

PS245: POLITICAL METHODOLOGY [3 CREDITS]

University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh
Spring 2023

Class meets 3:00-4:30 T-TH in Sage 1208A
Computer Lab and Sage 2221
Office hours: Wednesday, 12:30-2pm and Thursday,
10-11:30 in person and/or on MS Teams

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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 conflict. 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*, 6th Edition, Sage/CQ Press.
Lisa A. Baglione. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science* 4th Ed. Sage/CQ Pres

Additional course readings and data will be available on Canvas.

Grading Scale and Assignments:

I use a 93/90/87 grading scale in this course (which means that 93 is the cut-point 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:

Article Summaries (10%): One of the most important skills you'll use throughout your career in Political Science (and again as you move into many careers) is the ability to understand, summarize, and preserve articles or reports from other authors. We'll learn a new way of reading academic articles, then practice the skill of writing 1-2 page summaries of those articles to prepare for the annotated bibliography in this course, as well as your other upper

division courses, and work or additional study following graduation from UW Oshkosh. You'll produce 2 summaries and an assignment for your research designs (see below) early in the semester.

SPSS Practice Assignments (10%): Students will complete short assignments demonstrating their knowledge of statistical tests, their requirements, and interpretation in SPSS. These assignments are designed to help students prepare for the exam.

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.

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 or mixed method research design. The full grade weight of the paper will be 50% of your total course grade, divided as follows: topic submission 5%, annotated bibliography 5%, literature review 5%, theory/methods/data 5%, final paper submission 20%, 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. Citations for three articles using the same dependent variable. 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 and Participation (10%): Attendance is required for all 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 type of absence (for example, an obituary), I am happy to work with you to make up missed material. Non-COVID flu, personal travel, etc. are not excused absences. Students who are in isolation or quarantine due to a positive COVID test or exposure must work with the Dean of Students Office to provide documentation to cover absences. That office can be reached at: (920) 424-3100 or <https://uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/staff/>.

For participation, I expect you to come to class having read all assigned materials and prepared to work. Students are expected to 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.

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 develop these attributes. 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 both in person and Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) modalities for holding office hours. This system is available to all UW 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 availability as "busy" (a red dot).

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 office hours if students have conflicts with the posted times.

Access to SPSS outside of class: 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:** 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 <https://uwosh.edu/it/2020/08/virtuallabs/>.
 - 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 SPSSS. 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, 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, 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, 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. You may also set up a research advisory session with a librarian at: 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. If you have questions about this requirement, your course schedule, possible internships, or career preparation please reach out to your faculty adviser. Students are encouraged to meet with their faculty advisers at least once per year. If you are unsure who your adviser is, you can check Titanweb or email Ms. Angelee Hammond at hammond@uwosh.edu.

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. 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, Jan. 31st: Course Introduction

- Reading assignment: syllabus and Baglione, Chapter 1

Th, Feb. 2nd: Building Blocks: Concepts and Variables

- Reading assignment: King, Keohane, and Verba, Chapter 1

▪ **Su, Feb. 5th: Article Summary: Owens(2014) due by 11:59pm**

Week 2: T, Feb. 7th: Research Questions and Theory

- Reading assignment: Johnson, et al. Chapter 2; Shugart and Carey “Presidents and Assemblies”

TH, Feb. 9th: Writing Effective Research Questions

- Reading assignment: Baglione, Chapter 2
- **F, Feb. 10th Homework 1 due by 11:59pm**

Week 3:

T, Feb. 14th: Introduction to Social Science Data and SPSS

- Reading assignment: Pollock Chapter 1; Duquia, et al. (2015)

TH, Feb. 16th: Descriptive Statistics and Variable Transformation

- Reading assignment: Pollock Chapters 2 and 3
- **F, Feb. 17th, Research Question Final due by 11:59pm**

Week 4:

T, Feb. 21st: Preparing your Annotated Bibliography

- Reading assignment: Baglione, Chapter 3

TH, Feb. 23rd: Nominal/Ordinal Comparisons

- Reading assignment: Pollock, Chapter 4; Keller *The Tao of Statistics* 112-113
- **F, Feb. 24th: Article Summary: Achen and Bartels (2004) due by 11:59pm**

Week 5:

T, Feb. 28th: 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)
- **Homework 2 due by 11:59pm**

TH, Mar. 2nd: Chi-Square, day 2 and Graphing

- Reading assignment: Kemp and Kissane (2010)
- **F, March 3rd: Annotated Bibliography (first five sources) Due**

Week 6:

T, Mar. 7th: Linear Regression, 1

- Reading assignment: Pollock, Chapter 8; Beins, Chapter 11

TH, Mar. 9th: Linear Regression, 2

- Reading assignment: Shively, Chapter 8; Fowler and Hall “Do Shark Attacks Influence Presidential Elections?”
- **F, Mar. 10th: Homework 3 due by 11:59pm**

Week 7:

T, Mar. 14th: Logistic Regression

- Reading assignment: Pollock, Chapter 10; Shively, chapter 9
- **Stats Exam Distributed**

TH, Mar. 16th: Preparing Tables and Writing Results

- Reading assignment: Table Template, Anderson and Guillory (1997)
- **F, Mar. 17th: Statistics Exam DUE by 11:59pm**

Spring Break: March 19th-26th

Week 8:

T, Mar. 28th: PS Methods: Comparative Case Studies

- Reading assignment: Johnson, Chapter 7; Lijphart *Patterns of Democracy* 4

TH, Mar. 30th: Evaluating Literature Reviews

- Reading assignment: Baglione, Chapter 4; Reread A&G (1997) pp. 66-69

Week 9:

T, Apr. 4th: The Bridge: Your Theory, Hypotheses, and Model

- Reading assignment: Baglione, Chapter 5; Gierzynski, Theory

TH, Apr. 6th: Annotated Bibliography meetings (online)

- Reading assignment: prepare your annotated bibliography
- **F, Apr. 7th: Annotated Bibliography due by 11:59pm**

- Week 10: T, Apr. 11th: Creating an Effective Research Design Designs
▪ Reading assignment: Baglione, Chapters 7 and 8
TH, Apr. 13th: PS Methods: Survey Research and Experimental (online)
▪ Reading assignment: Beins, Chapters 6; Shively, chapter 7
▪ **F, Apr. 14th: Literature Review Draft due by 11:59pm**
- Week 11: T, Apr. 18th: Improving Research Designs
▪ Reading assignment: King, Keohane, and Verba, 99-114 and Chapter 5
T, Apr. 20th: Individual Paper Meetings (online)
▪ Reading assignment: Be prepared to ask and answer questions quickly!
▪ **F, Apr. 21st: Theory/Methods/Data draft Due by 11:59pm**
- Week 12: T, Apr. 25th: Effective Presentations
▪ Reading assignment: Presentation Instructions; Effective Presentations, Sample Presentation
TH, Apr. 27th: Individual Meetings: Presentation Review (online)
▪ Reading assignment: prepare your presentation slides
- Week 13: T, May 2nd: **Class Presentations**
TH, May 4th: Conclusions, Introductions, and Titles (online)
▪ Reading assignment: Baglione, Chapter 9
- Week 14: T, May 9th: Revisions, Edits, Finishing your Paper
▪ Read: Baglione, Chapter 6; Paper Final Checklist
TH, May 11th: No Class: Last minute questions for Prof. Krueger
▪ **TH, May 11th: Final Draft of Paper due by Midnight**
▪ **F, May 12th: Reflection due by Noon**