

Introduction to Data Analysis
PSC 251, Section 50
Spring 2012

Instructor: Dr. Justin Vaughn
Class: M/W 8:00-9:15 PM
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Course Overview

This course is an introduction to analyzing data. In this course, we will primarily examine data that is relevant to political practices and phenomena. We will discuss what data is, how to gather and analyze it, and how appropriate data analysis influences the political worlds we live in.

Required Texts

- Johnson and Reynolds, *Political Science Research Methods*, 7th ed. (CQ Press, 2012)
- Mycoff, *Working with Political Science Research Methods: Problems and Exercises*, 3rd ed. (CQ Press, 2012)

Grading policy

Grades in this course are cumulative. That is, as the semester goes on you have the opportunity to earn up to 500 points. Final grades will be based, without exception, on the following scale:

- 465-500 points = A
- 450-464 points = A-
- 435-449 points = B+
- 415-434 points = B
- 400-414 points = B-
- 385-399 points = C+
- 350-384 points = C
- 300-349 points = D
- 299 points or less = F

Please note the following: I do not change grades unless I make a computational error. I do not curve grades. *I do not reveal grades via e-mail or telephone.*

Course Grading Breakdown

Exams (3) – 300 points

There will be three non-cumulative exams in this class. Each exam is worth up to 100 points. The first exam – on Wednesday, February 22 – will cover material from January 18 through February 15. The second exam – on Wednesday, April 4 – will cover material from February 27 through April 2. The final exam – on Monday, May 7 – will cover material from April 9 through May 2. Exams will be open-book/open-note, so be sure to come prepared.

Homework Assignments – 120 points

Several of the chapters of the course textbook (Johnson & Reynolds's *Political Science Research Methods*, 7th ed.) have corresponding sets of exercises in the Mycoff workbook. You are required to complete the exercises for chapters two through thirteen over the course of the semester. Each set of exercises is worth up to 10 points. With the exception of chapters one and two, we will spend one full week on every chapter in the textbook. In these cases, the exercises must be turned in at the start of class on the Wednesday of each week. Due dates are marked in the Course Schedule section of this syllabus with asterisks (*).

Note: The exceptions to this are: chapter 1, when there is no corresponding set of exercises; chapter 2, which we only spend one day on so the exercises are due that day; and chapter 14, which we will not cover in this class. Also, no homework assignments will be due during the weeks when exams are scheduled.

Note: The pages in the workbook are perforated and can be easily detached. Be sure to staple pages together when you hand them in. In the case that the exercises require you to write on another sheet of paper, be sure to type your answers and generally follow the written work policy identified later in this syllabus.

Note: Students who turn in assignments after attendance has been taken on the date it is due may turn it in late up to the time attendance is taken the next Monday, but will only receive half-credit. Late assignments will not be accepted after that.

Note: As we get deeper into the semester, these exercises will require you to do some work using statistical software like SPSS. We will spend a small amount of time discussing this in class, but students are encouraged to seek out information about using SPSS on their own. For example, there are countless tutorials available online, particularly via youtube.com. Also, Harvard University provides a valuable document that you might find helpful. It can be located at the following url:

http://hmdc.harvard.edu/projects/SPSS_Tutorial/spsstut.shtml

Attendance/Punctuality – 80 points

I will take attendance at the beginning of class during each class period (with the exception of the first class meeting and each exam day). Once attendance has been taken, I will put away the roster and proceed with class. Students who arrive after this point will be considered late, students who do not attend at all will be considered absent. In terms of this component of your grade, there is no substantive difference between late arrivals and absences. Each student is allowed up to 3 late arrivals and/or absences without penalty. At the time of the fourth late arrival and/or absence, the student will be penalized 10 points. Each additional absence will cost an additional 10 points. Any student arriving late to and/or being absent from 10 or more classes will receive an automatic F for the course.

Note: If you use up your three late arrivals/absences early in the semester and then need to take sick or personal days later, you will still be penalized. Be sure to save your late arrival/absence days for serious and legitimate situations.

Note: Students leaving class early without advance notice to the professor will also be considered absent. Similarly, students who are disruptive or who violate classroom policy relating to cell phones or laptops will be considered absent.

Extra Credit Opportunities

Each student will have the opportunity to earn up to 25 extra credit points by turning in up to 5 separate “Data Analysis in the News” essays. These essays must be between 2-4 full typed pages and will identify a recent story about some political phenomenon published in a major national newspaper or website that utilizes statistical information to support its conclusions. Each essay will be worth up to 5 points. In addition to turning in a printed copy of the article, you will evaluate the article’s use of statistical information, analyzing the extent to which its employment of this information is accurate, appropriate, and how it relates to material we have discussed in class. Students may turn in these assignments on the following dates at the start of class:

- January 30
- February 27
- March 19
- April 9
- April 30

Note: Dates are also marked in the Course Schedule section of the syllabus with number signs (#).

Written Work Policy

All assignments must be typed (double spaced, Times New Roman fonts, traditional margin settings, pages numbered) and all references must be cited using the American Political Science Association's official citation style. Work that does not do so will be penalized. More information on this citation style can be found at the following link: <http://www.ipsonet.org/data/files/APSASStyleManual2006.pdf>

Exam Policy

Exams can be taken early or late only in accordance with the university's excused absence policy. If you are not present the day of an exam you will not be eligible to re-take the exam without either prior authorization from the instructor or proof that your situation meets the requirements of the university's excused absence policy.

Academic Honor Policy

Cheating, plagiarism, or collusion will result in a grade of "0" for that assignment. Two or more incidents will result in an automatic F for the course. I will enforce this policy for all examinations and assignments.

Classroom Policy

Cell phones and laptops must be turned off unless permission has been given by Dr. Vaughn in advance. Texting in particular will not be allowed. **Students in violation of this rule will be asked to stop and will lose credit for attendance and participation that day. Repeated violations will result in the student being asked to leave class.**

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading	Work due
18-Jan	Course Overview	Syllabus	
23-Jan	Introduction to Data Analysis	Ch 1	
25-Jan	The Scientific Study of Politics	Ch 2	*
30-Jan	Beginning the Research Process	Ch 3	#
1-Feb	"	"	*
6-Feb	Hypotheses, Concepts, and Variables	Ch 4	
8-Feb	"	"	*
13-Feb	Measurement	Ch 5	
15-Feb	"	"	*
20-Feb	no class - Presidents Day		
22-Feb	Exam 1		
27-Feb	Making Causal Inferences	Ch 6	#
29-Feb	"	"	*
5-Mar	Sampling	Ch 7	
7-Mar	"	"	*
12-Mar	no class - Spring Break		
14-Mar	no class - Spring Break		
19-Mar	Making Empirical Observations	Ch 8	#
21-Mar	"	"	*
26-Mar	"	"	
28-Mar	Document Analysis	Ch 9	
2-Apr	"	"	*
4-Apr	Exam 2		
9-Apr	Survey Research and Interviewing	Ch 10	#
11-Apr	"	"	*
16-Apr	Making Sense of Data	Ch 11	
18-Apr	"	"	*
23-Apr	Statistical Inference	Ch 12	
25-Apr	"	"	*
30-Apr	Investigating Bivariate Relationships	Ch 13	#
2-May	"	"	*
7-May	Final Exam - 8 PM		

* = Exercises from Mycoff workbook due

= Optional "Data Analysis in the News" essay due