

# Political Analysis POLS 3001

Department of Political Science  
University of Utah  
Fall 2007

Final Version

## Class Sessions & Instructor

time: **Mondays & Wednesdays, August 20-December 7, 6:00 p.m. to 7:20 p.m.**  
place: **University of Utah Main Campus OSH 232**  
instructor: **Randy Raphael**  
email: [randy.raaphael@schools.utah.gov](mailto:randy.raaphael@schools.utah.gov) (please begin the subject line with **POLS 3001**)  
course website: [http://www.ed.utah.edu/~raphael\\_r/POLS3001](http://www.ed.utah.edu/~raphael_r/POLS3001) (there is an underscore between the *l* and the *r*)  
work phone: **801.538.7802**  
work fax: **801.538.7729**  
office hours: **Mondays & Wednesdays, 5:00 p.m. to 5:50 p.m. or by appointment**  
office location: **OSH 156A**

## Catalog Description

Fulfills Quantitative Reason (Statistics/Logic) & Quantitative Intensive BS. Introduction of research techniques for the empirical study of politics including elements of research design and statistics.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Describe the major elements and issues in the design of a quantitative study.
2. Interpret basic statistics.
3. Evaluate the methodology of a research report.

Note that while the course is quantitative intensive, it is not computationally intensive. We will focus instead on developing a conceptual understanding of quantitative methods. However, some use of mathematical symbols and formulas will be necessary, but no calculation will require more than arithmetic, for which you may use a calculator, spreadsheet, or any other tool that is convenient.

## INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS & METHODS

### Textbook

The required textbook for the course is Philip H. Pollock III, *Essentials of Political Analysis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2005). The citations to chapters and pages in the Class Schedule below refer to this edition. This is a short book with copious examples from political science and little mathematical formalism. It supports the goal of conceptual understanding.

### Lectures

Lectures will typically highlight and supplement the textbook and, on occasion, take issue with it. I will publish lecture notes to the website prior to class and use the white board extensively. During the exam prep sessions, I will give particular attention to material covered only in lectures. At least two class sessions will be devoted to a collective close reading of a quantitative journal article.

### Exercises

Most of the end of chapter exercises will be assigned as homework. They are intended to help you engage with the text and learn the concepts presented therein by applying them. Some of the exercises will also be discussed in class.

## Exams

The midterm exam itself will be used as instructional tool. We will devote one class period to a review of each item and use the occasion to demonstrate item analysis in development of an instrument.

## Software

We will not use any statistical software per se, but I will sometimes use output from SPSS to illustrate statistical analysis. SPSS is probably the most widely used statistical package in political science and is available in university computer labs. If you want to pursue statistical computing on your own, I recommend *SPSS for Windows Step by Step 15.0 Update* (George & Mallery, September 2007) and will be happy to provide informal guidance in response to your questions outside of class.

## ASSESSMENT

### Midterm Exam & Chapter 1-4 Exercises (approximately 50%)

The exam will consist of 50 questions. The content of questions will be based on information covered in the textbook (chapters 1-4) and lectures for topics in research design. The format of questions will be multiple choice with four options. Producing the correct answer will require both recall and application. Your midterm exam score will be then be adjusted upward on the basis of the quality of your responses to the exercises.

### Final Take Home Exam & Chapter 5-8 Exercises (approximately 50%)

In the evening after our of last class session, I will post to the course website an article from a political science journal and a set of 20-25 short answer questions about the methodology of the research reported in the article. **Your task will be to read the article and submit your written answers to the questions via my mailbox in the Political Science Department office by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, December 14.** As with the midterm, scores on the final will be adjusted upward on the basis of the exercises.

## Exercises

You are expected to turn in written responses to the end of chapter exercises listed in the Class Schedule. You may collaborate with other students on these, but each student must submit his or her own work.

## Grading

I will assign your grade on exams according to where your rounded percentage correct of possible points falls among the following or an empirically adjusted set of cut scores, whichever is more favorable to you:

A	= $\geq 90\%$	C	= 70-72
A-	= 87-89	C-	= 67-69
B+	= 83-86	D+	= 63-66
B	= 80-82	D	= 60-62
B-	= 77-79	D-	= 56-59
C+	= 73-76	E	= $\leq 55$

I will then adjust each exam grade upward in thirds of a letter grade on the basis of the quality of your responses to the exercises. The rubric which will guide the scoring of the exercises is: +1/3 letter grade (C- becomes C) for partial submission, +2/3 letter grade (C- becomes C+) for complete and acceptable submission, +1 full letter grade (C- becomes B-) for a complete and exceptionally thoughtful treatment. Your final grade will then be the average of your two exercise-adjusted exam grades, with somewhat greater weight accorded a higher grade, if possible, especially on the final, since that indicates real progress in learning on your part. For example, a midterm C- and a final B would result in a B-, but a midterm A and a final A- would still result in an A.

# POLICIES & PROCEDURES

## Academic Conduct

The standards of academic conduct which will govern this course, including your rights as well as your responsibilities, are set out in Chapter 10 of the University of Utah Student Handbook at <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html>.

## Accommodations

The university seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services (DCS), 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

## Classroom Conduct

Each class will begin promptly at 6:00 and continue without a break for the scheduled 80 minutes. I expect you to prepare for each topic by studying the assigned readings and exercises. I also expect you to be courteous and constructive during discussions. If a concept is already familiar to you, remember the introductory intent of the course and be patient with other students who are encountering the material for the first time. We will take time to answer questions as they arise. Finally, silence your cell phones. If you must take a call or take care of any other business, please quietly leave the classroom.

## Harassment

The University of Utah does not tolerate racial, sexual, or other forms of harassment of students, faculty, or staff. If you feel you are subject to such harassment, you should notify your instructor. If you feel you are subject to harassment by your instructor, you should contact the Chair of the Political Science Department.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

**Please bring your textbook to class**

### PRELIMINARIES

**August 20, 22 — Introduction to the Course & Study of Politics as Science**  
Reading: Introduction & Chapter 9

### PART I — RESEARCH DESIGN

**August 27, 29 — Defining and Measuring Variables**  
Reading: Chapter 1  
Exercises: 1.1; 1.5; 1.6

**September 3**  
NO CLASS (Labor Day)

**September 5, 10, 12 — Designing Studies to Test Hypotheses**  
Reading: Chapter 2  
Exercises: 2.2; 2.3; 2.4; 2.5

**September 17, 19 — Describing Variables and Exploring Two-Variable Relationships**  
Reading: Chapter 3  
Exercises: 3.1; 3.2.A-C; 3.3.A,C; 3.4.A; 3.5.A; 3.6; 3.7.A

**September 24, 26 — Causal Inference & Three-Variable Relationships**  
Reading: Chapter 4  
Exercises: 4.1.B-C; 4.2; 4.3

**October 1 — Making Sense of a Quantitative Journal Article (Part I)**

**Reading:** Prior, M. (2005). News vs. entertainment: How increasing media choice widens gaps in political knowledge and turnout. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49 (3), 577-592. **Specific Assignment:** page 577 through first paragraph under “Analysis” subheading (page 583) plus “N&E Survey” section of Appendix (page 589-590). Ignore Table 1 for the time being. **Document:** [http://www.ed.utah.edu/~raphael\\_r/POLS3001/Prior.pdf](http://www.ed.utah.edu/~raphael_r/POLS3001/Prior.pdf)

**October 3 — Midterm Exam Prep**

**October 8, 10**

NO CLASS (University Fall Break)

**October 15**

**MIDTERM EXAM on material through October 3 & EXERCISES for Chapters 1-4 Due**

**PART II — STATISTICS**

**October 17 — Overview of Statistical Techniques for Continuous Data (Mean, Standard Deviation, etc.)**

No reading or exercises

**October 22 — Overview of Categorical Data Analysis**

No reading or exercises

**October 24 — Sampling**

Reading: Chapter 5 (104-120)

Exercises: 5.1; 5.2.B; 5.3.B (just give the rationale for allowing certain speeds above the stated limit); 5.5.B

**October 29 — Midterm Exam Review**

**October 31**

NO CLASS (Halloween)

**November 5 — Probability & Normal Distribution**

Reading & Exercises: see October 24

**November 7, 12 — Statistical Inference & Tests of Statistical Significance**

Reading: Chapter 5 (116-128); Chapter 6 (130-144)

Exercises: 6.1.C; 6.3.D (for both statements of conventional wisdom)

**November 14 — Effect Size (with emphasis on Correlation Coefficient)**

Reading: Chapter 6 (144-151), just aim for understanding of PRE and don't worry about specific measures; Chapter 7 (154-162)

Exercises: 7.1

**November 19, 21, 26, 28 — Regression Modeling**

Reading: Chapter 7 (focus on these pages → 157-165)

Exercises: 7.3; 7.4

**December 3 — Final Exam Prep: Making Sense of a Quantitative Journal Article (Part II)**

**Reading:** Prior, M. (2005), 577-592. **Specific Assignment:** Apply questions at [http://www.ed.utah.edu/~raphael\\_r/POLS3001/Final\\_StudyGuide.doc](http://www.ed.utah.edu/~raphael_r/POLS3001/Final_StudyGuide.doc) to the article, focusing on “Study 1.”

**December 5 — Course Review**

**Posting of Materials for Take Home Exam (Methodological Critique):**

- [http://www.ed.utah.edu/~raphael\\_r/POLS3001/Final\\_Article.pdf](http://www.ed.utah.edu/~raphael_r/POLS3001/Final_Article.pdf)
- [http://www.ed.utah.edu/~raphael\\_r/POLS3001/Final\\_Questions.doc](http://www.ed.utah.edu/~raphael_r/POLS3001/Final_Questions.doc)

**FINALS WEEK**

**December 14**

**FINAL EXAM & ALL EXERCISES Due**