

Political Science 300: Research Methods

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MW: 3-4:15
Bakeless 307

Office hours: M 1-2:00,
T 9:30-11:30,
W 1-3:00,
and by appointment



Sheldon: We're scientists, we can conduct our own research. I propose that we imprison two street people-

Amy: No.

Sheldon: You didn't even let me finish.

Amy: Forget it.

Sheldon: Oh, so you can experiment on all the apes you want, but I want to manipulate the emotions of two captive human beings, suddenly I'm the monster.

— Sheldon Cooper & Amy Farrah Fowler in *The Big Bang Theory*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In our data rich environment, we are inundated with convincing statistics every time we turn on the TV. Where do these numbers come from? How is research conducted to find these numbers? How do we know which information is correct and which is not? This course explores how to conduct social science research. This class will (1) acquaint students with the qualitative and quantitative research process as it pertains to political phenomena, (2) familiarize students with the mechanics of researching and writing a literature review, gathering original data, and analyzing the data. Students will: (3) learn basic statistical procedures and to apply these procedures to the relevant data, (4) develop critical thinking skills through constructive criticism of others', (5) foster positive oral communication skills through presenting research in a formal environment. Students will write an original research paper on the topic of their choice and present this significant scholarly paper in a formal research environment. Students will leave this course with a 15 to 20-page original research paper which may serve as a starting point for future research or an honor's thesis.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Buttolph Johnson, Janet, H.T. Reynolds, and Jason D. Mycoff. 2016. *Political Science Research Methods*, 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Additional assigned journal articles will be available in class or on BOLT.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. **In-class/Homework Assignments (10% of total grade).** Students will have activities and assignments on a regular basis. Some may be pop quizzes. Many activities will be completed within class time in groups. Others may have to be finished on your own. A few homework assignments will require the use of the SPSS statistical software which is available for students in our lab and on the BU computer network. Students also have access to SPSS in Andrus Library. THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR NOT HAVING ACCESS TO SPSS.
2. **Exams (25% of total grade).** There will be two exams. They are closed book, closed note exams administered Oct 10 (10% of grade) & Nov 21 (15% of grade). The exams may consist of multiple-choice, matching, short answer items, and essay. Everything from the textbook, in-class videos, guest speakers, and material discussed in class is fair game for the in-class examinations.
3. **Research Project (50% of total grade)** students will be required to complete and submit a 15-20-page scholarly research paper on a subject *to be approved by the instructor*. Please note that I will require you to turn in parts of your research paper as the semester unfolds. This is an iterative project that requires early engagement and constant attention throughout the semester. It will actually be easier to write this paper in the end, I promise! A very detailed research project description will follow in a separate document.
4. **Presentation and Attendance of Presentation Days (15% of total grade).** All students will be required to orally present (not read!) their research paper during class in a public forum (10% of the total grade). Students who fail to orally present their research papers will receive a zero for their research paper grade and fail the course. I will provide more information about what I expect in your presentations during the semester.

All students must also be audience members for *every* presentation day (5% of the total grade). As audience members you will review each project. Students who do not attend class as audience members, not only lose points toward the attendance portion of the grade but also have their final paper grade reduced by 5%-points for each day that you are absent during these presentations.

Important Due Dates for Research Project:

- Thesis Statement (2% of grade): **Mon Sept 19** – due in Discussions
- Annotated Literature Review (15% of grade): **Wed Oct 5** – due in Assignments
- Annotated Paper Outline (15% of grade): **Mon, Oct 24** – due in Discussions
- Peer Review of Two Outlines (6% of grade): **Mon, Oct 31** – due in Discussions
- Student Instructor Meeting (2% of total grade): Required office hour visit during the weeks of Nov 7, Nov 14, or Nov 21 (sign-up to follow)
- Formal Research Presentations: Dec 5, 7, & 12
- Final Paper (60% of grade): **Mon, Dec 12** – due in Assignments & a hard copy to me at the start of class at 1pm.

Grading Scale

- A: Outstanding understanding/application with very few errors, if any
- B: Above average knowledge/application with some errors
- C: Basic knowledge/application with a number of notable errors
- D: Some amount of knowledge/application with significant shortcomings
- F: Minimal knowledge, if any, of course material

A = 93 – 100%	B = 83 – 86.9	C = 73 – 76.9	D = 60 – 66.9
A- = 90 – 92.9	B- = 80 – 82.9	C- = 70 – 72.9	F = 59.9 and below
B+ = 87 – 89.9	C+ = 77 – 79.9	D+ = 67 – 69.9	

COURSE POLICIES

You are expected to check your university email account daily and utilize the BOLT features of the course on a regular basis. In an effort to be fair to all class members, please take note of my detailed course policies.

During class, refrain from using all forms of social media technology. No phones and no texting. We are in a computer lab for this class. Many of the classes we will not use the computers directly, so I am asking you to refrain from using the computer during lecture for anything other than class notes.

Class attendance is critical to your success; without your presence, you cannot receive credit for in-class activities and may be unable to complete homework assignments. Missing more than one class period will very likely place you at a severe disadvantage due to the iterative nature of the research project. Nevertheless, though I do not assign a grade for attendance, I will take attendance as a mechanism for “benefit of the doubt” points. For instance, if you receive an 82.4% in the class, but you attended every class, I may consider boosting your grade to a B, instead of a B-. You do not need to email me if you will miss a class period with no assignments due. As adults, I expect that if there is a moment when you have to prioritize life circumstances over class you do so appropriately. If you have an excused absence and you would like it to be noted in my attendance book, please bring it to me the very next class you are present. In such a case, you need to take upon yourself the responsibility of acquiring missed notes and announcements from another student in the class.

Class absence is not an excuse for missing any graded assignment. Due to the nature of *pop* quizzes, group activities, and in-class assignments, I do not offer make-up opportunities for these missed assignments. For all other assignments, I apply a letter grade reduction to late or missed assignments, and this letter grade reduction continues for every 24-hour period past the due date and time. Please note: passing the class is contingent on your completion of *each* graded assignment. For example, it may be possible to receive a passing grade and not hand-in the annotated literature review; however, I consider this failure to complete the class, which will result in a failing grade. Please note, again, that failure to present your paper during the instructor-determined presentation days, will also result in failing the class.

The unexpected can happen, and I want to be responsive and sensitive to a variety of situations. The Bloom attendance policy provides an avenue for students to make up an assignment due to an authorized absence (What’s an authorized absence? see: http://bloomu.edu/policies_procedures/3506). I will consider late assignments with prior permission or a written excuse from a medical

professional. Health center notes do not count, and employment and family vacations do not count as extenuating circumstances. **The number one rule is to contact me in advance of class with any serious situation that may arise on a day where a major course assignment is due.** I can only make honest judgments of unexpected events if I am aware of the situation, so email as soon as possible. All considerations of rescheduled assignments must be placed in writing (email is fine), and I reserve the right to consider special requests before responding. If you are at all unsure of the attendance policy, please see me.

I will take inquiries about the grades of assignments by appointment. However, specific disputes or issues with the graded assignment must first be placed in writing prior to our meeting (email is fine). Please note: When you ask me to review a grade, I review the whole assignment, meaning that I review the grade for accuracy throughout the document, not just in the area of your concern. Additionally, I will consider disputes for one week after the class has received the graded assignment (e.g., I will not discuss the merits of your midterm grade during the final week of class).

In general, expect a response to your questions and e-mails within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours over the weekend. As most of you are new to the college experience, I strongly encourage you to read the following guide to academic **e-mail etiquette**: <http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>. Remember, you are writing to me as your instructor not texting your best friend. I grant each student one inappropriately addressed email. I will gently remind you in that email to write in proper letter form. After the midterm of the semester, I will stop responding to emails written inappropriately.

Overall, I ask for conscientious students—those who are prepared and can manage their course requirements and personal lives. Displays of responsibility go a long way in my book. Finally, enrollment in this course implies understanding and acceptance of all the university and course level policies.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Academic dishonesty includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, misrepresentation in connection with examinations and course assignments. Informal and formal avenues of sanction are available to instructors and some penalties are severe. I do not overlook instances of academic dishonesty and will file an Academic Integrity Policy Violation Report Form with the Director of Student Standards, as per the Bloomsburg University Academic Integrity Policy (PRP 3512). All students are expected to know and understand this policy. If you have any questions about academic integrity, please see me immediately. Ignorance of this policy will not excuse you from any penalties. Please note that all assignments uploaded to BOLT are screened through Turnitin.

The research project in this class makes it particularly important to be well-versed in appropriate academic practices. Did you know that plagiarism is not just using the exact words of an author? It also includes **parallel plagiarism**: setting up sentences in a paragraph, or even in one sentence alone, where the structure, content, or ideas expressed are parallel or mirror that of an author. Neither of these forms of plagiarism, whether created deliberately or accidentally, will be tolerated in this class. If plagiarism is detected, a grade of F for the assignment—or for the course—shall be issued at the discretion of the instructor. **Fabrication of sources and other forms of academic dishonesty** will be treated in an identical fashion. By taking this course, students agree

that all required papers and assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

It is imperative for all college graduates to have well-developed writing skills. I expect quality writing from every single student in this class. **This course requires good writing. Your writing in this class will weigh heavily on all of your writing assignments.** All Students should consult Purdue University's online writing center (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>) for information on how to properly document sources and for general writing tips. The most common writing problems for students are addressed at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/index.html>. This website offers information on grammar and punctuation, writing exercises, tips for writing, and how to properly document sources. All written work in this class must follow the current APA Style. Failure to use APA style will result in heavily penalized assignment grades.

It is your responsibility to write in your own words, properly cite published works as appropriate for assignments, and use the correct APA style. This all sounds very stern, but there is hope:

The BU Writing Center Can Help: The Bloomsburg University Writing Center (BUWC) is a free resource that offers support for undergraduate and graduate writers at any stage of the writing process. We are a diverse staff of Writing Consultants who represent a variety of majors and share the common goal of working with you to develop your skills and help you grow as a writer. You set the agenda for the appointment - whether you're concerned about getting started, or about clarity, grammar, organization, citations or any other aspect of writing or the English language. Appointments are highly recommended, but walk-ins are welcome.

BUWC consultants are also available to conduct sessions online. Commuting students or any student who wants to work with a consultant but cannot get to one of our locations will be able to reach us online through a link we will provide. Students will be able to speak with consultants and share their documents, usually without having to download any new software. We will be offering workshops and individual tutorials for students who are interested in working with us online.

BUWC Hours are Mon.—Thurs. from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in Bakeless 206. There are also night hours on Sunday through Thursday from 7-10 pm in the Schweiker Room in the Andruss Library. You can drop in or request an appointment through email: buwc@bloomu.edu. Visit their website (bloomu.edu/writingcenter) for more information.

DISABILITY SERVICES

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Students with Disabilities Center will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Students with Disabilities Center is located in Warren Student Services Center 043; telephone 570-389-4491.

An additional note to **student athletes** and **students certified with SDC**: Multiple class absences can significantly lower your grade. I hold all students to the same standard. If you are on a university sports team or have a disability that impacts your attendance, you must talk to me in the first week

of class, regardless of when your athletic season starts or if you believe you will not be impacted by your disability this term. It is much more difficult for me to make fair arrangements in the middle of the term when I had no knowledge of the potential for your absences.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

This course calendar is tentative and therefore subject to change. I will announce all changes to the course calendar in class. I reserve the right to add and delete topics covered in class as well as to correct all typographical and mathematical errors.

Week of 8/29

Empirical Approach to Political Science, Chapters 1 & 2

Week of 9/5

No class—Mon, Sept 5

Responsible Research Practices

Week of 9/12

Beginning the Research Process, Chapter 3

Week of 9/19

Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables, Chapter 4

Thesis Statement Due—Mon, Sept 19

Journal Research Workshop

Week of 9/26

Measurement, Chapter 5

Week of 10/3

Research Design, Chapter 6

Annotated Literature Review Due—Wed, Oct 5

Week of 10/10

Exam 1—Mon, Oct 10

Sampling, Chapter 7

Week of 10/17

Chp 7 continued

Surveys and Interviews, Chapter 10

Week of 10/24

Annotated Paper Outline Due—Mon, Oct 24

Document Analysis, Chapter 9

Making Sense of Data, Chapter 11

Week of 10/31

Peer Reviews Due—Mon, Oct 31

Chp 11 continued

Week of 11/7: Tuesday is Election Day!

Statistical Inference, Chapter 12

Week of 11/14

Variable Relationships, Chapter 13

Week of 11/21

Exam 2—Mon, Nov 21

No Class—Wed and Fri

Week of 11/28

Chp 13 continued

Week of 12/5

Student Presentations both Mon and Wed

Mon, 12/12

Student Presentations during **finals slot 1-3:00pm**

Final paper due at 1pm