

Instructor

Simon Weschle
Assistant Professor of Political Science
Office Hours: M 2:00 - 3:30 pm
or by appointment

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Teaching Assistants

Dongshu Liu
Sections: 101 (10:35-11:30) and 103 (12:45-1:40)

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Raza Raja
Sections: 102 (10:35-11:30) and 104 (12:45-1:40)

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Class Information

Days: M/W

Time: 11:40 am - 12:35 pm

Classroom: Falk 104

Course Description

The purpose of this course, required for political science majors, is to build skills for conducting, interpreting, and presenting political science research. These skills include: basic research and data collection practices, techniques for measuring political science concepts quantitatively, hypothesis testing, interpretation of statistical evidence, and the presentation of findings in a clear and compelling manner. Tying these components together is a thematic focus on important political science concepts such as democracy, power, or representation.

Course Philosophy

This course adds tremendous value to your political science major or minor. It is designed to have you learn and practice a discrete set of skills that can be applied widely both inside and outside of political science. While politics is not science, you will learn how the scientific method can be applied to the study of politics.

The course is designed first to help you learn how to analyze information. The frenetic advancement of technology has produced an expansion of information and data about the political world. This course will help you consume logical arguments, data, and statistics.

How do you evaluate a theory? A hypothesis? A claim about an observable relationship between X and Y? How do you know when someone is lying with statistics? You will be a better critic of other people's work especially work that uses basic statistics. You should also leave this course thinking more systematically and critically about the truth claims made by the media, policymakers, and professors.

Next, this course will help you learn critical empirical methods for conducting your own re-

search. The first part of the course will examine the logic behind conceptualizing and analyzing ideas. Ideas about politics are often abstract such as democracy, power, and values. This course will help you evaluate these concepts with more precision.

This course will also help you develop and test your own ideas. This includes recognizing the steps to creating sound theories and testable hypotheses. You will also learn the comparative method and become familiar with case studies. Finally, you will learn basic statistical analysis. Statistics provide strategies and tools for using data to gain insight into real problems. This class will help you become a better political science student and a democratic citizen.

Course Objectives

1. The primary purpose of this course is to prepare students, especially political science majors and minors, to read and understand original research in political science, especially quantitative research.
2. The course will also increase students' understanding of the following topics: concepts, variables, and hypotheses; literature reviews and research design strategies; quantitative analysis of data; and making effective arguments.
3. This course should prove useful in other ways as well. In nearly every area of life you are presented with claims and evidence in support of these claims. This course will help you develop skills that will enable you to evaluate these claims more rigorously and to make better-grounded claims of your own.

Course Materials

Required Text: Pollock, Philip H. 2016. *The Essentials of Political Analysis*. 5th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

MAKE SURE you have the correct edition (5th) of the textbook. It is available for purchase at the SU Bookstore and online outlets. Additional readings not in the Pollock book will be posted to Blackboard.

Assignments and Grading

Your grade in this class will be based on attendance quizzes, two exams, four problem sets, and your grade from the discussion section.

- *Attendance Quizzes (10%)*: The reading load for this course is light in order to enable a close reading of each text. Before each class, I recommend that you take notes on the readings: the author's argument, the evidence for that argument, and how this argument relates to the other readings. This will help you prepare for the problem sets and the exams. I will from time to time give short in-class quizzes on the readings for class. This quizzes will be used for attendance grading in lecture, and if a student answers all the questions correctly there will be extra credit points given to that student for the day.

- *Two Exams (20% each)*: Exams take place on **October 16** and **December 6**. They are closed book/closed notes. Note that for both exams, makeup exams will only be given in truly exceptional circumstances, such as illness (with appropriate documentation). If you know you will miss an exam, notify us as soon as possible.
- *Four Problem Sets (30% total)*: You will receive four problem sets throughout the semester (see Course Schedule below for dates when they are handed out and when they are due). All assignments will be due in section. Assignments that are late will be penalized by 10 percentage points for every 24 hours past the due date. Any homework extension requests must be made to me personally and at the time of the homework being passed out in lecture or sooner. All assignments should be typed and printed (rather than hand-written) in their entirety. There will be some assignments that require you use EXCEL for simple data analysis.
- *Discussion Section (20%)*: You will receive a syllabus for your section that explains grading for the section. The discussion section is designed for small group discussion and activities that are integral in a course like this that requires you master a specific skill set.

We will post grades to Blackboard. You are expected to keep track of your own grade using the raw scores from Blackboard and the weights above. Do not request your grade from your teaching assistant without working out the grade yourself using the scores from Blackboard.

Electronic Devices Policy

All electronic devices (tablet, laptop, phone) must be turned off for the duration of the class meeting time. Electronic devices can be distracting to people around the user as well as to the users themselves. If you don't believe me, believe science: A number of studies have now shown that students who were allowed to use a laptop in class scored lower than students who were forbidden from using one. So by instituting this policy, I am improving your final grade.

Attendance and Class Discussion

Since the assignments cover the material discussed in class, it is in students' interest to attend every class sessions. There will be 7 (plus or minus 2) reading quizzes that will be given at random times throughout the semester. These will be used to determine your attendance grade. If you are in class for the quiz regardless of your performance you receive full credit for that day and if you get all three reading questions correctly then you receive extra credit for the day.

Email Policy

Email is the best way to reach me; of course, students are welcome to drop by during office hours as well or make an appointment. I will usually respond to email within 48 hours. I will **NOT** respond to questions that are answered in the syllabus. Students are expected to check their email accounts regularly, as I will be using email to provide announcements and updates about the course. See Syracuse's email policy at <http://supolicies.syr.edu/it/email.htm>.

Religious Observances

SU's religious observances policy, at http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm, is intended to recognize the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protect the rights of students (as well as faculty and staff) to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance - provided they notify their instructors no later than the end of the second week of classes.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

I am committed to supporting Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This means that in general no individual who is otherwise qualified shall be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity, solely by reason of having a disability.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) located at 804 University Avenue, third floor or go to the ODS website at disabilityservices.syr.edu and click current students tab to register on-line. You may also call 315.443.4498 to speak to someone regarding specific access needs. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue 'Accommodation Letters' to students as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity

Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy is intended to hold students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university policy. The university policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities.

The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same written work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. The presump-

tive penalty for a first offense by an undergraduate student is course failure, accompanied by a transcript notation indicating that the failure resulted from a violation of Academic Integrity Policy. The standard sanction for a first offense by a graduate student is suspension or expulsion. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

Privacy and Student Records

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) sets forth requirements regarding the privacy of student records. FERPA governs both the access to and release of those records, known as education records, and the information they contain. Under FERPA, faculty have a legal responsibility to protect the confidentiality of student records. For additional information about FERPA and SU's FERPA policy, see: <http://www.syr.edu/registrar/staff/ferpa>.

Course Schedule

- Aug 28 – Introduction to the Course
 - Aug 30 – What is Political Science?
 - Shepsle, Kenneth A. 2010. “It Isn’t Rocket Science, but...” In: *Analyzing Politics*, 2nd. ed., ch. 1. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (Blackboard)
 - Noel, Hans. 2010. “Ten Things Political Scientists Know that You Don’t” *The Forum: Political Science and Practical Politics* 8:3. (Blackboard)
 - Sep 4 – No Class: Labor Day
 - Sep 6 – Making Effective Arguments in Political Science. Part A: Writing
 - Wilhoit, Stephen. 2009. “The Elements of Persuasive Academic Arguments.” In: *A Brief Guide to Writing Academic Arguments*, ch. 2. New York: Longman. (Blackboard)
 - Sep 11 – Making Effective Arguments in Political Science. Part B: Visual Presentation of Data
 - Zinovyev, Andrei. 2011. “Data Visualization in Political and Social Sciences.” In *SAGE International Encyclopedia of Political Science* by Badie, B., Berg-Schlosser, D., Morlino, L. A. (Eds.). (Blackboard)
 - <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/29/our-favorite-pew-research-center-data-visualizations-from-2014/>
 - <https://flowingdata.com/tag/upshot/>
 - Sep 13 – Concepts and Measurement
 - Pollock, Ch. 1
- [Problem Set #1 distributed in lecture](#)
- Sep 18 – Variables
 - Pollock, Ch. 2
 - Sep 20 – Hypotheses
 - Pollock, Ch. 3
 - Sep 25 – Literature Search and Literature Review

- Knopf, Jeffrey W. 2006. “Doing a Literature Review.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31(1): 127-132.
- Baglione, Lisa A. 2012. “Learning Proper Citation Forms, Finding the Scholarly Debate, and Summarizing and Classifying Arguments: The Annotated Bibliography.” In: *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Ch. 3.

- Sep 27 – Methods Toolbox. Part A: Experiments and Quasi-Experiments

- Pollock, Ch. 4 (pp. 78-84).

[Sep 29 – Problem Set #1 due in section](#)

- Oct 2 – Methods Toolbox. Part B: Quantitative and Qualitative Research

- Brians, Craig, Lars Willnat, Jarol B. Manheim, and Richard C. Rich. 2011. “Designing Your Research and Choosing Your Qualitative and Quantitative Methods.” In: *Empirical Political Analysis: Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods*. Boston: Longman. Ch. 4. (Blackboard)

[Problem Set #2 distributed in lecture](#)

- Oct 4 – Methods Toolbox. Part C: The Comparative Method

- He, Kai. 2013. “Case Study and the Comparative Method.” In: *Political Science Research in Practice* New York: Routledge. Ch. 3. (Blackboard)

- Oct 9 – Methods Toolbox. Part D: Case Studies and Process Tracing

- Van Evera, Stephen. 1997. “What are case studies? How should they be performed?” In: *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Ch. 2. (Blackboard)

- Oct 11 – Review of Part I of the course

[Oct 13 – Problem Set #2 due in section](#)

- [Oct 16 – EXAM # 1](#)

- Oct 18 & Oct 23 – Using Data for Comparisons and Cross-Tabulations

- Pollock, Ch. 4 (pp. 84-97), and Ch. 5.

- Oct 25 & Oct 30 – Sampling and Surveys

- Pollock, Ch. 6.

- Monroe, Alan C. 2000. “Survey Research.” In: *Essentials of Political Research*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press. Ch. 5. (Blackboard)

Oct 25 – Problem Set #3 distributed in lecture

- Nov 1 – Significance Testing, Part 1
- Nov 6 – Significance Testing, Part 2
 - Pollock, Ch. 7. DO NOT READ the section on “Measures of Association” (pp. 169-176).
- Nov 8 – Correlation
 - Pollock, Ch. 8.

Nov 10 – Problem Set #3 due in section

- Nov 13 & Nov 15 – Linear Regression
 - Pollock, Ch. 8, pp. 187-206

Nov 13 – Problem Set #4 distributed in lecture

- Nov 20 & Nov 22 – No Class: Thanksgiving Break
- Nov 27 & Nov 29 – Linear Regression
 - Pollock, Ch. 8, pp. 187-206

Dec 1 – Problem Set #4 due in section

- Dec 4 – Review of Part I of the course
- **Dec 6 – EXAM # 2**