Regent University Robertson School of Government

Syllabus: Governmental Research Methods
GOV 603
Fall 2009

Dr. Mary Manjikian
(757) 352-4138
Class taught on campus Wednesday, 1-4 PM
Office Hours: Friday, 9-12 AM, Robertson Hall

1. **Course Description:** Analysis of basic research design strategies. Students attain statistical literacy as they generate and critique research reports normally required in a variety of governmental settings.

2. **Purpose:** This is a course about how to think – how to think about data, how to think about theories and how to think about politics. The purpose of this course is to prepare you to be both (a.) an informed consumer of research about politics as well as a (b.) producer of competent, thoughtful and methodologically rigorous independent research in the field of political science.

3. **Objectives:**
   A. To present the major approaches to conducting qualitative and quantitative analysis in political science including the case study, content analysis and even some basic statistical inference.
   B. To present and analyze questions of epistemology, or the theory of knowledge. We will ask HOW we know what we currently know about political science, what methods we have utilized to arrive at this knowledge, and whether it is actually possible to conduct objective, scientific research in the social sciences.
   C. To prepare students to conduct independent quantitative and qualitative research in political science, using proper research methodology and procedure.

4. **Competencies:**
The student will be able to
   A. Formulate a research hypothesis for further study
   B. Specify the tools and methods which are best suited to your task
   C. Discuss the particular types of biases and assumptions you might bring to your task and the best ways to control for them.
5. Course Procedures:
This course is divided into two parts – Part One: What is Political Science? And Part Two: Data Analysis. Each half will take approximately 7 weeks with a final week at the end for synthesizing and summarizing the main issues of the course as a whole. In the first half of the course we will focus a bit on philosophy of science, including ontology and epistemology. We will ask whether political science is really a science, what it means to use a scientific method, and whether a scientific method is objective or merely a Western way of “looking.” We will examine the who’s, what’s, why’s and how’s of scientific reasoning in the social sciences, before taking our tour over to the world of quantitative analysis in the second half of the course. Every week you will be responsible for mastering the information for that week, as well as to applying it to a specific problem in the field of political science.

6. Evaluation of Student Performance:

Your grade is based on the following elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Essays or problem sets</th>
<th>12 @ 2.9 pts. each</th>
<th>35 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Discussions</td>
<td>12 @ 2.9 pts. Each</td>
<td>35 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Exams:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One each at Week Four</td>
<td>4@ 7.5 points</td>
<td>30 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Eight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Twelve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Fifteen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note that late work will NOT be accepted for this course. The material presented in this course is cumulative, and falling behind on one week’s assignment will cause you poor performance in all subsequent weeks of the course.

You will have one written assignment per week for both parts of the class. For Part One of the course, a weekly essay will be assigned and for Part Two, a weekly problem set will be due. There is no essay required during the weeks that you have either a midterm or a final, or when you are preparing to submit your final paper. Please note that these essays are creative and challenging and require original thinking. (Some may require a bit of outside research as well.) They cannot be cranked out at the last minute. Your essays need to be between 250-500 words in length. Criteria for grading your essays are found online.

Problem sets will be taken from the “working with political science research methods problems and exercises.” Please do NOT allow yourself to fall behind the deadlines listed in the syllabus, including the initial deadline for taking the SPSS tutorial. On-line students will need to type up the questions as they appear in the workbook as well as their
answers for submitting through the assignments tab. In-class students may tear out the workbook sheets and submit those if they prefer to do so.

Please note that particularly in the statistics section of this course, the material can be quite time-intensive. The only way to get really comfortable with statistics (and lose your fear!) is to spend a lot of time with the material. You need to explore the data-sets you are given, and use a trial and error approach. If you devote the time, then at the end of the semester you will feel comfortable with statistics. If you do not, then you will not.

Students taking the on-line version of this class will participate in on-line discussions. You are responsible for an INITIAL post of at least 200 words, and at least two follow up posts (of at least fifty words each). The on-line class week runs from Monday until the following Sunday evening. Initial posts are due by Thursday of the week you are in, with the discussion board officially CLOSING on Sunday evening of that week. The grading criteria for posts are listed on-line.

Students taking the “live” version of the class will be responsible for both the weekly discussion question listed in the syllabus as well as any additional questions or issues raised in the notes which accompany the weekly readings. You should come to class prepared to both the weekly discussion question and the questions raised in the supplemental materials/reading guides. You will also be called on to SUMMARIZE the readings and to critique them. Read carefully and take notes!

Both in-class and on-line students will take four exams: at weeks four, eight, twelve and fifteen.

7. Required Texts:

| Janet Bottolph Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, Working with Political Science Research Methods |
| Janet Bottolph Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, Political Science Research Methods |
| SPSS for Windows |

Several other texts will be found on electronic reserve. These can be accessed from Blackboard. They appear as .pdf files which you can then print, download or read online.

*Bernard Grofman, Political Science as Puzzle Solving
*Stephen Toulmin, Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity
*Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions
*Steven Johnson, The Ghost Map
*Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field
*The Political Science Student Writer’s Manual
*Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, Designing Social Inquiry

You also need to have a calculator which is capable of finding a square root.

8. **Recommended Reference Materials:**
Some additional texts which may help you to familiarize yourself with the SPSS statistical package are found in the Week Zero folder on-line.

9. **Reading Assignments:**

**Week One: Studying Politics Scientifically**

*(Wed, August 26)*

**Read:**
Textbook, Chapter Two, “Studying Politics Scientifically”
Toulmin, pp. 5-44

**Write:** On p. 33, Toulmin states: “Ethnographers are unmoved by inconsistencies among the legal customs of different peoples, but philosophers have to bring to light the general principles that hold in a given field of study – or, preferably, in all fields.” Should political science be more like ethnography or philosophy in terms of:
(a.) abstraction
(b.) formulation of generalizable of principles
(c.) universality of claims
Which approach is ultimately or more utility and why? Give at least three examples. You should write 250-500 words.

**Discuss:** Why is astronomy a science but astrology is not? What factors make something a science? What does it mean to study something scientifically? Your post should be 250-500 words.

**Due Date for all work:** Monday, August 31

**Week Two: Measurement, Hypotheses and Variables**

*(Wednesday, September 2)*

**Read:**
Textbook, Chapter Three, “The Building Blocks of Social Scientific Research,”
Do SPSS tutorial.
Van Evera, p. 6-43.

**Write:** Workbook, pp. 15-19
**Discuss:** What is the difference between proving a theory true and proving a theory false? Which one is more well-regarded methodologically and why? What are the implications of providing something false rather than providing something true?

**DUE DATE:** Monday, September 7

---

**Week Three: Measurement**

(Wednesday, September 9)

**Read:**
Textbook, Chapter 4, “The Building Blocks of Social Scientific Research,”
Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map*

**Write:** In his analysis of the causes of cholera, Dr. Whitehead collected a different set of measurements than the other researchers at the time.
   a. Describe the data he collected in comparison to the data other researchers were collecting.
   b. How did his decision about what data was important inform his conclusion?
   c. What social or cultural factors kept other researchers from deciding this data was important?
   d. How did social and cultural understandings regarding the deserving and undeserving poor affect decisions regarding data collection?
   e. **EXTRA CREDIT:** Can you think of any situations today in which our cultural or social understandings of a situation might bias our decisions about what data to collect? (Include the cite if you find a newspaper or other article).

Please write 250-500 words.

**Discuss:** Please carefully read exercise 4-3 on p. 24 of your workbook. For this week’s assignment I want you to choose three out of the ten possible questions they suggest can be used to measure survey participants’ attitudes towards military assertiveness. Try to convince your classmates that these are the best questions to measure this concept. Think about which ones are the worst and the question of face and construct validity.

**DUE DATE:** Monday, Sept. 14

---

**Week Four: Puzzle-solving**

(Wednesday, Sept. 16)

**Read:**
Zinnes
Grofman, pp. 43-63
Grofman, pp. 85-101

**First Take-Home Quiz:**
The instructions for your first take home quiz are found in the week four folder.

**Discussion:** There is no discussion post due this week.
DUE DATE: Monday, September 21

Week Five: Scientific Revolutions

( Wednesday, Sept. 23)

Read:
- Textbook, “Conducting a Literature Review”
  Kuhn, pp. 1-65.
  Scott and Garrison, pp. 77-87

Write: Because the reading for this week is very heavy, your written assignment is short. You are to create an annotated bibliography for a research project that you might like to do in the future. (There is NO research paper for this course.) You need to identify at least 2 books and 5 articles that you will need to read to begin your research project. You will probably want to look through several more and choose those most suited to your research topic. You may use the library databases available through Regent as well any additional sources you need. Please list the weeks in proper MLA format.

Discuss: What is something we USED TO believe about politics but no longer do? Some examples I can think of include:
- The world is becoming more secular
- The greatest threat to the United States is from other states
- A strong central government like that of the Soviet Union will never collapse
- Women are unfit for public office
- Voters would never accept a Catholic president

Try to come up with at least three things people used to believe about politics but no longer do. Does any of these count as a scientific revolution or paradigm shift? What paradigm CAUSED people to believe these things, and what led to a change in how they view the world now?

DUE DATE: Monday, Sept. 28

Week Six: Scientific Research programs

( Wednesday, Sept. 30)

Read:
Elman and Elman, pp. 1-71

Write: This week you are to submit a short literature review. You will not need to read all the books on your bibliography (though you might want to read the introduction to these books), but be sure to read the articles. Try to outline 2 conflicting approaches or answers to the question you are interested in. How have analysts attempted to answer this question and does any of the work now being done appear to build on earlier work? Pay attention to the authors’ own literature reviews or summaries at the beginning of their papers. How will YOUR specific contribution advance the ‘scientific research program’?
Discuss: Was the new understanding of cholera cure that we read about in “The Ghost Map” a scientific revolution or part of a program of scientific research?
Due Date: Monday, October 5

Week Seven: measurement and observation
(Wednesday, October 7)
Read: Textbook, Chapter 5, “Research Design,“
Write: workbook Exercise 5-1; Exercise 5-5; Exercise 5-6
Discuss: Choose one of the questions from Exercise 5-9. Formulate a research strategy and post discussion.
Due Date: Monday, October 12

Week Eight: Direct and Indirect Observation/Content Analysis
(Wednesday, October 14)
Read: Textbook Chapter 8 and 9, pp. 243-295.
Second Take-Home Quiz: This week’s problem set counts as a quiz grade. Make sure you answer all questions thoroughly.
Choose one question from Exercise 8-4. Also, Exercise 9-1, a-e.
There is no discussion or essay this week.
Due Date: Monday, October 19

PART TWO: DATA ANALYSIS

Week Nine: Sampling; elite interviewing and survey research
(Wednesday, October 21)
Read: Chapter Seven, “Sampling” and Chapter 10, “Survey Research and Interviewing”
Write: workbook Exercises 7-1; 7-2 and 7-3
Discuss: Surveys on value change (listed on blackboard).
Due Date: Monday, October 26

Week Ten: Statistics: First Steps
(Wednesday, October 28)
Read: Chapter 11
Write: Workbook 11-2; 11-3; 11-7; 11-13.
Discuss: You will be analyzing the data from “An Interesting Incident”. (Posted in Blackboard) Your task is to attempt to identify the incident. You may each post TWO questions to the professor which require a yes or no answer (similar to 20 questions) in your attempt to figure out what the event is. When you have figured out the event, you need to E-MAIL me your answer. Do not post it publicly, since your classmates will still
be working on the problem. (Correctly identifying the incident will get you THREE extra points on your next mid-term)

Due Date: Monday, November 2

**Week Eleven: Bivariate Data analysis**

(Wednesday, November 4)

Read: pp. 426-261

Write: TBA

Discuss: Please read the article in your weekly folder called, “Who Wins at the Olympics?” Please make sure you answer ALL discussion questions.

Due Date: Monday, November 9

**Week Twelve: Bivariate data analysis**

(Wednesday, November 11)

Read: pp. 461 to end of the chapter

Write: TBA.

QUIZ THREE: Available on-line from Thursday, November 12- Sunday, November 15

Due Date: Sunday, November 15

**Week Thirteen: Multivariate Data Analysis**

(Wednesday, November 18)

Read: Pp. 503-525.

Write: Workbook 13-1; 13-2.

Discuss: You will be performing a linear regression using the SPSS data set I have created for you and made available on-line. See your weekly folder for more details.

Due Date: Monday, November 23

**Week Fourteen: More Multivariate Data Analysis**

(Wednesday, November 25)

Read: PP. 525-549.

Write: Workbook: exercise 13-7;

Discuss: You are to use the National Election Study data-set available on your text’s companion website for this week’s assignment. See your weekly folder for more details.

Due Date: Monday, November 30

**Week Fifteen: Review**

(Wednesday, December 3)

Read: No new reading this week.

Write: No essay.
Discuss: No discussion.

Exam Four: Please allow yourself sufficient time to work with the two data-sets for your final exam.

Due Date: Monday, December 10

10. Grades: Your grades will be available for viewing via blackboard at the end of each week and at the end of the semester.

11. Attendance: For on-campus students, attendance is mandatory unless prior arrangements are made for a situation such as a family emergency. All work due at your weekly class will be marked as failing if you do not also attend that week’s class.

For on-line students, failure to submit work on-time will be construed as a weekly absence. Late work will not be accepted, as stated under grading criteria.

12. Final Exam Scheduling: Exams will be given on-line for both distance education and local students. The tests are available only for a finite time period and cannot be accessed once the file has been closed. The exam will be opened two days prior to the due date for that week’s materials and will close at midnight, EST on the due date. Please make sure you allow yourself sufficient time for any technical glitches which you might experience.

13. Academic Honesty: Students shall abide by the highest standards of academic honesty. All students should review the discussion of “Academic Integrity” in the University Catalog. In the event the professor determines that a student has either cheated or plagiarized on a class assignment or exam, the professor shall determine what effect this academic dishonesty shall have on the student's grade. The professor has the discretion to assign an "F" grade to the student's assignment, exam, or for the course. Any further disciplinary actions shall be determined by the law school administration.

14. Incomplete Grades: Incompletes will be given only in extreme situations such as a death in the family. If you plan your time well, you will have sufficient time to complete all assignments during this term. Students who DO request an incomplete are required to submit a time management plan showing how many hours worth of work are outstanding and how they have scheduled those hours into their life so that the work will be completed within six weeks of the end of the course.

15. Student Feedback: Students are encouraged to be in frequent contact with the professor throughout the course. There is a formal evaluation form to be completed towards the end of the course, but you may contact the professor at any time via phone or e-mail to discuss specific concerns regarding assignments, grading and topics to be covered throughout the course.

16. Biblical Integration: We will integrate this material with our faith in a variety of ways this semester. We will complete an assignment in Part Two which looks at survey data on religiosity and belief. In addition, in Part One, we will look at the question of “truth with a capital T” and the ways in which our own belief systems
may interact with post-modernist claims about truth. We will also consider ethical questions in our discussions of how to use and interpret data, as well as how to treat scientific subjects.

17. **Late Assignments:** Every student is allowed one 72 hour grace period for ONE assignment, to be taken at your choosing, with no penalty. I do not require documentation of the emergency or even an explanation. However, I recommend holding this in reserve so that if a “true” emergency arises (illness, etc.) you still have it to draw upon.