

**POL308: Social Research Methods
Online, 2018**

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Course Description

This course serves as a broad overview to conducting research in social science, specifically political science and sociology. In the broadest terms, you will be taught how to ask and answer questions that are of interest to students of human behavior. The goal is to further your ability to analyze, interpret, and critically assess social phenomena. While you may choose not to conduct social scientific research beyond this course, your ability to critically evaluate scientific information (polls, demographic trends, media commentary, research articles, etc.) will be strengthened, and you will become a better consumer of research, regardless of its specific domain. To this end, in this course you will: 1) become familiar with the social scientific research process, 2) be introduced to core statistical concepts, such as sampling distributions and hypothesis testing.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain the social scientific research process from beginning to end
- Identify the common components of social scientific journal articles and be able to read and comprehend each component
- Observe and analyze political phenomena to formulate empirically testable questions
- Generate theoretically motivated hypotheses based on empirical questions
- Evaluate various research designs and critique their theoretical and methodological rigor

Required Textbook

- Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff. (2016). *Political Science Research Methods*, 8th Edition. Sage CQ Press. [PSRM]

Course Requirements

You may earn up to 500 points in this course, as determined by your scores on the following assignments:

- **Exams (200 points; 40%)** – You will complete a midterm and final exam, each worth 100 points. These exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay style questions. The exams will each be posted for a three-day period (as noted in the schedule) and once you begin the exam you will have 90 minutes to complete it.
- **Homework Assignments (150 points; 30%)** – You will complete seven homework assignments due at the end of each week (with the exception of the first week). These will each be worth 25 points. I will drop your lowest homework score (or you may choose to skip one).
- **Research Proposal (100 points; 20%)** – You will design an original research project and write a proposal. The proposal will contain the following elements: abstract, introduction, literature review, hypotheses, and a survey/experimental design. While you will not actually conduct this research, your proposal should be detailed enough such that you could carry out the proposal with little modification. As such, you will be required to design a full survey (or survey experiment) and include all questions and other stimuli within the proposal. You will submit the proposal in four stages (note the due dates on the course schedule): 1) annotated bibliography (20 points), 2) theory and hypotheses (10 points), 3) survey/experimental design (20 points), 4) full draft (50 points). I will provide feedback at each stage to improve the quality of the final proposal.
- **Course Engagement (50 points; 20%)** – I will post 1-2 weekly discussion questions on the course message board. You should make at least one original post and reply to at least two other posts. Your original posts are due by Thursday (at 11:55pm) of each week and your replies are due by Saturday (at 11:55pm)

Grading Scale

Your course grade will be determined by your total *earned* points according to the following scale:

- A = 465-500 points (93% or higher)
- A- = 450-464 points (90-92%)
- B+ = 435-449 points (87-89%)
- B = 415-434 points (83-86%)
- B- = 400-414 points (80-82%)
- C+ = 385-399 points (77-79%)
- C = 365-384 points (73-76%)
- C- = 350-364 points (70-72%)
- D+ = 335-349 points (67-69%)
- D = 300-334 points (63-66%)
- F = 0-299 points (0-59%)

Course Policies

- **Late Work:** I will accept work up to 24 hours late with a penalty of 20% of the assignment's total point value applied to your grade (i.e., an assignment worth 100 points would receive a 20-point penalty).
- **Email Policy:** Under most circumstances, I will respond to emails within one business day (24 hours). While I often reply to emails during non-business hours (i.e., outside of 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday), please do not expect me to always do so. However, if you do not hear back from me within one business day, please respond with a follow-up email, as your first email may have gone to my spam folder.
- **Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity means giving credit where credit is due in an academic setting. The instructor and students share responsibility for the integrity of the academic process. The definition of cheating is "giving or receiving of information illicitly with intent to deceive the instructor in his or her effort to grade fairly any academic work," and the definition of plagiarism is "to take and use as one's own the thoughts, writings, or inventions of another" (Oxford English Dictionary). It is plagiarism when one uses direct quotations without proper credit and appropriate quotation marks, and when one uses the ideas of another without proper credit. The penalty for academic dishonesty is severe. (Refer to the college catalog, pp.82-84.)
- **Disability Resources:** North Carolina Wesleyan College seeks to fully comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a covered disability must go to the Coordinator of Disability Services located in the Student Success Center, PCB 192A to verify the disability before any accommodations can occur. The telephone number is 252-985-5216.
- **Inclement Weather:** In the event of a weather or other emergency, information about the status of classes at NCWC will be posted on the NCWC home page (www.ncwc.edu) and distributed to major TV and radio stations in the area.
- **Addition and Modification to Course Policy:** At the discretion of the instructor, additional policies may be added throughout the duration of the course. Policies may also be revised during the course if necessary. All students will be notified of such additions and changes in advance.

Course Schedule

- Week 1 (April 29-May 5)
 - Read the Syllabus
 - Read *PSRM* Chapters 1-2

- Introductory Forum Post (due Saturday by 11:55pm)
- Week 2 (May 6-12)
 - Read *PSRM* Chapter 3
 - Homework 1 (due Friday by 11:55pm)
 - Discussion Posts (initial posts due Thursday by 11:55pm; replies due Saturday by 11:55pm)
- Week 3 (May 13-19)
 - Read *PSRM* Chapters 4-5
 - Homework 2 (due Friday by 11:55pm)
 - Discussion Posts (initial posts due Thursday by 11:55pm; replies due Saturday by 11:55pm)
- Week 4 (May 20-26)
 - Read *PSRM* Chapters 6 & 10
 - Homework 3 (due Friday by 11:55pm)
 - Annotated Bibliography (due Saturday by 11:55pm)
 - Discussion Posts (initial posts due Thursday by 11:55pm; replies due Saturday by 11:55pm)
 - **Midterm Exam (available Thursday, due Saturday by 11:55pm)**
- Week 5 (May 27-June 2)
 - Read *PSRM* Chapters 7 & 11
 - Homework 4 (due Friday by 11:55pm)
 - Theory & Hypotheses (due Saturday by 11:55pm)
 - Discussion Posts (initial posts due Thursday by 11:55pm; replies due Saturday by 11:55pm)
- Week 6 (June 3-9)
 - Read *PSRM* Chapter 12
 - Homework 5 (due Friday by 11:55pm)
 - Survey/Experimental Design (due Saturday by 11:55pm)
 - Discussion Posts (initial posts due Thursday by 11:55pm; replies due Saturday by 11:55pm)
- Week 7 (June 10-16)
 - Read *PSRM* Chapter 13
 - Homework 6 (due Friday by 11:55pm)
 - Discussion Posts (initial posts due Thursday by 11:55pm; replies due Saturday by 11:55pm)
- Week 8 (June 17-23)
 - Read *PSRM* Chapter 14
 - Final Design (due Wednesday by 11:55pm)
 - Homework 7 (due Friday by 11:55pm)
 - Discussion Posts (initial posts due Thursday by 11:55pm; replies due Saturday by 11:55pm)
 - **Final Exam (available Thursday, due Saturday by 11:55pm)**