

# Political Science 390

## Introduction to Research and Data in Political Science

University of Washington  
Winter 2023

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Office Hours:

Wednesdays, 3:30-4:30 in Gowen 29

Thursdays, 4:00-5:00, through the Zoom link at the top of the course's Canvas page

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### Course Description:

Most social science classes focus on the theories, concepts, and findings that have emerged from research in a particular area, rather than the research process itself. Our class will reverse that emphasis. We'll get "under the hood" of research in political science to understand how to design and interpret a research study. The topics to be covered include identifying questions to investigate, developing theories, collecting data, finding reliable and valid measures, and analyzing results. We'll also examine the tools and methods of social science research such as surveys, experiments, case studies, and statistical analysis. Students will learn basic skills in working with data.

Students will emerge from the class better equipped to conduct research of their own and assess the credibility of other people's research. The class does not presume any prior knowledge of or experience with research. We will spend most of our time focusing on the kinds of quantitative data commonly used in the social sciences today.

Students who want to pursue further study in statistical methods and data science are encouraged to consider:

- CS&SS 221/SOC 221/STAT 221, Statistical Concepts and Methods for the Social Sciences
- CS&SS 321/SOC 321/STAT 321 and CS&SS 322/SOC 322/STAT 322, Case-Based Social Statistics II
- Other courses in the Data Science Minor, <https://dataminor.uw.edu/>

- Undergraduate fellows program of the Center for American Politics and Public Policy, <https://www.polisci.washington.edu/research/undergraduate/cappp-undergraduate-fellows-program>
- Political science honors program, <https://www.polisci.washington.edu/honors-program-political-science>

### **Learning Objectives:**

The course has the following goals for students:

- to learn how to think like a social scientist
- to understand the research methods used by political scientists
- to see how evidence and data can yield insights into political phenomena
- to learn basic tools for data analysis

### **Course Requirements:**

The grading is based on a midterm exam, a final exam, a paper, a data analysis assignment, and a set of short weekly assignments. Most of the exam questions will ask you evaluate different aspects of hypothetical or actual research projects.

### **Grading:**

Acknowledgement of course policies: 1%

Midterm exam: 23%

Final exam: 30%

Article review assignment: 16%

Data analysis assignment: 16%

Section assignments: 14%

### **Required textbook**

Janet Buttolph Johnson, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff, *Political Science Research Methods*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed.

### **In-person, no recordings:**

The course will be in-person, without recordings. Copies of all lecture slides will be posted at the course's Canvas page shortly after each class session. Thus, if you need to miss a class, you will have access to the notes from it.

### **Religious Accommodations:**

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at Religious Accommodations Policy, <https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/>. Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the Religious Accommodations Request form, available at <https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/>.

### **Disability Accommodations:**

Disability Resources for Students (DRS) offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary or permanent disability that requires accommodations (this includes but is not limited to mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, and physical or health impacts), please contact DRS at 206-543-8924, or [uwdrs@uw.edu](mailto:uwdrs@uw.edu). See also the DRS website at <http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/>

### **Academic Honesty:**

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstances. A suspected instance will be reported and disciplinary actions may ensue. For further detail about the University of Washington's academic honesty policy, see <https://www.washington.edu/cssc/for-students/academic-misconduct/>

### **Plagiarism and Turnitin:**

The UW has a license agreement with Turnitin, an educational tool that helps prevent or identify plagiarism from Internet resources. Your instructor will use the service by requiring that assignments are submitted electronically through Canvas and checked by Turnitin. The Turnitin report indicates the amount of original text in your work and whether all material that you quoted, paraphrased, summarized, or used from another source is appropriately referenced.

### **Other Course Policies:**

1. In cases of illness and other extenuating circumstances, the instructor will consider requests for a deadline extension or a makeup exam, so long as a student makes the request ahead of time. The instructor will not look favorably upon requests received after a deadline has passed.
2. There may be instances where a student needs to request an extension but is not comfortable sharing any details with the instructor. The student nevertheless needs to contact the instructor before the deadline. The student can reference something general as the reason for the request, such as a "health problem" or "personal situation."
3. In cases where a student encounters an emergency within four hours of a deadline and needs to ask for an extension, the student's request will include (as an attachment) the work they have completed so far, which could include notes, an outline, and/or a draft.
4. Cases of cheating and plagiarism will be referred to UW's Community Standards and Student Conduct Office.
5. Once an in-person exam begins, a student will not be allowed to leave the room until they submit the exam.
6. A grade of incomplete for the quarter will be given only in cases where a student has been doing satisfactory work up until the last two weeks.
7. Unless authorized through Disability Resources for Students (DRS), students are not permitted to make recordings of lectures or sections.

## **Schedule of Topics and Assignments:**

Note: Some of the readings may change during the course, but you will always have advance notice

**Wednesday, January 4** Introduction to the course

**Friday, January 6** Thinking about social science research

**Monday, January 9** The science in political science

Read: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 2

**Wednesday, January 11** Theories, models, and causation

Read: Marshal Ijaz, How to Identify a Research Question

Read: Stefan Götze, A Brief Guide for Developing a Research Question

**Wednesday, January 11, 8:00 PM.** Acknowledgment of course policies due

**Thursday, January 12, 8:00 PM.** Section assignment #1 due

**Friday, January 13** Finding researchable questions

**Monday, January 16** No class (MLK Day)

**Wednesday, January 18** The challenges of demonstrating causation

Read: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 6

**Thursday, January 19, 8:00 PM.** Section assignment #2 due

**Friday, January 20** Research design

**Monday, January 23** Conceptualization and measurement

Read: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 4

**Wednesday, January 25** Sampling

Read: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 5

**Thursday, January 26, 8:00 PM.** Section assignment #3 due

**Friday, January 27** Conceptualizing and measuring variables

**Monday, January 30** Sampling; surveys and survey research

Watch: Armin Trost, Survey Design Part 1

**Wednesday, February 1** Surveys and survey research

Read: Pew Research Center, Writing Survey Questions

Watch: Seth Stephens-Davidowitz, What Google Searches Can Tell Us About Who We Really

Are

**Friday, February 3** Designing surveys; review

**Monday, February 6** Midterm exam

**Wednesday, February 8** Descriptive and inferential statistics

Read: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 11

**Thursday, February 9, 8:00 PM.** Section assignment #4 due

**Friday, February 10** Descriptive and inferential statistics

**Monday, February 13** Descriptive and inferential statistics

Read: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 12

**Wednesday, February 15** Hypothesis testing and inferential statistics

Watch: Hypothesis Testing Problems

**Friday, February 17** Inferential statistics

**Monday, February 20** No class (Presidents' Day)

**Monday, February 20, 8:00 PM** Article review assignment due

**Wednesday, February 22** Correlation and bivariate regression

Read: Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff, chapter 14

**Thursday, February 23, 8:00 PM.** Section assignment #5 due

**Friday, February 24** Calculating correlations and bivariate regressions

**Monday, February 27** Bivariate regression and multiple regression

**Wednesday, March 1** Multiple regression

**Friday, March 3** Estimating multiple regressions

**Monday, March 6** Experiments

Read: Saloni Dattani, Why Randomized Controlled Trials Matter and the Procedures that Strengthen Them

**Monday, March 6, 8:00 PM** Data analysis assignment due

**Wednesday, March 8** Natural experiments, the comparative method, and case studies

**Friday, March 9** Political science research; review

**Monday, March 13 from 2:30-4:20** Final exam