

Professor McAvoy  
Political Science 301  
Spring 2008

Office: 223 Graham  
Phone: 256-0517  
Office Hours: T,Th 11-12  
Th, 4-5pm  
email: gemcavoy@uncg.edu

### **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. 2008. *Political Science Research Methods, 6<sup>th</sup> 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 (Jan. 15,17), Overview of the Research Process*  
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 1

*Week 2 (Jan. 22,24), Theory Building*  
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 2 & 3

*Week 3 (Jan. 29,31), Operationalization, Validity, and Reliability*  
Putnam, Chapter 1&8, and Chapters 2-5  
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 4

*Week 4 (Feb 5,7), Operationalization, Validity, and Reliability, cont'd*  
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 8

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

*Week 6 (Feb. 19, 21), Research Design*  
\*Short Paper Due: February 19  
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 5  
Gary Taubes, "Do We Really Know What Makes Us Healthy?" *New York Times Magazine*,  
September 16, 2007 available via Blackboard.

*Week 7 (Feb. 26, 28 ), Sampling*  
Putnam, Chapter 16-19  
Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 7  
Asher, Chapter 4

## **Data Gathering**

*Week 8 (Mar. 4, 6), Survey Research and Polling*

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 10

Asher, Chapters 5-7

\*Midterm: March 6

## **Analyzing Data**

*Week 9 (Mar. 18, 20), Graphing and Presenting Data*

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 11, p. 384-393

Asher, Chapter 8.

Homework #1

*Week 10 (Mar. 25, 27), Descriptive Statistics*

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 11; Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 12, p. 431-439 (Cross Tabs)

Putnam, Chapter 20-22

Homework #2

*Week 11 (April 1, 3), Measures of Association*

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 12, p.477-482, 490-492 (Correlation)

Homework #3

*Week 12 (April 8, 10) Significance Tests*

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 11, p. 393-416

Homework #4

*Week 13 (April 15, 17), Regression*

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 12, p. 483-498.

Homework #5

*Week 14 (April 22, 24), Summary of the Research Process*

Putnam, Chapter 23&24

Homework #6

*Week 15 (April 29-May 1), Conclusion*

Johnson and Reynolds, Chapter 14

Final Project Due: Friday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at 4pm.