Regent University Robertson School of Government

Syllabus: Governmental Research Methods

GOV 603
Summer 2010

Dr. Mary Manjikian
(757) 352-4138
Class taught on campus Wednesday, 6-9 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 focus on philosophy of science, including ontology and epistemology. We 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 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.

6. Evaluation of Student Performance:

Your grade is based on the following elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment ONE: Due at the conclusion of Week Four</th>
<th>Article Summary</th>
<th>25 points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment TWO: Due at the conclusion of Week Eight</td>
<td>Literature Review Assignment</td>
<td>25 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment THREE:</td>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>25 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bi-Weekly Discussion Assignments</td>
<td>To be assigned</td>
<td>25 points</td>
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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 assignment will cause you poor performance in all subsequent weeks of the course.

You will have one discussion assignment per two-week period. Note that many of these ‘discussions’ are actually problems where you are required to analyze data, collect data or observe data. They CANNOT be completed the night before. You have two weeks per assignment since they require PLANNING.

The discussions will be conducted IN-CLASS for those on campus and on-line for those taking this course at home. The discussions will relate to the READING packets which are assigned weekly, and require both knowledge of the text as well as independent thought, creativity and sometimes research. Criteria for grading your discussions are found online.
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.

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!

7. Required Texts:

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

Several other texts will be found either in blackboard as .pdf files, while for some of the cites you are expected to find them on your own through the library databases. I find that the easiest way to find many of these cites is to utilize the EBSCO database and to use the ‘citation finder’ utility.

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: See information at end of this document.

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 discussion 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.
9. Reading Assignments:

**Week One: Studying Politics Scientifically**

(Wednesday, May 12)


**Recommended:**

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

(Wednesday, May 19)

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

**Discuss:** Please complete the discussion assignment for “happiness” found in the Week Two folder.
Week Three: The Christian Scholar

(Wednesday, May 26)


- Jean Bethke Elshtain, “To Serve God Wittily: In the tangle of One’s Mind,” in Douglas Henry and Michael Beaty, ed., Christianity and the soul of the University (Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI). Available in Folder


AND The Literature Review

Read:

- Textbook, “Conducting a Literature Review” Chapter 6

- Please read these articles relating to the proper preparation of a literature review:
  http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/literature_review.html
  http://library.ucsc.edu/help/howto/write-a-literature-review


For each article, pay attention to how they have structured their literature review. Attempt to outline the competing hypotheses they consider, the various schools of thought on the subject (faith in politics or racial violence), and how the author’s OWN thinking fits into the “schools of thought” which they have outlined. Come to class prepared to discuss.

The instructions for your first assignment, “Article Summary,” are found in the week four folder.

DUE DATE: for both the article summary and discussion is Wednesday, May 26.
Week FOUR: Case Studies

Wednesday, June 2


Discuss: Who did a better job of selecting cases – Joppke or Kuru? HOW did each choose cases – did they select along the dependent or the independent variable? Did they choose most similar or most different cases? Who was influenced by what they expected to find (who let their model drive their research)? Due by Monday, February 22

Lectures: How to write an abstract; Case studies
Hypothesis Testing and the Angel of Death

AND measurement and observation

- Textbook, Chapter 5, “Research Design,”


In-Class Assignment: Counterfactual Analysis

Week FIVE: Direct and Indirect Observation/Content Analysis

Wednesday, June 9

- Textbook Chapter 8 and 9, pp. 243-295.


- Susan Hyde. 2007. The Observer Effect in International Politics: Evidence from a Natural Experiment,” *World Politics*. 
In-Class Assignment: Content Analysis

**Second Assignment Due:** You are to complete the literature review for the articles assigned to you, using the instructions you have received thus far regarding the literature review. **Due Wednesday, June 9.**

**DISCUSSION:** Choose a subject which you would like to research using scientific observation. It does not need to be a complicated question, but it needs to be one where you can:
1. Make a hypothesis using clearly specified variables
2. Collect data related to your hypothesis using clearly specified categories and at least ten events
3. Provide some sort of explanation for your hypothesis.
   For example, you could:
   a. Observe whether men or women select produce differently at the supermarket
   b. Observe whether children of different ages, genders or social classes cheat more or less while playing board games
   c. Observe who is the most generous tipper when you work at a restaurant
   d. Observe who is most likely to violate rules through for example talking in the library or cutting across the lawn at the university

   Share your observations with your classmates. Make sure you talk about whether you feel your presence biased the analysis, the mechanism by which you selected your project and participants. **Due Monday, March 15.**

**PART TWO: DATA ANALYSIS**

**ALSO:** Sampling; elite interviewing and survey research

- Chapter Seven, “Sampling” and Chapter 10, “Survey Research and Interviewing”
Week SIX: Statistics: First Steps

Wednesday, June 16

- Chapter 11


**DISCUSSION QUESTION: To Be Announced.**

AND Bivariate Data analysis

- **Text**, pp. 426-261


Week Seven: Bivariate Data analysis

Wednesday, June 23

- Text, pp. 461 to end of the chapter


Multivariate Data Analysis

Wednesday, June 30

- Text, Pp. 503-549.

**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.

**ASSIGNMENT THREE: Available on-line from June 16.**

**Due Date: Wednesday, June 30**