POLS 3800 Introduction to Methods of Political Research

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Course Description
The goal is to introduce students to the methods used by political scientists to try to answer questions that arise from theories of politics. Students will be introduced to the logic of social scientific inquiry and the basic statistical tools used to study politics scientifically. More generally, this class will serve as an introduction to the concepts of causal relationships, probability, and inference. This should aid in looking at politics—and the world in general—critically and analytically. No math skills are assumed or required beyond algebra and arithmetic.

Required Text
*The Fundamentals of Political Science Research.* Paul M. Kellstedt and Guy D. Whitten.

Grades
- Quizzes 10%
- Exam grades 50%
- Writing assignment 40%

Quizzes
Throughout the semester there will be periodic quizzes. These quizzes will primarily be drawn from the previous lecture.

Exams
There will be three exams, for a total of 50% of the course grade. The format will be short answer questions, which will include both short essays and problems for you to solve.

Writing Assignment
There will be a semester long paper assignment that is worth 40% of your overall grade. Various components of the paper will be due at different times throughout the semester. There will be a handout with more detailed instructions.

The breakdown is as follows:
- Paper proposal 5%
- Annotated bibliography 5%
- First draft 15%
- Final draft 15%
Schedule

1/15  Introduction
1/17  The scientific study of politics
      Ch 1–2

1/22  Causal Relationships
      Ch 3
1/24  Research designs
      Ch 4

1/29  Measurement
      Ch 5
1/31  Descriptive statistics, measures of central tendency
      Ch 5

2/5   Measures of dispersion
      Ch 5
2/7   Charts and graphs
      Ch 5

2/12  Reading scientific articles
      Ch 12
2/14  Performing a literature review
      Ch 12

2/19  Exam 1
2/21  Statistical inference
      Ch 6

2/26  Statistical inference
      Ch 6
2/28  No class: paper meetings

3/5   Hypothesis testing: Z-scores and confidence intervals
      Ch 7
3/7   Difference of means
      Ch 7

3/12  $\chi^2$
      Ch 7
3/14  Pearson’s $r$
      Ch 7

3/19  Spring break
3/21  Spring break
3/26 Review
3/28 Exam 2

4/2 Bivariate regression
   Ch 8
4/4 Bivariate regression
   Ch 8
4/9 Bivariate regression: examples
   Ch 8
4/11 Multiple regression: controlling for Z
   Ch 9
4/16 Multiple regression: Interpretation
   Ch 9
4/18 Extensions: dummy variables and an introduction to interactive effects
   Ch 10
4/23 Multiple regression: examples
   Ch 10
4/25 Review

Exam Three: May 2 @ 10:45–1:15
Class Policies

Make-up Policy
Make-up exams will only be given in the most extreme circumstances and must have a university-approved excuse. Written documentation for the excuse is required and I must, barring some extraordinary circumstance, approve your excuse before the exam. If you fail to get my approval before the scheduled time for the exam, you will receive a zero.

Academic Honesty
All work must be your own. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing assignments will receive a zero for exam or assignment and possibly the course and will be punished in accordance with Georgia State University policies (for details, see the GSU student code of conduct: http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwdos/codeofconduct.html).

Drop Date
Be advised that the last day to withdraw from a course with the possibility of receiving a ‘W’ is March 5. If a student withdraws by this date but is failing the course, he/she will receive a ‘WF.’ All students who withdraw after this date will receive a ‘WF.’

Participation
Attendance is expected but not formally required. I expect that when in class individuals will be respectful of their fellow students and will therefore refrain from using laptops in a distracting manner and cell phones altogether. A pattern of disregarding these rules will result in a lowering of one’s overall grade (I give myself considerable discretion as to what exactly this might entail—but, it will be substantial).