

PS103: Political Science Research Methods

****Last revised 1/4/11****

Spring 2011

Professor: Debbie Schildkraut
210 Packard Hall, 7-3492
deborah.schildkraut@tufts.edu

Class meets: BLOCK D: Monday, 9:30 – 10:20, Eaton 208
Tues., & Thurs., 10:30 – 11:20, Eaton 208

Office hours: Mondays, 10:30 – 11:45, Thursdays 3:00 – 4:00, and by appointment.

Course Description:

This course introduces the use of quantitative methods for investigating political issues such as campaigns and elections, the death penalty, public opinion about war and terrorism, and other policy controversies. Students will develop research designs and learn how to collect, analyze, and present data. The course emphasizes hands-on training that will provide useful skills for academic and professional settings. Most readings and assignments emphasize politics in the United States, though the skills we will develop are useful for every aspect of political science.

Class meets three times per week in either a lecture or workshop format. No prior data analysis or statistics background is necessary. The only prerequisite is that students must have already taken one of the core foundation Political Science courses (11, 21, 44, 46, 61).

The first portion of the course focuses on questions of research design and on several research methods commonly used in political science, such as content analysis, surveys, and experiments. The remainder of the course will be an introduction to quantitative methods through applied statistics. We will cover several methodological issues, including measurement and presentation, and basic statistical procedures, including confidence intervals, hypothesis testing, correlations, and regression. The emphasis will be on achieving an intuitive understanding of the central concepts and on using computers for data analysis. The main goal of the course is for you to become critical consumers of empirical social science research as well as competent producers of your own research. Coursework includes problem sets and some research assignments.

This course fulfills the Political Science Department's methodology requirement and is considered part of the subfield in American Politics. It also satisfies the University's math distribution requirement. It ***does not*** satisfy a social science distribution requirement.

You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss issues raised in the readings. Read the assignments *before class* on the date they are listed. For weeks in which there is more than one reading listed, please read the items in the order in which they appear on the syllabus.

I strongly encourage you to follow current events and to read a national newspaper, such as *The New York Times*, or watch *The PBS News Hour* several times per week. I rely on current political issues and events for illustration, and I welcome your examples and observations in this regard.

For many research techniques we cover, the readings will consist of a methodological piece that explains the technique and a substantive article or chapter in which the technique is used in practice. The following 4 books are required reading for the course and are on sale at the college bookstore and on reserve in the library:

1. W. Phillips Shively. 2009. *The Craft of Political Research*, 8th edition.
Note: I do not mind if you purchase a used copy of the 7th edition and use that instead. In nearly all cases, the pages I assign are the same in both editions. Where they are different, I make a note of it in the reading list for that particular day. I tried to get the 7th edition for the bookstore to save you all some money, but the publisher was unable to supply it. The library has the 8th edition on reserve.
2. Janet Buttolph Johnson and H. T. Reynolds. 2008. *Political Science Research Methods*, 6th edition. (JR).
3. Alan Agresti and Barbara Finlay. 2009. *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*, 4th edition. (AF)
4. John Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 1995. *Congress as Public Enemy*, Cambridge University Press.

There are additional required readings posted on blackboard (B) under “Course Documents” → “Readings”.

Course Website on Blackboard:

If you are already registered for PS103, you should have access to the course website on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.tufts.edu>). Follow the log-in instructions. There, you will find the syllabus, some course readings, and links to websites that you may find useful as you work on assignments (under “External Links”). I will use Blackboard to send emails to the class regarding announcements and possible syllabus changes or updates, and you will be required to use Blackboard to complete most assignments.

If you are adding the course, please send me an email with your full name so that I can make sure you get full access to the PS103 site. In the meantime, you can view the site as a guest by selecting “Course Catalog” from the main Blackboard site and following the appropriate links: “Tufts University Academic Course Sites,” → “School of Liberal Arts” → “Political Science” → “Schildkraut, Deborah.”

The registrar automatically enters your Tufts e-mail address from the directory as the email address associated with your membership in our class. If you would like to change the email address the registrar’s office sets for you, log in to Blackboard and then select “Personal information” → “Edit personal information.” It is your responsibility to make sure that your correct email address is entered in Blackboard.

Assignments and Grading:

Class participation:	5%
Problem sets:	60% (6 total: 1 & 2 = 5%, 3 = 15%, 4 & 5 = 10%, 6 = 15%)
Literature review:	10%
Final exam:	25%

All assignments are graded out of 100 points. I use the chart below to convert numbers to letters:

97 – 100 = A+
94 – 96 = A
90 – 93 = A-
87 – 89 = B+
84 – 86 = B
80 – 83 = B-
77 – 79 = C+
74 – 76 = C
70 – 73 = C-
65 – 70 = D
Below 65 = F

Important Dates:

Tues., Feb. 8:	Problem set #1 due
Thurs., Feb. 17:	Problem set #2 due
Mon., Feb. 21:	Presidents' Day: NO CLASS
Thurs., Feb. 24:	Monday schedule: Class meets at 9:30!
Mon, Feb. 28:	Literature review due
Thurs., March 10:	Problem set #3 due
Thurs., March 17:	NO CLASS (due to conference travel)
Mon., March 21 – Thurs., March 24:	Spring Break: NO CLASS
Thurs., March 31:	Problem set #4 due
Mon., April 18:	Patriots Day: NO CLASS
Tues., April 19:	Problem set #5 due
Mon., May 2:	Problem set #6 due
Wed., May 11:	Final exam: 3:30 – 5:30pm

Problem Sets:

There are 6 problem sets in this course. They are due at the start of class on the day indicated in the syllabus. They are graded out of 100 points and lose 5 points for every day late. I encourage you to work with each other on the assignments that involve statistical analysis, although you are to hand in your own assignment and use your own words to write up the analysis and interpretation of the results. See me if the difference between acceptable and unacceptable

collaboration is unclear. Problems with computers or printers are **not** acceptable excuses for late assignments. Back up your work OFTEN. Proper grammar, correct spelling, and appropriate citation of sources are minimum requirements for acceptable assignments. When in doubt, cite it. See me if you have any questions about properly documenting your sources.

Note: completing some problem sets requires using STATA, the statistical package for our class. STATA is only available on some computers, such as those in the Eaton lab. Be sure that you budget your time such that you are not in need of STATA when the public labs are closed.

OPTIONAL: You can purchase your own copy Stata/IC 11 from Tufts at a discount (\$98.00 for 1 yr license; \$65.00 for 6 month license). To do so, go to: <http://uit.tufts.edu/?pid=334&c=379> and follow instructions. I do not assume nor expect that you will buy your own copy of STATA.

Literature review:

This 6 – 8 page assignment is due on **Monday, Feb. 28**. It is worth 10% of your course grade. More information about this assignment will be available later.

Academic integrity:

Assignments that you submit for this course will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs if any evidence of academic dishonesty is detected. The Office of the Dean of Students publishes a thorough pamphlet on academic integrity and plagiarism. You can find it at: <http://studentservices.tufts.edu/dos/publications.htm>.

Topics and Readings:

Week 1:

Thus., 1/20: Introduction (no reading)

Week 2:

Mon., 1/24: Studying politics

Reading:

- PS103 syllabus
- JR: Chs. 1 (skim), 2 (pp. 27 – 48)
- (B) Adams, William. 2005. *Election Night News and Voter Turnout*. pp. 1 – 12 only.

Tues., 1/25: Designing a research question and developing hypotheses

Reading:

- JR: Ch. 3.
- Shively: Chs. 2 (pp. 13 – 21), 3 (pp. 32 – 37), 6 (entire)

- Thurs., 1/27: Developing hypotheses, plus demo of websites for finding political science data.
- No additional reading

Week 3:

Mon., 1/31: Lab workshop: Learning Excel

Reading:

- (B) Wallgren, A., et al. *Graphing Statistics and Data: Creating Better Charts*
****Problem set #1 distributed today****

Tues., 2/1: Workshop: Evaluating hypotheses

Reading:

- JR : Ch. 5 (pp. 147 – 165).

Thurs., 2/3: Measurement

Reading:

- Shively: Chs. 4 (entire), 5 (to pp. 66)
- JR : Ch. 4.

Week 4:

Mon., 2/7: Measurement, continued

- No additional reading

Tues. 2/8: Discussion of problem set #1.

****Problem set #1 due at start of class****

****Problem set #2 distributed today****

Thurs., 2/10: Literature review and secondary sources

Reading:

- (B) Knopf, Jeffrey. 2006. "Doing a Literature Review," PS: Political Science and Politics, 40: 127 – 132.
- (B) Sullivan, John, James Piereson, and George Marcus. 1978. "Ideological Constraint in the Mass Public: A Methodological Critique and Some New Findings," *American Journal of Political Science*. 22: 233-249.
- Hibbing and Theiss Morse: Chs. 1-2.

Week 5:

Mon., 2/14: Surveys: Sampling, Construction, and Implementation

Reading:

- JR: Chs. 7, 10 (pp. 297 – 331).
- Hibbing and Theiss Morse: Chs. 3-4, and appendix (pp. 163 – 173).
- (B) Adams, William. 2005. *Election Night News and Voter Turnout*, Ch. 4 (pp. 59 – 72)

Tues., 2/15: Public opinion data and introduction to STATA

Reading:

- Lab handout and PS 3 codebook (to be distributed in class on Monday, 9/29)
- JR: Ch. 12 (pp. 426 – 439)

Thurs., 2/17: More introduction to STATA

****Problem set #2 due at start of class ****

****Problem set #3 distributed in class today****

Week 5:

Mon., 2/21: Presidents' Day: NO CLASS

Tues., 2/22: Experiments

Reading:

- JR: Ch. 5 (pp. 127 – 147).
- (B) James Druckman. 2001. "Using Credible Advice to Overcome Framing Effects," *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 17: 62 – 82.
- (B) Adams, William. 2005. *Election Night News and Voter Turnout*, Ch. 5 (pp. 75- 81).
- (B) Vedantam, Shankar. 2008. "Your Neighbors Could Find Out, So You'd Better Vote," *Washington Post*.

Thurs., 2/24: Content analysis

Reading:

- JR: Ch. 9 (skim 266-281; read the rest).
- (B) Nacos, Brigitte and Oscar Torres-Reyna. 2003. "Framing Muslim-Americans Before and After 9/11," in *Framing Terrorism*.

****NOTE: Today is a MONDAY schedule; class meets at 9:30****

Week 6:

Mon., 2/28: Discussion of literature reviews

****Literature review due today****

Tues., 3/1: Introduction to statistics and descriptive statistics

Reading:

- AF: Chs. 1, 3 (pp. 31 – 51; 58 – 59)

Thurs., 3/3: Descriptive statistics; in-class workshop

Reading:

- JR: Ch. 11 (pp. 351 – 378)

Week 7:

Mon., 3/7: Descriptive statistics with Excel and STATA

Tues., 3/8: Probability distributions and z-scores

Reading:

- JR: re-read pp. 227 – 236.
- AF: Ch. 4.

Thurs., 3/10: More on probability distributions and z-scores

****Problem set #3 due at start of class****

****Problem set #4 distributed in class****

Week 8:

Mon., 3/14: Distribution exercise

Tues., 3/15: Lab workshop: Probability distributions

Thurs., 3/17: NO CLASS (due to conference travel)

Week 9:

Mon., 3/21 – Thurs., 3/24: Spring Break: NO CLASS

Week 10:

Mon., 3/28: Confidence intervals

Reading:

- AF: Ch. 5 (pp. 107 – 123).

Tues., 3/29: Confidence intervals and significance tests

Reading:

- AF: Ch. 6 (pp. 143 – 159; 181 - 165).

Thurs., 3/31: Significance tests, continued

Reading:

- AF: Ch. 7 (pp. 185 – 193).

****Problem set #4 due in class****

Week 11:

Mon., 4/4: Significance tests, continued.

Reading:

- Shively: Ch. 10 (pp. 162 – 164 in 7th edition; pp. 163 – 165 in 8th edition).

Tues., 4/5: Confidence intervals and significance tests with STATA

****Problem set #5 distributed in class****

Thurs., 4/7: Confidence intervals and significance tests with STATA, continued

Week 12:

Mon., 4/11: Bivariate data analysis: crosstabs and chi-square

Reading:

- JR: Ch. 12 (pp. 429 – 439; 454 – 459).
- AF: Ch. 8 (pp. 221 – 229)
- Shively: Ch. 10 (pp. 148-158 in 7th edition; pp. 150 – 160 in 8th edition)

Tues., 4/12: Bivariate regression

Reading:

- AF: Ch. 9 (pp. 255 – 268; 276 – 281).
- Shively: Ch. 8 (pp. 111 – 122 in 7th edition; pp. 112 – 123 in 8th edition).

Thurs., 4/14: Regression, continued

Week 13:

Mon., 4/18: Patriots Day: NO CLASS

Tues., 4/19: Bivariate correlation

Reading:

- AF: Ch. 9 (pp. 269 – 272).
- JR: Ch. 12 (pp. 477 – 498).
- Shively: Ch. 8 (pp. 122 – 131 in 7th edition; pp. 123 – 131 in 8th edition).

****Problem set #5 due in class****

****Problem set #6 distributed in class today****

Thurs., 4/21: More on regression and correlation

Week 14:

Mon., 4/25: Regression workshop in STATA

Tues., 4/26: Multiple regression

Reading:

- AF: Ch. (pp. 321 – 326).
- JR: Ch. (pp. 514 – 519).
- Shively: Ch. 9 (pp. 141 – 147 in 7th edition; pp. 142 – 149 in 8th edition)
- Hibbing and Theiss-Morse: Chs. 6 & 8.

Thurs., 4/28: Regression workshop

Reading:

- (B) Tolbert, Caroline and Rodney Hero. 1996. “Race/Ethnicity and Direct Democracy: An Analysis of California’s Illegal Immigration Initiative,” *The Journal of Politics* v58, n3, pp. 806-818.

Week 15:

Mon., 5/2: Free day/make-up day/review for final

****Problem set #6 due in class****

FINAL EXAM: Wed., May 11, 3:30 – 5:30pm

Note: It is your responsibility to make sure that your end-of-semester travel plans do not conflict with the final exam. Alternate exams WILL NOT be administered due to travel.