

Introduction to Research in Political Science

POLS 15

Fall 2019

Instructor:

Professor Heather Stoll
hstoll(at)ucsb.edu
Ellison 3715
Office Hours: R 11:00–1:00 p.m. or by appointment

Teaching Assistants:

Sinan Isik and Rui Wang
TA e-mail addresses, offices, office hours, and sections available from the course Gaucho Space site

1 Course Objectives

This course is an introduction to research in political science. Its goal is to familiarize you with the social scientific study of politics. We will learn how to take a *scientific* approach to questions about political phenomena instead of the more familiar *advocacy* approach taken by politicians, interest groups, and lobbyists. In other words, we will learn how to ask empirical questions about the political world; how to answer these questions scientifically using the appropriate types of evidence; and how to clearly convey our arguments, evidence, and conclusions to others. The course topics will accordingly include the logic of the scientific method; the measurement of political concepts; research design and methods of data collection; statistical and graphical techniques for describing data; and the principles of statistical inference. Particular attention will be paid to methods for analyzing quantitative data because this is the most widely used methodology in political science today. You will also learn SPSS, a user-friendly statistical software program. At the end of the course, we hope that you will be comfortable reading and critiquing arguments about real world political problems. Learning to think social scientifically in this manner is a skill that you will find useful in your future upper division political science courses. It will also be beneficial beyond the walls of UCSB: in a career in the policy, government, journalistic, business, or legal professions, as well as in every-day life as a citizen of a democracy. No background in statistics or mathematics beyond high school algebra is assumed. The major prerequisite is a commitment to learning how to do political science.

2 Course and Contact Information

The syllabus, assignments, paper guidelines, study guides, links to assigned readings that are available electronically, and other resources and handouts are all available from the course Gaucho Space site. Announcements will also be posted to the Gaucho Space site; it should be your first port of call if you are unsure about what is happening when and where.

You have two ways to contact me:

- *Office Hours*: I encourage you to stop by early in the quarter so that you can get to know me, and vice versa. Don't, in other words, feel shy about coming to office hours. A face-to-face

conversation is often the best way to discuss any non-trivial questions.

- *E-mail*: I will generally respond within twenty-four hours to e-mails that I receive Mondays through Fridays. Often my response will come in far less than twenty-four hours, but I do not guarantee it. Note that I rarely check e-mail in the evenings. E-mails that I receive over the weekend will be answered on Monday. I will notify you of any planned deviations from this pledge, such as occasions when I am out of town and hence away from my e-mail.

I will also usually arrive ten minutes early to class, so you can catch me then.

3 Initial Attendance and Waitlist

Students who do not attend the first section may be dropped from the course. If you decide that this is not the course for you for whatever reason, please drop as quickly as possible so as to make room for other students who are currently on the waitlist. If you would like to enroll but have not yet managed to secure a seat, please add yourself to the course waitlist; the waitlist is the sole mechanism for crashing.

4 Course Requirements

This is a five-unit class with both lecture and discussion/lab components. It does not require as much reading as many political science courses, but mastering the concepts requires you to more actively engage the material than you may be accustomed to doing. Several old adages (such as ‘practice makes perfect’ and ‘you only learn by doing’) apply. Accordingly, we will ask you to regularly reflect upon the material in written assignments as well as through participation in both lectures and discussion sections. We will also be employing a variety of evidence-based teaching and learning strategies, one of which is peer review of written assignments using Eli Review, which will provide you with further opportunity to reflect upon the course material. The course requirements and the weight of each component towards your course grade are as follows:

- A research paper on a topic of your choice. Your goal in writing the paper is to apply the skills that you have learned in the class. That is, you will conduct an empirical analysis of a political science research question and seek to transmit the results of your research in a professional style using clear, jargon-free prose and compelling visual aids. We think that you will ultimately find this process to be a rewarding experience. To aid you, components of the paper will be assigned as homework. The final paper should be between 10 and 15 pages, double spaced, with standard font and margins. It is due at 12:00 p.m. on Friday, December 6 using Gaucho Space. Note that *no late papers will be accepted* except in cases of *documented* personal, family, or medical emergencies. (20%)
- Five written homework assignments and peer review of those assignments. Assignments will be announced in class and posted to the course Gaucho Space site, along with peer review deadlines. A major part of each homework assignment will be a draft of a component of your research paper. Note that homework assignments will be submitted and peer review will be done using the Eli Review platform, not with Gaucho Space. The two components (assignments and peer review) will be weighted approximately equally. Note that *no late*

assignments or peer reviews will be accepted except in cases of *documented* personal, family, or medical emergencies. (20%)

- An in-class midterm examination. Tentative date: Thursday, October 31. (20%)
- An in-class final examination. The final examination is scheduled for Tuesday, December 10 from 8:00-11:00 a.m. (30%)
- Participation in lab/discussion section. Attendance of sections, which meet once a week beginning on October 1, is required, as is active participation in the section's discussions and activities. While I will present computer output in class, sections are the place where you will learn how to use the computer software that implements the methods we discuss. Additionally, they serve as a venue for you to discuss the material covered in the lectures and texts. (10%)
- Participation in lecture. While attendance of lectures is not required, material that is not in the readings will often be presented. Moreover, we will devote significant time to working through questions and problems, following a flipped classroom model. That is: I will not be lecturing during a good chunk of "lecture". If you choose to be somewhere else during lecture, that is your decision, but you are responsible for the material covered. However, if your absence is due to either illness or a family emergency, I will help you to make it up. Even though you will not be formally graded on participation in lecture, coming to lecture prepared (i.e., having done the assigned readings prior to class) and actively participating in lecture activities will greatly facilitate your learning and hence your success in the course. To provide you with a more concrete incentive for attending, I will periodically offer extra credit points for participation in lecture activities. (0%)

5 Grading

You will receive letter grades for exams, section participation, and the final research paper. One important note with respect to the final exam: in order to pass the class, *you must pass the final exam (meaning you must receive a grade of D- or better on the final exam)*. For example, if you do not take the final exam, you will fail the class.

Homework assignments and peer review will be graded as follows. Each completed homework assignment will receive 2 points; each incomplete (but $> 33\%$) or severely flawed assignment, 1 point; and assignments not submitted or significantly incomplete ($< 33\%$), 0 points. TAs will reward exceptionally well-done assignments with a bonus point, for a maximum of 3 points per homework assignment. Similarly, for each homework assignment, completing the peer review task (meaning completely performing all assigned peer reviews) will earn you 2 points; partially completing the peer review task (but $> 33\%$), 1 point; and not undertaking it or significantly incompleting it ($< 33\%$), 0 points. Students who have performed exceptionally helpful peer reviews over the course of the quarter will also be eligible for an end-of-quarter bonus of up to 3 points. We will then translate these points into letter grades at the end of the quarter, with this translation benchmarked by 20 points equalling a B- and 24 points equalling a B. Accordingly, to incentivize you to regularly practice working with the course concepts, you will earn a B for 20% of your course grade just by completing all of the assignments and peer reviews on time (see the next section for the "on-time" bonus policy).

6 Late Policy

Due to the tight schedule we must maintain in order to provide timely feedback on and grades for written work, *no late assignments will be accepted*. This holds for both the homework assignments and the final research paper. However, for the homework assignments, peer review groups will be assigned sometime within the 24 hours following the due date, so you may choose to gamble by submitting your homework assignment late: as long as the assignment is submitted by the time we assign peer review groups, you will receive credit for having completed the assignment, although you will not be eligible for an “on time” bonus (see below). But keep in mind that this is a gamble because peer review groups could be assigned anytime within that 24 hour window (such as merely 1 hour after the homework assignment was due). Students who submit at least three of the five homework assignments on time will receive one bonus point towards their homework grade, and students who submit all five homework assignments on time will receive an additional bonus point (for a total of two bonus points). Similarly, students who submit at least three of the five peer review tasks on time will receive one bonus point, and students who submit all five peer review tasks on time will receive an additional bonus point (for a total of two bonus points). The maximum total “on time” bonus points is therefore four.

Exceptions to this policy will only be made for *documented* cases of personal, family, or medical emergencies.

Note that you may always submit written assignments early.

7 Plagiarism

UCSB defines plagiarism as “the use of another’s idea or words without proper attribution or credit” (see the Judicial Affairs “Academic Integrity” site: <http://judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/AcademicIntegrity.aspx>). It is a serious academic offense. For this course, while you may discuss assignments and your final paper with fellow students, the write-ups *must be your own*. This means that you can talk through an assignment with someone else, but you must then *on your own* (in another room, later in the day, in silence) put the answer to the questions down on paper *in your own words*. Plagiarism and other types of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Student Judicial Affairs Office for disciplinary action and will result in an automatic fail on the course requirement in question. If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism, ask either me or your TA! Also ask us for help if you’re struggling before you resort to such desperate measures.

8 Course Recording and Technology Use Policies

Audio or visual recordings of lectures or class discussions may *not be made without my advance written consent*, excepting only DSP-approved accommodations. Approved recordings are to be solely used for the purposes of individual or group study by students enrolled in the class. If the recordings are to be used in any other manner, including any form of reproduction or distribution on the internet or any other media, then in addition to my advance written consent, you must obtain written consent from any student whose words or likeness appears in the recording.

Please bring a computer or smartphone to class with you, if possible, because we will periodically use them for in-class activities. Don’t worry if this isn’t possible for you to do, however; you will be able to work with someone else who has brought one. However, I discourage using your computer

to take notes and instead encourage you to take notes by hand, which research shows promotes better learning. If you nevertheless choose to take notes using a computer, you should not be using your computer to engage in other activities unrelated to class (such as e-mailing or surfing). This interferes with your learning, as well as with the learning of other students. To minimize the effect on your colleagues, I ask those using a computer to take notes to sit in the back of the classroom.

9 Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Providing accommodations for students with disabilities, including temporary ones, is a shared responsibility between the student, the Disabled Students Program (DSP) at UCSB, and me as the faculty instructor. If you have a disability that you believe needs accommodation, you should contact the DSP immediately (<http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu>). It is your responsibility to: have your disability evaluated and any accommodations approved by DSP; meet with me in a timely fashion about these accommodations as needed (such as making alternative exam arrangements); and submit timely requests to DSP for implementing approved accommodations, such as requesting proctors for exams.

10 Required Reading Materials

The following two books are required for the course. They are available for purchase from the bookstore or from various internet sources such as Amazon.com:

- Salkind, Neil. *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*. 6th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Henceforth: Salkind.
- Shively, W. Phillips. *The Craft of Political Research*. 10th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Henceforth: Shively.

Both current and older editions of both texts are alternatively available through the library's course reserve system. For those looking to save money but still interested in purchasing the texts, you may easily obtain used copies of older editions of the texts from many sources. I have provided comparable page numbers for the 5th edition of Salkind and the 9th edition of Shively in brackets on the reading schedule, where the page numbers differ; if needed, I will be happy to provide comparable page numbers for even older editions.

All other readings are available from the course Gaucho Space site, either as PDFs or via links. To access some of these readings, you will need to be on a UCSB computer or have proxy access configured through the library.

11 Recommended Reading Materials

In addition to the books appearing on the syllabus, the following books are good resources to consult if you wish to investigate a course topic further.

- Agresti, Alan and Barbara Finley. 1997. *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Freedman, David, Robert Pisani, and Roger Purves. 1998. *Statistics*. 3rd ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Johnson, Janet Buttolph, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. *Political Science Research Methods*. Any edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2009. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba. 1994. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Paulos, John Allen. 1988. *Innumeracy: Mathematical Illiteracy and Its Consequences*. New York: Random House.

12 Statistical Software

We will be using SPSS to implement the statistical methods we learn. You can acquire your own version of SPSS through the campus license from this site (click on the link to the request form): <https://www.software.ucsb.edu/info/spss>.

It can take up to 48 hours for requests to be processed, so do not wait until the last minute to submit your request. Find more information about labs and computing help at UCSB, see <https://collaborate.ucsb.edu>.

13 Schedule (All Dates Tentative)

Introduction: From Montesquieu to Diamond (September 26)

Salkind. A Note to the Student, p. xxiii–xxiv [xxii–xxiii], Chapter 1.

The Social Scientific Enterprise: Overview and Key Concepts (October 1 and 3)

Salkind. Chapter 7, p. 133–134 and 142–144 [p. 131–132 and 140–142] only.

Shively. Chapters 1–2.

Best, Joel. 2001. *Damned Lies and Statistics: Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politicians, and Activists*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Introduction, p. 1–8, and Chapter 1, p. 9–29.

Feynman, Richard. 1992. “Cargo Cult Science.” In *Surely You’re Joking, Mr. Feynman! Adventures of a Curious Character*. London: Vintage. p. 338–346.

Dean, Cornelia. 2006. “When Questions of Science Come to a Courtroom, Truth Has Many Faces.” *The New York Times*. 5 December.

Diamond, Jared. 1999. “A Natural Experiment of History.” In *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Chapter 2, p. 53–66.

Measurement (October 8 and 10)

Salkind. Chapter 6, p. 109–113, 122–128 [p. 105–111, p. 121–128] only.

Shively. Chapters 3–5.

Best, Joel. 2001. *Damned Lies and Statistics: Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politicians, and Activists*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 2, p. 30–52 and 59–61 only.

Gewirtz, Paul and Chad Golder. 2005. “So Who Are the Activists?” *The New York Times*. 6 July.

Vega, Tanzina. 2014. “Census Considers How to Measure a More Diverse America.” *The New York Times*. 1 July.

Describing Data: Statistical and Graphical Techniques (October 15, 17, 22, and 24)

Salkind. Chapters 2–5 and 16.

Shively. Chapter 8 and Chapter 9, p. 138–145 [p. 132–139] only.

Tufte, Edward. 1997. “Visual and Statistical Thinking: Displays of Evidence for Making Decisions.” In *Visual Explanations*. Cheshire, Connecticut: Graphics Press. Chapter 2, p. 27–37 only.

Tufte, Edward. 2001. *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*. Cheshire, Connecticut: Graphics Press. Selected pages: 13–15, 53, 76–77, and 107.

The Economist. 2005. “Economics of Happiness: Change and Decay.” 25 August.

Wang, Sam. 2015. “Let Math Save Our Democracy.” *The New York Times*. 5 December.

Sampling and Statistical Inference (October 29, November 5, 7, and 12)

Salkind. Chapter 7, p. 134–142 [p. 132–140] only, Chapters 8–12, 15, and 17.

Shively. Chapters 7 and 10.

Best, Joel. 2001. *Damned Lies and Statistics: Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politicians, and Activists*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 2, p. 52–58 only, and Chapter 3, p. 70–71 only.

Cohn, Nate. 2017. “2016 Review: Why Key State Polls Were Wrong About Trump.” 31 May. *The New York Times*.

The Economist. 2004. “Economics Focus: Signifying Nothing?” 29 January.

The Economist. 2017. “Election Forecasting: Democracy’s Whipping Boys.” 17 June.

Research Design and Causality (November 14, 19, 21, and 26))

Shively. Chapter 6 and Chapter 9, p. 147–155 [p. 141–148] only.

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason Mycoff. 2008. *Political Science Research Methods*. 6th ed. Washington, D. C.: CQ Press. Chapter 5, p. 122–148, 155–166, and 175 only, and Chapter 10.

Levin, Matt. 2017. “Early Returns Suggest Smoking Drop in Response to State Tax.” *CALmatters*. 10 July.

Paulos, John Allen. 2001. “Do Concealed Guns Reduce Crime? Economist Says Guns Deter Criminals, But It’s Not That Simple.” ABCNews.com. 1 March.

Beyond the Quantitative (Comparative and Case Studies) (December 3)

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, H. T. Reynolds, and Jason Mycoff. 2008. *Political Science Research Methods*. 6th ed. Washington, D. C.: CQ Press. Chapter 5, p. 148–155 only.

Mill, John Stuart. 1970. “Two Methods of Comparison.” In Amitai Etzioni and Fredric Dubow, eds. *Comparative Perspectives: Theories and Methods*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Diamond, Jared. 1999. “The Future of Human History as a Science.” In *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Epilogue, p. 405–420 only.

Review (December 5)

13. — *Effects arising from the Climate of England*

In a nation so distempered by the climate as to have a dis-relish of everything, nay, even of life, it is plain that the government most suitable to the inhabitants is that in which they cannot lay their uneasiness to any single person's charge, and in which, being under the direction rather of the laws than of the prince, it is impossible for them to change the government without subverting the laws themselves.

And if this nation has likewise derived from the climate a certain impatience of temper, which renders them incapable of bearing the same train of things for any long continuance,¹ it is obvious that the government above mentioned is the fittest for them.

This impatience of temper is not very considerable of itself; but it may become so when joined with courage.

It is quite a different thing from levity, which makes people undertake or drop a project without cause; it borders more upon obstinacy, because it proceeds from so lively a sense of misery that it is not weakened even by the habit of suffering.

This temper in a free nation is extremely proper for disconcerting the projects of tyranny, which is always slow and feeble in its commencement, as in the end it is active and lively; which at first only stretches out a hand to assist, and exerts afterwards a multitude of arms to oppress.

Slavery is ever preceded by sleep. But a people who find no rest in any situation, who continually explore every part, and feel nothing but pain, can hardly be lulled to sleep.

Politics are a smooth file, which cuts gradually, and attains its end by a slow progression. Now the people of whom we have been speaking are incapable of bearing the delays, the details, and the coolness of negotiations: in these they are more unlikely to succeed than any other nation; hence they are apt to lose by treaties what they obtain by arms.

From Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 1748.

¹It may be complicated with the scurvy, which, in some countries especially, renders a man whimsical and unsupportable to himself. See Pirard's "Voyages," part II. chap. xxi.