabus.

When logging into MS Teams, look closely at the status symbols for your instructor. A green dot by the professor's icon (which may be their picture or their initials) means they are available. A red dot means they are busy. Generally, you are able to join office hour meetings and talk openly in the forum or use the chat function freely. At times, your instructor may be in a private meeting with a student during office hours, and will mark my availability as "busy" (a red dot).

We hope that using MS Teams for office hours for all of our courses will help students become more accustomed to virtual office hours during the pandemic. *The main point to remember is that we are available to you. Please use our office hours freely and often. We are here to help.* Many faculty are also happy to set up meetings outside of my office hours if students have conflicts with the posted times.

**Access to SPSS outside of class:** I'm aware of three options for access to SPSS (or an equivalent) outside of class time. **You should try to use one or more of these options the first week of class** to ensure you have access for out-of-class practice and in the event that the class is required to move online.

- 1) **Computer labs** have been reconfigured to promote social distancing. Find more information including locations for each campus: [Computer Labs & Hours](#)
- 2) **New virtual computer labs** have been implemented to allow remote access to generalized lab software. You can access the virtual labs by visiting [uwo.sh/vlab-info](http://uwo.sh/vlab-info).
  - a. You can use the html client or download their program. As SPSS is an "intensive" program (in terms of system resource use), downloading the client is probably the better choice. The server you should enter on the client is: <https://virtuallab.it.uwosh.edu/>
- 3) You can download a freeware program that mimics SPSS. The Program is called PSPP.
  - a. Go to this website: <https://www.gnu.org/software/pspp/get.html>
  - b. Under the label "Binaries" look for the bullet points starting "Windows" or Mac OS X. Select "installers". You should be redirected to this page: <http://pspp.awardspace.info/> In the downloads box, select the top hyperlink (either 32 bit or 64 bit, depending on your system), it should read "Build 42.2.3" in the right hand column of that box.
  - c. You should then be redirected to this site: <https://sourceforge.net/projects/pspp4windows/files/2018-11-09/pspp-20181109-daily-64bits-setup.exe/download> and your download should automatically begin. Then, run the installer. You should have an icon on your desktop that looks like a pie chart, called "PSPP". You can then open the program normally.

**Accommodations** The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. It is the University's policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students are expected to inform Instructors of the need for accommodations as soon as possible by presenting an Accommodation Plan from either the Accessibility Center, Project Success, or both. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared Instructor and student responsibility. The Accessibility Center is part of the Dean of Students Office and is located in 125 Dempsey Hall. For more information, email [accessibilitycenter@uwosh.edu](mailto:accessibilitycenter@uwosh.edu), call 920- 424-3100, or visit the Accessibility Center Website.

**Writing Center:** The Writing Center helps students of all ability levels improve their writing. Trained peer consultants help writers understand an assignment, envision possibilities for a draft, and improve their writing process. They even help writers learn to identify their own proofreading errors. Students can make a free appointment or stop by to see whether a consultant is available. For more information, view their website (<http://www.uwosh.edu/wcenter>), call 920-424-1152, email [wcenter@uwosh.edu](mailto:wcenter@uwosh.edu), or visit them in Suite 102 of the Student Success Center.

**Reading Study Center:** The Reading Study Center is an all-university service whose mission is to facilitate the development of efficient college-level learning strategies in students of all abilities. The center offers strategies for improved textbook study, time management, note-taking, test preparation, and test-taking. For more information, email [readingstudy@uwosh.edu](mailto:readingstudy@uwosh.edu), view the website (<http://www.uwosh.edu/readingstudycenter>), visit them in Nursing Ed Room 201, or call 424-1031.

**Polk Library/Information Literacy:** You have been introduced to Information Literacy in your Quest Speaking and Writing courses. As a reminder, Polk Library offers many professional librarians who can help you find library resources for your research. Specifically, Ted Mulvey, the Information Literacy Librarian, is available to assist you as you access, evaluate, and use information in University Studies Program classes. Phone: 920-424-7329; email: [mulveyt@uwosh.edu](mailto:mulveyt@uwosh.edu). You may also set up a research advisory session with a librarian at: [rap@uwosh.edu](mailto:rap@uwosh.edu).

**Note to Political Science Majors:** Political Science majors should take Political Methodology (245) in either their sophomore year or the first semester of their junior year. Political Science 245 is a prerequisite for the senior capstone, Political analysis (401), and cannot be taken concurrently. If you are currently a political science major or if you think you will be one of our majors in the future, it is important that you save your graded coursework from this class. If you have questions, please see me or any faculty member after class.

**Disclosure statement:** Students are advised to see the following URL for disclosures about essential consumer protection items required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990: <https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/consumer-information/>.

**Grievance statement:** The Department of Political Science is committed to offering you a high-quality classroom experience, and we take your feedback very seriously. If you have concerns about anything related to this course, assignments, or teaching method, you are encouraged to first speak with your instructor directly. If you are not comfortable speaking with the instructor, you are invited to speak with the Chair of the Department of Political Science, Dr. James Krueger. He can be reached at [kruegerj@uwosh.edu](mailto:kruegerj@uwosh.edu). Should he be unable to resolve your concerns, he will guide you to appropriate resources within the College of Letters and Science.

**Other policies:** Please turn your cell phone off or onto silent mode before you enter the classroom. If I see you using your cell phone during class time I will warn you the first time, and mark you as absent after that. *The same is true of using classroom computers for non-class related work.*

Please do not pack up before class is over. If this becomes a problem, pop quizzes or a similar assignment will be your new end of class activity.

I check my email often, and I am happy to answer questions via email. However, please use proper grammar, punctuation, and professional communication when emailing your professor. Also, I am not able to answer questions about grades unless you are using your Oshkosh email address. *All class announcements will be sent to your UW Oshkosh address.*

**Note:** *If substantive changes are made in course syllabus, such as changes in schedule or assignments, notification will be provided in a timely manner and a revised syllabus made available.*

### Course Calendar:

Week 1: T, Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Course Introduction

- Reading assignment: syllabus

T, Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>: Building Blocks: Concepts and Variables

- Reading assignment: King, Keohane, and Verba, Chapter 1, Shugart and Carey “Presidents and Assemblies”

- Week 2: T, Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>: Research Questions and Theory  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Johnson, et al. Chapter 2  
 TH, Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>: Introduction to Social Science Data and SPSS  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Beins, Chapter 3; Lijphart *Patterns of Democracy* 4
- Week 3: T, Feb. 16<sup>th</sup>: Descriptive Statistics and Variable Transformation  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Pollock, Chapters 1, 2, and 3  
 TH, Feb 18<sup>th</sup>: Nominal/Ordinal Comparisons and Graphing  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Pollock, Chapter 4; Keller *The Tao of Statistics* 112-113
- Week 4: T, Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>: Controlled Comparisons  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Pollock, Chapter 5  
 TH, Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>: T-Tests, Sample Means, and Quality Assurance  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Pollock, Chapter 6
- Week 5: T, Mar. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Chi-Square and Measures of Association  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Pollock, Chapter 7; Segal “Supreme Court Support for the Solicitor General: The Effect of Presidential Appointments” (pgs 137-145 only)  
 TH, Mar. 4<sup>th</sup>: Linear Regression, 1  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Pollock, Chapter 8; LeDuc, Niemi, and Norris “Introduction
- Week 6: T, Mar. 9<sup>th</sup>: Linear Regression, 2  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Shively, Chapter 8  
 TH, Mar. 11<sup>th</sup>: **No Class**  
 ▪ **Stats Exam Distributed**  
 ▪ **S, Mar. 14<sup>th</sup>: Statistics Exam DUE by 11:59pm**
- Week 7: T, Mar. 16<sup>th</sup>: Dummy and Interaction Variables  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Pollock, Chapter 9; Fowler and Hall “Do Shark Attacks Influence Presidential Elections?”  
 TH, Mar. 18<sup>th</sup>: Logistic Regression  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Pollock, Chapter 10; Shively, chapter 9
- Spring Break: March 21-28<sup>th</sup>**
- Week 8: T, Mar. 30<sup>th</sup>: Logistic Regression, 2 and Interpreting Tables in Articles  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Strom, Nonwinning Cabinets  
 TH, Apr. 1<sup>st</sup>: Presenting Quantitative Results  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Kastlelec and Leoni; Baglione, pages 313-320
- Week 9: T, Apr. 6<sup>th</sup>: Final questions on the Data Analysis Project  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Prepare your project for submission!  
 ▪ **W, Apr. 7<sup>th</sup>: Data Analysis Project Due by 11:59pm**  
 TH, Apr. 8<sup>th</sup>: Looking ahead to the research paper  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Baglione, Chapter 1
- Week 10: T, Apr. 13<sup>th</sup>: Formulating a Research Question and Annotated Bibliography (AB)  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Baglione, 49-88, refresh on chapter 2  
 TH, Apr. 15<sup>th</sup>: Individual Meetings - A

- Reading assignment:
- **S, Apr. 18<sup>th</sup>: Research Question Due by 11:59pm**

Week 11: T, Apr. 20<sup>th</sup>: Understanding a complete research project (Model for Success)

- Reading assignment: Duren “An Evaluation of the Factors Causing Food Insecurity in Africa”; King, Keohane, and Verba chapter 5

TH, Apr. 22<sup>nd</sup>: Individual Meetings - B

- Reading assignment: Owens-Oshkosh Scholar
- **S, Apr. 25<sup>th</sup>: Annotated Bibliography Due by 11:59pm**

Week 12: T, Apr. 27<sup>th</sup>: Evaluating Literature Reviews

- Reading assignment: Baglione, Chapter 4; Anderson and Guillory “Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems” (pgs. 66-69 only)

TH, Apr. 29<sup>th</sup>: Individual Meetings - A

- Reading assignment: Theory/Model/Hypothesis lecture video; Baglione, Chapter 5; Gierzinski and Eddy
- **S, May 2<sup>nd</sup>: Literature Review Due by 11:59pm**

Week 13: T, May 4<sup>th</sup>: Creating an Effective Research Design

- Reading assignment: Baglione, Chapters 7 and 8; Shively, chapter 7

TH, May 6<sup>th</sup>: Individual Meetings - B

- Reading assignment: Revisions and Checklists lecture video; Baglione Chapters 6 and 9; King, Keohane, and Verba 99-114; also: Paper Final Checklist
- **S, May 9<sup>th</sup>: Theory/Data/Methods Due by 11:59pm**

Week 14: T, May 11<sup>th</sup>: Presentations - A

- Reading assignment:

TH, May 13<sup>th</sup>: Presentations - B

- **Final Papers Due by 11:59pm, May 13<sup>th</sup>**
- **Reflections Due by 11:59pm, May 14<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Weekly schedule:**

##### **Monday - Thursday**

Students should complete assigned readings, review powerpoints and video lectures (if online) or attend lecture (if in person), and ask questions about content on the discussion forums, during office hours, or in class.

##### **Thursday – Sunday**

Complete draft submissions of the homework assignment or portion of your paper due that day. Peer reviews will also be due on Sundays.

##### **At any time:**

Students should contact the instructor with questions, concerns, or ideas for their successful completion of class.