

POLS 3310-001: Research Methods and Political Analysis
(Cross-listed with POLS 5310-001)
Fall 2017

Time and Place of Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00am-12:20pm; SH129

Section Information: POLS 3310-001 (Cross-listed with POLS 5310-001)

Instructor: Dr. Herschel Thomas

Office Location: 404 University Hall

Office Hours: R 3:30-5:00pm and by appointment

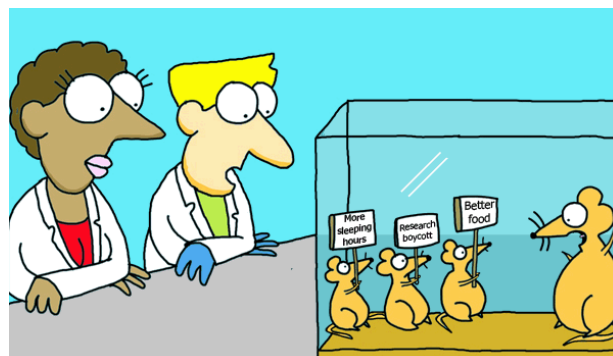
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Teaching Assistant: Josué Rodriguez (3310 *only*, josueroedriguez2009@mavs.uta.edu)

Description of Course Content: This course introduces students to the methods of research in political science and the practice of political analysis. We begin by building a foundation in research design, covering topics such as how to develop testable hypotheses and measure concepts. Next, we study a range of quantitative and qualitative methods used by political scientists to answer major questions in our discipline—to include field experiments, surveys, elite interviews, non-participant observation, content analysis/text-as-data, and the study of networks. We then cover how and when to utilize the various tools of statistical inference to understand and explain political phenomena.



“Our mistake.
We introduced a politician’s genes in that one!”

Student Learning Outcomes: At the end of this semester, the successful student should be able to:

- Understand the components of effective research in political science
- Evaluate the usefulness and appropriateness of various research designs
- Collect, compile, and thoughtfully analyze data about politics
- Properly apply analytical tools to questions of causality
- Understand and assess academic research articles

Required Textbook and Other Course Materials: There is one required textbook for this course: Johnson, Reynold and Mycoff. 2015. *Political Science Research Methods*, 8th Ed.: CQ Press. (ISBN: 978-1506307824). The accompanying problem/exercise workbook of the textbook is *not* required and no passcodes are needed. Additional readings will be made available on Blackboard or are freely available from online sources.

Blackboard: This course will make extensive use of our course page in Blackboard. It is available at: <http://www.uta.edu/blackboard/students/index.php>

Descriptions of Major Assignments and Examinations: Students are required to complete two exams, write two short papers, write a research design paper, complete lab and analysis notebooks, and regularly participate in class exercises.

- **Exams:** Two exams will cover all course material through each exam date.
- **Short Papers:** Students will write two short papers, of 2-3 pages in length (single-spaced and *not* including figures), that address instructor-provided analysis tasks. These assignments are to be submitted electronically on Blackboard *and* a printed/stapled copy must be submitted in class.

- **Article and Lab Notebooks:** Students will maintain written notebooks (in three separate blue books) to include the below. Notebooks will be collected and graded three times throughout the course, and must *always* be brought to class.
 - All work related to *in-class* lab exercises
 - Six summaries/reactions to a data-focused politics or public policy article of the student's choice (two per notebook collection). Articles may be found on NYT Upshot (<http://www.nytimes.com/section/upshot>), FiveThirtyEight (<http://fivethirtyeight.com/politics/>) or elsewhere. Responses should exceed 1 page (written) in length and include detail *regarding the data and/or analysis* provided in the chosen article.
- **Research Design Paper:** Students will write a paper of 4-5 pages (single-spaced) that describes the design of a potential research project on a political science topic of their choosing. It should: discuss an important research question (including a literature review with appropriate references), describe and justify one testable hypothesis, detail the operationalization of an independent variable and dependent variable, identify possible data sources and/or specify data collection methods. Papers must be well-written, proofread, and detailed. A proposal of ~1 page is also required, which will outline your planned research topic, question, hypothesis, and variables.
- **Attendance/Participation:** For this course, daily attendance may be recorded and I expect you to attend all classes. Students should come to class having read and thought about course material. Communicating your thoughts to others is an important component of learning and thus participation is an important part of this course. Participation involves not only responding to or asking questions, but also regularly engaging in class discussion. Students miss class at their own risk. Should you find occasion to be absent, I will be happy to discuss missed material during my office hours once you have obtained class notes from another student.
- **Students enrolled in POLS 5310 (only) will also:**
 - Present their research design papers to the class (~5 minutes in length)
 - Extend research design papers to include preliminary analysis (e.g. descriptive tables and figures) drawn from secondary data sources
 - Include a half-page summary/response for *each* additional "5310 only" reading in lab notebooks
 - Maintain a high level of in-class participation and attendance

Grading:

Student grades will be calculated as follows*:

Short Papers (2): 10%
 Research Design Paper: 20%
 Exam 1: 25%
 Exam 2: 25%
 Lab Notebooks: 15%
 In-class Participation: 5%

*Limited extra credit opportunities may be available on occasion. Any extra credit points will be added to the next exam grade as percentage points.

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

90+ %: A
 80-89 %: B
 70-79 %: C
 60-69 %: D
 Below 60 %: F

Students are expected to keep track of their performance throughout the semester and seek guidance from available sources (including the instructor) if their performance drops below satisfactory levels; see “Student Support Services,” below.

Office Hours: Students are encouraged to visit my office hours with questions related to course content and assessments. Coming to office hours is the best way to receive to an answer to an in-depth question. I am typically available to schedule appointments during university business hours as needed.

Electronic Devices: Laptops and tablets are permitted in class for the purpose of taking notes and completing exercises. I expect that you will refrain from using your smartphone during class time—any new Snapchats will still be there after class!

In-class Discussion: On occasion, we may discuss political issues and current events related to course content. Civility and professionalism in all discussions is expected and all opinions will be respected. Though I may present follow-up questions or ask for counter-arguments related to any particular discussion, I have no interest in swaying your views and I encourage the respectful exchange of ideas.

Grading Questions: All questions regarding grades or exam questions must be submitted in writing and include reasonable explanation for consideration.

Grade Grievances: Any appeal of a grade in this course must follow the procedures and deadlines for grade-related grievances as published in the current University Catalog.

Makeup Exams: No makeups will be scheduled for the in-class exams except under extraordinary circumstances. Students must notify me in advance of the exam to schedule such a make-up. Written documentation of the extraordinary circumstance may be required and students should expect documentation to be verified.

Recording: Recording of audio/video during class is not permitted except under special circumstances.

Bad Weather: Any bad weather cancellations made by the University will result in the scheduled topic or exam being held on the next class day.

Incompletes: Incompletes will be given only in extraordinary circumstances and at the discretion of the instructor.

Late Work Policy: I expect you to complete and turn in all assignments on time and as specified in this syllabus. All work is subject to increasing penalties for lateness (up to a 25% deduction per day).

Drop Policy: Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://web.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

Disability Accommodations: UT Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including *The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*, *The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA)*, and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to

discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the **Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)**. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting:

The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD) www.uta.edu/disability or calling 817-272-3364.
Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS) www.uta.edu/caps/ or calling 817-272-3671.

Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Title IX Policy: The University of Texas at Arlington (“University”) is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated. *For information regarding Title IX, visit www.uta.edu/titleIX or contact Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or jmhood@uta.edu.*

Academic Integrity: Students enrolled in all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.

I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents’ Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university’s standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student’s suspension or expulsion from the University. *Any student violating the UT Arlington honor code will receive a grade of 0 on the corresponding assignment(s) and be referred to the OSC.*

Campus Carry: Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/>.

Electronic Communication: UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is

aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

Final Review Week: A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

Emergency Exit Procedures: Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located immediately across (as well as to the right) from the classroom door. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities. Students are encouraged to subscribe to the MavAlert system that will send information in case of an emergency to their cell phones or email accounts. Anyone can subscribe at <https://mavalert.uta.edu/> or <https://mavalert.uta.edu/register.php>

Student Support Services: UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include [tutoring](#), [major-based learning centers](#), developmental education, [advising and mentoring](#), personal counseling, and [federally funded programs](#). For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>.

IDEAS Center (2nd Floor of Central Library): Offers free tutoring to all students with a focus on transfer students, sophomores, veterans and others undergoing a transition to UT Arlington. To schedule an appointment with a peer tutor or mentor email IDEAS@uta.edu or call (817) 272-6593.

The English Writing Center (411LIBR): The Writing Center Offers free tutoring in 20-, 40-, or 60-minute face-to-face and online sessions to all UTA students on any phase of their UTA coursework. Our hours are 9 am to 8 pm Mon.-Thurs., 9 am-3 pm Fri. and Noon-6 pm Sat. and Sun. Register and make appointments online at <http://uta.mywconline.com>. Classroom Visits, workshops, and specialized services for graduate students are also available. Please see www.uta.edu/owl for detailed information on all our programs and services.

Library's 2nd floor Academic Plaza: Offers students a central hub of support services, including IDEAS Center, University Advising Services, Transfer UTA and various college/school advising hours. Services are available during the library's hours of operation. <http://library.uta.edu/academic-plaza>

Course Schedule

Every attempt will be made to keep to the plan below. As the instructor for this course, I reserve the ability to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course. Any adjustments will be announced in class and coming to class will ensure that you know about such changes.

Date	Topic(s)	Readings
Aug 24 (R)	Introduction to the course	
Aug 29 (T)	How scientific is political science? What is the <i>value</i> of political science research?	BB: Wearing (2010); Lane (2012); Reilly (2013) [5310 only – BB: Stratford (2014)]
Aug 31 (T)	*No class: Professor at APSA conference*	Read ahead for next time!
Sep 5 (T) / Sep 7 (R)	Fundamentals of empirical research Identifying topics, developing research questions Lab exercise: from topics to questions	JRM Ch. 1 and Ch. 2
Sept 12 (T) / Sept 14 (R)	Developing testable hypotheses Lab exercise: from questions to hypotheses The basics of conceptualization and measurement	BB: Lovett et al. (2012, 22-29 only) JRM Ch. 3 and Ch. 4
Sept 19 (T) / 21 (R)	Measurement and operationalization of variables Lab exercise: operationalizing variables	BB: Deen and Shelton (2015) JRM Ch. 5 [5310 only – BB: Boydston et al. (2014)]

Sept 26 (T) / 28 (R)	<p>Correlation vs. causation</p> <p>The art of research design</p> <p>Lab exercise: same question, different research designs?</p> <p>*Collection #1 for Lab Notebooks on Sep 28</p>	JRM Ch. 6 and Ch. 15 (584-596 only)
Oct 3 (T) / 5 (R)	<p>How to read an academic research article</p> <p>Experiments and ethics</p> <p>*Short Paper 1 due on Oct 3 by 11am (submit on BB and bring printed/stapled copy to class)*</p>	<p>BB: Lovett et al. (2012, 29-34 only)</p> <p>BB: Markoff (2012); Drezner (2016); Willis (2014); And, glance through the experimental design sections of Ansolabehere et al. (1994); Bond et al. (2012); Vicente and Wantchekon (2008)</p> <p>Browse through the UTA IRB website here.</p> <p>[5310 only – BB: McDermott (2002)]</p>
Oct 10 (T) / Oct 12 (R)	<p>Lab exercise: designing an ethical experiment</p> <p>Non-participant observation/ethnography</p> <p>Exam review</p>	<p>JRM Ch. 8</p> <p>BB: Bialik (2015); Neyfakh (2015); Hoang (2016)</p>
Oct 17 (T)	*Exam 1*	
Oct 19 (R)	<p>Secondary data analysis</p> <p>Lab exercise: Assessing the reliability and validity of existing data sources</p>	<p>Boyea (2016)</p> <p>Browse the ICPSR Data Archive here and browse https://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/</p>

Oct 24 (T) / 26 (R)	<p>Surveys</p> <p>Lab exercise: Understanding UTA students as voters</p> <p>Sampling</p> <p>*1 page proposal for research design paper due on Oct 26 by 11:00am (submit on BB and bring printed/stapled copy to class)*</p>	JRM Ch. 7 and Ch. 10
Oct 31 (T) / Nov 2 (R)	<p>Content analysis and text-as-data</p> <p>Lab exercise: classifying tweets</p> <p>*Collection #2 for Lab Notebooks on Oct 31*</p>	<p>JRM Ch. 9</p> <p>Browse the Comparative Agendas Project Topics Codebook: http://www.comparativeagendas.net/pages/master-codebook</p> <p>BB: Robinson (2016); Russell (2016)</p> <p>[5310 only – Shaffer et al. 2016]</p>
Nov 7 (T) / Nov 9 (R)	<p>Political analysis: description, measures of central tendency, dispersion</p> <p>Visualizing data</p>	JRM Ch. 11 & JRM Ch. 12
Nov 14 (T) / 16 (R)	<p>Political analysis: statistical inference and hypothesis testing</p> <p>Lab exercise: statistical inference</p> <p>**3310 only: Research design paper due on Nov 16 by 11am (submit on BB and bring printed/stapled copy to class)**</p>	JRM Ch 13
Nov 21 (T)	<p>Political analysis: relationships between variables</p>	

Nov 23 (R)	*No class: UTA closed*	
Nov 28 (T) / 30 (R)	<p>Political analysis: Regression</p> <p>Lab exercise: designing a multivariate analysis</p> <p>How to read regression tables</p> <p>[5310 Only: Presentation of research design paper (submit Powerpoint file to BB by 11am) on Nov 30; 5310 Only, extended paper due on Nov 30 by 11am (submit on BB and bring printed/stapled copy to class)]</p>	JRM Ch 14 and Ch. 15 (596-)
Dec 5 (T)	<p>Network Analysis</p> <p>Lab exercise: Constructing a network and identifying central actors</p> <p>Exam Review</p> <p>*Collection #3 for Lab Notebooks*</p> <p>*Short paper #2 due Dec 5 by 11am (submit on BB and bring printed/stapled copy to class)*</p>	<p>BB: Ingraham (2015)</p> <p>[5310 only – BB: Adamic and Glance (2005); Andris et al. (2015); LaPira et al. (2014)]</p>
Dec 12 (T) 11:00-12:20	*Exam 2 held on the UTA-determined final exam day/time*	

Emergency Phone Numbers: In case of an on-campus emergency, call the UT Arlington Police Department at **817-272-3003** (non-campus phone), **2-3003** (campus phone). You may also dial 911. Non-emergency number 817-272-3381