

Introduction to Data Analysis
PSC 251, Section 50
Spring 2008

Instructor: Dr. Justin Vaughn
Class: TU/TH 4:00-5:15 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.

Course Goals

- 1) To develop a broad understanding of what data is and how to obtain and analyze it.
- 2) To enhance one's ability to think critically about political events and politicians.
- 3) To learn to identify how politics is all around us and how the way we think about and acquire information about politics affects our lives.

Required Texts

Janet Buttolph Johnson and H.T. Reynolds, *Political Science Research Methods*, 5th Edition.

Grading policy

Grading will follow a standard scale: 90 points or more is an A, 80-89 points is a B, 70-79 points is a C, and 60-69 is a D. 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.*

Academic Honor Policy

- Cheating, plagiarism, or collusion will result in a grade of "0" for that assignment. I will enforce this policy for all examinations and assignments.

Course Grading Breakdown

Participation – 20 points

- We will spend significant portions of several class periods this semester engaged in various activities that help relate the assigned material of the day. I will take attendance at the beginning of class during four (4) such class periods this semester. Every person present will receive 5 points for being present and taking part in our activity. To be clear: if you miss class on one of those randomly selected days, your grade will suffer by a half-letter; if you miss twice, it will suffer a whole letter grade, and so on.

Library Resource Project – 20 points

- February 14th has been set aside as a library resource day. On this day, you will be working independently to identify a problematic area in American politics and write a letter to a legislative representative (i.e., U.S. House, U.S. Senate, Ohio House, or Ohio Senate) about what you want them to do to fix the situation. In this letter, you will include at least 3 different sources of data that highlight the problem and support your preferred plan for action. This will be discussed in detail during the first class period and a handout detailing your responsibilities will be distributed later in the semester. **Letters are due in class on March 4th.**

Midterm Exam – 20 points

- This exam will be cover material from January 5th through February 28th. **The exam will be held on March 6th during the normal class period.** You will be responsible for writing an in-class essay, so bring necessary paper and writing material. (Note: Exams can be taken early or late only in accordance with the university's excused absence policy.)

Group Project & Presentation – 40 points

- Early in the semester the class will be broken into 3-6 small groups. These groups will not only be used in various classroom activities, but they will also help you develop a network of classmates to assist with your understanding of the lecture/reading material and assignment and exam preparation. Over the course of the semester, your group will conduct research on an aspect of the 2008 presidential election that relates to Ohio. (All groups must have their topics approved by Dr. Vaughn.) As the semester progresses, your group will identify a central research question, devise a strategy for answering that question, implement the strategy, and produce a research report. The group research report will be worth 20 points. Groups will also be responsible for presenting their reports formally to the rest of the class. The group presentation will also be worth 20 points (i.e., combined, the report and presentation will be worth 40 points). This will be discussed in detail during the first class period and a handout detailing your responsibilities will be distributed later in the semester. There will be a class period dedicated to workshopping your ideas on April 3rd. **Group presentations will take place on April 24th and 29th and May 1st. Your typed group project reports will be due Monday, May 5, in person to Dr. Vaughn, no later than 5 PM.**

Course Schedule

15-Jan	Course Introduction	
17-Jan	Types of Inquiry	J&R Ch. 1-2
22-Jan	Scientific Method Overview	Handout
24-Jan	Asking Questions/Designing Research	J&R Ch. 2-3
29-Jan	Reviewing Literatures	J&R Ch. 5
31-Jan	Developing Hypotheses	J&R Ch. 4
5-Feb	Developing Hypotheses	J&R Ch. 4
7-Feb	Developing Hypotheses	J&R Ch. 4
12-Feb	What is Data?	Handout
14-Feb	Library Resources	
19-Feb	Data & Measurement	J&R Ch. 6
21-Feb	Data & Measurement	J&R Ch. 6
26-Feb	Collecting Data	J&R Ch. 7
28-Feb	Collecting Data	J&R Ch. 7
4-Mar	Midterm Review	
6-Mar	Midterm Exam	
11-Mar	Spring Break - No Class	
13-Mar	Spring Break - No Class	
18-Mar	Qualitative Data (Archival)	J&R Ch. 8
20-Mar	Qualitative Data (Interviews)	J&R Ch. 10
25-Mar	Sampling	J&R Ch. 9
27-Mar	Descriptive Data	J&R Ch. 11
1-Apr	Causality and Inference	Handout
3-Apr	Group Workshops	
8-Apr	Causality and Inference	Handout
10-Apr	Bivariate Analysis	J&R Ch. 12
15-Apr	Multivariate Analysis	J&R Ch. 13
17-Apr	Reporting Information (Ethics)	Handout
22-Apr	Reporting Information (Pragmatics)	Handout
24-Apr	Group Presentations	
29-Apr	Group Presentations	
1-May	Group Presentations	
5-May	Group Projects Due – 5 PM	