

Professor McAvoy
Political Science 301
Fall 2007

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Research Methods in Political Science

This course will give students an overview of the research methods used by political scientists. The goal is to provide students with the background to better understand political science questions and the types of evidence that researchers rely on to answer them. Topics the course will cover include: the design of a research project, development of theories, selection of measures, and methods to gather and analyze data. Students will also learn how to construct and interpret graphs and tables using political science data as well as to conduct basic statistical analysis.

What You Will Learn in this Class:

- How to design research projects
- How to use primary data to answer questions about politics
- How to integrate data analysis into your writing
- How to be an informed readers of public opinion polls

Required Texts

The following three books are required for this course and available from the bookstore:

Herbert Asher. 2007. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*. Washington, D.C.:Congressional Quarterly Press.

Janet Buttolph Johnson and H.T. Reynolds. 2004. *Political Science Research Methods, 5th edition*. Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Robert Putnam. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York:Simon & Schuster.

Occasionally, you will be asked to read a daily newspaper or news magazine in order to find examples of concepts or issues for class discussions.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to come to class fully prepared to discuss the assigned readings or homework assignments. You should bring the assigned readings to class since we will often refer to these in our discussions. We will frequently have class and small group discussions in order to apply the course material to specific examples, and meaningful participation in these is required.

Grades for the course will be determined on the basis of the following course requirements: quizzes (10%), one paper (20%), a midterm (25%), homework assignments (20%), and a final project (25%). Written assignments will be marked down half a grade for each day that they are late. **All course assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade in the class.**

Letter grades are assigned as follows:

A (100-94)	B+ (89-86)	C+ (79-76)	D+ (69-66)
A- (93-90)	B (85-83)	C (75-73)	D (65-63)
	B- (82-80)	C- (72-70)	D- (62-60)

Formulating Research Projects

Week 1 (Aug 20-24), Overview of the Research Process
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 1

Week 2 (Aug 27,29), Theory Building
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 2 & 4
***No class on Aug 30, American Political Science Association Conference.*

Week 3 (Sept. 5,7), Operationalization, Validity, and Reliability
Putnam, Chapter 1&8, and Chapters 2-5
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 6 (p. 153-175)

Week 4 (Sept. 10-14), Operationalization, Validity, and Reliability, cont'd
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 7

Week 5 (Sept. 17-21) Operationalization, Validity, and Reliability, cont'd
Putnam, Chapter 10,13, & 15, and Chapters 11,12, & 14
Asher, Chapters 1-3

Week 6 (Sept. 24-28), Research Design
*Short Paper Due: Sept. 28
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 3

Week 7 (Oct. 1-5), Sampling
Putnam, Chapter 16-19
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 9
Asher, Chapter 4

Data Gathering

Week 8 (Oct.8-12), Survey Research and Polling

Asher, Chapters 5-7

*Midterm: Oct 12

Week 9 (Oct. 17,19), Interviewing and Direct Observation

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 10

Analyzing Data

Week 10 (Oct. 22-26), Graphing and Presenting Data

Asher, Chapter 8.

Homework #1

Week 11 (Oct. 29-Nov.2), Descriptive Statistics

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 11; Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 12, p. 341- 348 (Cross Tabs)

Putnam, Chapter 20-22

Homework #2

Week 12 (Nov. 5-9), Measures of Association

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 12, p.392-396 (Correlation)

Homework #3

Week 13 (Nov. 12-16) Significance Tests

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 11, p. 329-335 and Chapter 12, p. 360-365

Homework #4

Week 14 (Nov. 19), Regression

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 12, p. 372-390.

Week 15 (Nov. 26-30), Regression, continued.

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 12, p. 372-390.

Homework #5

Week 16 (Dec. 3-7), Summary of the Research Process

Putnam, Chapter 23&24

Homework #6

Week 17 (Dec. 10), Conclusion

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 14

Final Project Due: Friday, December 14